

## **Pre Departure Seminar and Networking Evening, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

On 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2019 a seminar combining a Japanese class for beginners and information about preparations for a research trip to Japan was organised by JSPS London and held at the Magic Circle Headquarters in London. Participants included recent awardees of several types of JSPS Fellowships. The seminar started with a Japanese language class for beginner level given by staff of the Japan Foundation London Office and included information from them about the activities and funding schemes of their organisation for intellectual exchanges with Japan. The teacher was Ms. Marika Horie. The lesson covered words and phrases for practical everyday situations both for living and working in Japan including self-introductions in order that fellows are able to simply explain about their research area. An introduction to reading hiragana and writing names in katakana was also given.

After a short break, the next segment of the seminar began and included presentations on pre departure preparations from JSPS staff and Alumni. This session started with welcoming remarks from the Director of JSPS London, Professor Nobuo Ueno and was followed by a short self-introduction from each participant. The purpose of these self-introductions was for fellows to link similar areas of research and institutions being visited overall. In this group JSPS research fellows will be visiting a varied array of departments at top universities and research institutions all over Japan. The seminar was presided over by Ms. Polly Watson, International Programme Coordinator of JSPS London, who at first explained the purpose of the event and about the different presentations that were to follow. The first presentation by Dr Masataka Ando, Deputy Director of JSPS London, gave an essential introduction to JSPS and the preparations JSPS researchers need to make. He also explained about the expectations JSPS has of its research fellows, as well as practical advice for risk management of natural disasters and considerations for living harmoniously in Japanese society. Dr Ando's presentation ended with information about the kinds of assistance available from JSPS. Ms Fuki Yokoyama, International Programme Associate at JSPS London, gave the next presentation about the activities of JSPS and the range of JSPS funding opportunities available to support a researcher throughout their career, at individual, group and institutional levels. After this, a UK & RoI Alumni Association member, Dr Riccardo Maddalena, from Cardiff University spoke about their experiences of research environments and living in Japan. Dr Maddalena explained about his productive visit to Tohoku University and field visits while working on the development of fibre reinforced self-healing concrete. He advised about getting the most from a JSPS fellowship by being well prepared and open minded to trying new things and approaches both to daily life and research, as well as the importance of being actively involved with the UK and RoI JSPS Alumni Association to maintain links with Japan.

JSPS London was also pleased to have in attendance guest speaker Mr Brendan Griggs MBE, Chief Executive of the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, who gave a presentation on the

activities of his organisation, to make seminar participants aware about further funding opportunities they offer to do research in Japan.

After the pre-departure seminar, the UK & RoI JSPS Alumni Association held a networking evening to include Japanese researchers based in the UK (JBUK) as well, that allowed for networking among members and new JSPS fellows in a relaxed atmosphere. The evening started with a presentation from a member of the UK & RoI JSPS Alumni Association Executive Committee, Dr. John Brazier, based at the University of Reading, to explain about the recent and future activities of the Association, including recent awards made under the BRIDGE Fellowship and Symposium Scheme as sources of funding available exclusively to Alumni Association members, as well as upcoming symposia with partner funding organisations. This presentation was followed by a drinks reception and buffet to allow for networking and the chance for further information exchange between new fellows, Alumni and Japanese researchers in preparation for their trips to Japan. The attendees were also treated to a magic show from JBUK member Dr Yoshikatsu Shinozawa based at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.



***Presentation from Dr Riccardo Maddalena, Cardiff University***



*Reception Participants*



*Magic Show*