



Earth-Shaking Events: Natural Disasters & Their Global Impact: 2nd AGM & Evening Lecture

On the evening of 14 July 2005, the second General Assembly of the UK-JSPS Alumni Association was held at the Royal Geographical Society. At the assembly, it was announced that Ms. Melody Liles would succeed Dr. Darren Bagnall as the association's secretary. After completing this and other items of business, a lecture and debate, entitled "Earth-Shaking Events: Natural Disasters and Their Global Impact", was held on the impact of natural disasters and human vulnerability to them, focusing on the recent tsunami in Asia.

Invited to address the session was Professor Kenji Satake, Geological Survey of Japan, National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST); Professor Lord Julian Hunt, University College London; and Dr Terry Cannon, University of Greenwich.



Their presentations not only covered natural disasters from a perspective of the natural sciences but also in terms of their social and political impacts as seen from the viewpoint of humanities and social sciences. Capturing the interest of all the attendees, this approach spawned an extremely broad-based discussion. Altogether, some 60 people attended the event, including government officials, researchers in related fields and NGO representatives as well as the association members. As it gave the alumni an opportunity to interface with people from various sectors, this lecture-debate session had value beyond being a mere members' activity. In the future, it is expected that the association will continue to build the Anglo-Japanese research community through events such as this.

Alumni Fellowship Evening and Summer Programme Orientation



On the afternoon of the 20th May, 2005, a pre-departure meeting, organised by the JSPS London Office in conjunction with the British Council Japan, was held for participants on the JSPS Summer Programme 2005 on the premises of the British Council in London. Following the meeting, the UK-JSPS Alumni Association held an “Alumni Fellowship Evening” to give the Summer Programme participants the opportunity to meet with former JSPS fellows. Bringing together researchers who had participated in JSPS programmes and others interested in Japan, the event provided a good opportunity for exchanging information on Anglo-Japanese research activities, whilst expanding communication between researchers of the two countries.

The evening event was held at Galerie Besson on Bond Street where the renowned Japanese potter Tatsuzo Shimaoka was conducting an exhibition, thus giving the participants a unique opportunity to view first-hand some exquisite examples of

Japanese *mingei* (folk craft) pottery. Shimaoka was designated a Living National Treasure by the Japanese government in 1996 for developing a pottery technique where white clay slip is applied to rope impressions made in the surface of the pot when it is still wet; a technique he calls *Jomon Zogan*. The technique is actually a combination of, on the one hand, the Korean Yi Dynasty process of applying slip to decorative pottery indentations, and the decorative rope impressions seen in ancient Japanese Jomon pottery on the other.



It is expected that the young researchers who attended the event will contribute to the alumni association's activities by helping to broaden the scope of the Anglo-Japanese research community. Though small in scale, it is hoped that such events will be held in other regions, contributing to similar bilateral research community building. A similar event to welcome this year's Summer Programme and Short-Term Award fellows into the Alumni Association is being planned for later this year.

German JSPS Club AGM



UK JSPS Alumni members Professor Peter Sammonds and Melody Liles were graciously invited to the German JSPS Club annual general meeting in April last year, "Prospects of the Japanese - German Scientific Cooperation". The celebratory event was to mark the 10th Anniversary of the German JSPS Alumni, and attracted attendance from other JSPS alumni groups worldwide, including Sweden, France and the UK.

The German JSPS Club is an inspiration to other younger JSPS alumni groups, boasting over 130 loyal members and an active social calendar. The title networking evening event was a great success; waltzing was attempted and enjoyed by our zealous committee members, and proved an excellent lever for fostering collaborations. The UK JSPS Club is fortunate to have such a generous existing network as the German Club to share and spread new ideas among. We are keen to generate as much enthusiasm and reciprocate the kindness the European Clubs have shown us this year at our own AGM.

Japanese-French Research Cooperation: French JSPS Club AGM



UK JSPS Alumni Association Secretary Melody Liles was cordially invited to attend the French JSPS Club annual meeting "Presentation des activités de la JSPS et de l'association des anciens boursiers francophones de la JSPS" on the 1st – 2nd December, 2005 at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris.

The French JSPS Club only support one major meeting per annum as there is limited time and funding available to aid committee members and their expenses. The workshop aims to celebrate not only successful JSPS collaborations, but also mutually beneficial Franco-Japanese research. The workshop runs over two days, with a global list of invited speakers, covering a diversity of topics including themed sessions highlighting

various areas of research.

The opening session was hosted by a number of notable guests, including speakers from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ambassador of Japan in France.



Presentations were divided into subject groups by field, namely Health-related Life Sciences, Life Science for Agriculture, Science of the Universe, Mathematics, Nano-technology and Materials, Nuclear and Particle Physics, Environment and Energy, Social Sciences and Humanities, and Life Sciences. The end of each day was concluded with a "Round Table" session, where examples of technology transfer were presented and areas of special interest to Franco-Japanese cooperatives



raised. The highlight of the academic programme was a lecture from past JSPS Fellow and Nobel Prize winner (1991) Pierre-Gilles de Gennes.

Representatives were from far and ranging institutions, past fellows and alumni club members.

The JSPS also presented many talks, explaining changes to the fellowship schemes and funding allocations for the upcoming financial year. The workshop also serves as a central point to keep former fellows informed and updated, and the JSPS offices in touch with the product of their collaboration.



The emphasis of the event was very much angled towards promoting collaboration and networking between Franco-Japanese research communities. The friendly and informal attitude certainly attracted many members who stayed throughout the workshop.

UK JSPS Alumni Association Executive Committee

Peter Sammonds: Chair

I am Professor of Geophysics at UCL and am Chair of the UK Alumni Association. I have had a long involvement with Japan, dating back to 1991/92 when I was a JSPS Research Fellow at the Earthquake Research Institute, University of Tokyo. My research aims are to investigate the mechanics of the Earth's crust and ice sheets by studying the fundamental physics and mechanics of geological materials. I do research directed towards studying the impacts of climate change on the cryosphere and towards studying geohazards (earthquakes and volcanoes). It was for this reason I was particularly keen to do research in Japan. My host, Professor Miti Ohnaka, himself had been a JSPS Research Fellow in my lab at UCL in the past. So there was a long-standing collaboration. Working in Japan was certainly a formative experience. I loved Tokyo and made many friends there. The research on earthquake mechanics I did at ERI was both novel, because of the facilities available, and had an immediacy about it, because of the importance of geohazards in Japan. Four of my research students have since done research in Japan and I returned in 1999 as a Visiting Professor at Tokyo University. It continues to be a place for research excellence in geohazards and a country always full of surprises, even when you think you know it.

Martyn Kingsbury: Vice-Chair

A long interest in Japan and Japanese culture that stemmed from an interest in classical Japanese martial arts led me to explore the chance of continuing research in Japan on completing my PhD at the university of Bath. I was lucky enough to be awarded a JSPS fellowship in 1990 and I spent two years working on cardiovascular pharmacology at Tohoku University in Sendai. I did a return fellowship back at Bath and then moved on to Imperial College School of Medicine where I am a research lecturer looking at various aspects of heart failure. I also had a short study visit to Japan in 1995. I am the vice-chair of the alumni association and my role is to assist the chair and to stand in when the chair is unavailable.

Hugo Dobson: Treasurer

Hugo Dobson is lecturer in the international relations of Japan at the University of Sheffield. His research and teaching interests include East Asian region. He is the co-

author of Japan's international history and international relations in the International Relations: Politics, Economics and Security (Routledge, 2nd edition 2005), co editor of Britain and Japan in the Contemporary World: Responses to Common Issues (RoutledgeCurzon, 2003) and is the author of Japan and United Nations Peacekeeping: New Pressures, New Responses (RoutledgeCurzon, 2003) and Japan and G7/8, 1975 to 2002 (RoutledgeCurzon, 2004). He is currently planning a research project on the representation of Japan's international relations in film, and a co-edited book on East Asian postage stamps as propaganda.

Melody Liles: Secretary

Melody Liles is currently a third year PhD student with the Structural Biophysics Group in the School of Optometry and Vision Sciences at Cardiff University. Melody gained a Short-Term JSPS Fellowship at Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine under Professor Shigeru Kinoshita, an international leader in pioneering vision research. Her research interests centre around the relationship between corneal structure and function. Using state-of-the art techniques such as synchrotron X-ray diffraction combined with a range of biochemical studies in collaboration with the Cardiff School of Biosciences, Melody's work aims to better understand corneal transparency. Her findings have been presented at a number of conferences, including the international IOVS research meeting, ARVO.

Melody is also enthusiastically involved in a number of projects, including National Science week, Researchers in Residence, Women in Science and Engineering, and is a keen adventure runner.

Lakshmi Sharma: Associate

I have been in Japan now for nearly 6 years. I initially started on the European Commission INCO STF 14 fellowship at AIST in Tsukuba, where I stayed for 2 years. I then received the Royal Society awarded JSPS fellowship to research at Kyoto University with Professor Kanaya for a further 2 years. I enjoyed the laboratory so much that I extended my time here and am currently a visiting international research associate. My research field involves polymer chemistry especially structure, crystallisation, blends, rheology and biomaterials.

What is the UK JSPS Alumni Association?

Aim:

The aim of the Association is to promote scientific exchange between the UK and Japan. In pursuit of this objective, the Association will carry out the following objectives;

- (1) Provide personal and expert guidance to young researchers under JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowships for foreign researchers and to support Japanese researchers working in the United Kingdom.
- (2) Exchange information amongst the Association's members.
- (3) Conduct joint activities with academic institutions and organisations of science promotion.
- (4) Collect and disseminate information regarding science, technology, society and culture.

Membership:

- a) Regular Members: Individuals who are being or were supported by JSPS or STA
 - b) Associate Members: Individuals and organizations who are interested in pursuing and achieving the Association's objectives
 - c) Honorary Members: Individuals who have a distinguished record of promoting scientific exchange between the UK and Japan
- *The Association requires no membership fee, however the Association reserves the right to introduce a fee at any time.

How to Apply:

Applications for membership to the Association should be made by submitting the registration form to the JSPS London Office, 12 Berkeley Street, London W1J 8DT.