

## Vol.2 Dr John Brazier



Presentation at JSPS London Pre-departure seminar

Dr John Brazier, an active member of JSPS Alumni Association of the UK & ROI (Republic of Ireland) strongly recommends you to pursue research with Japanese researchers. The reason is ... please have a look at his article below.

### Why did I go to Japan?

My interest in Japan began when I joined the University of Warwick Kempo Ju Jitsu Club during my undergraduate degree in Chemistry. This gave me a small insight into Japanese culture and led to me attending a workshop about funding opportunities to work in Japan during my PhD at the University of Sheffield. I was very fortunate to be accepted on to a scheme that was the precursor to the JSPS summer programme, which allowed me to conduct a short research project in Japan over the summer of 2001. I arrived in Tokyo at the beginning of July, and had a whistle stop tour of Japanese language and culture, along with a short stay with a Japanese family. I finally arrived in Fukuoka just in time to experience the Hakata Gion Yamakasa, a festival, where the city's male population race through the streets of the city in the early morning carrying intricate floats weighing over a ton, all while wearing a loin cloth. I worked hard for six weeks to complete the research we had planned, and spent a week travelling back to Tokyo for the formal finish of the programme.

### Dr John Brazier

Lecturer in Pharmaceutical Chemistry, School of Pharmacy, University of Reading

#### Biography

1995-1999 MChem (Chemistry), University of Warwick  
1999-2003 PhD, University of Sheffield  
2003-2006 Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Liverpool  
2006-2008 JSPS Postdoctoral Researcher, Kyushu University  
2008- Lecturer in Pharmaceutical Chemistry, University of Reading

#### JSPS Concerning

- 2001.6-2001.8 JSPS Summer Programme
- 2006.7-2008.7 JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship (Standard)
- 2009.8 JSPS FURUSATO Award
- 2014.7 JSPS Symposium Scheme

### Why did I return to Japan?

My stay in Professor Shigeki Sasaki's lab was a great experience that left me with warm memories of the people and environment in Japan, and made me determined to return for longer. I kept contact with Professor Sasaki through meeting at various conferences over the next few years, and in 2006 returned to Kyushu University as a JSPS Post-doctoral Fellow. This was originally planned to be just a one year position, but my experiences within the first few months led to me extending my fellowship to two years.

### What impact did I have during my fellowship?

During these two years, I learnt a lot about the research ethic in Japan, and was able to introduce a few working practices from the UK. Recently Professor Sasaki spoke to me about some of the impact I had made to his lab, such as encouraging students to think about their experiments and the data they collected,

rather than just following a standard procedure, which he still instills in students today, eight years after I left his lab. The research I started during my fellowship continued after I left and in collaboration over the next few years, developed to a point that we were able to publish the results in peer reviewed journals.<sup>1</sup>

### What impact did the fellowship have on me?

Immediately after my fellowship, I secured a position as a Lecturer in Pharmaceutical Chemistry at the University of Reading. The competition for the position was high, with candidates from very prestigious universities and research groups, but I believe that my experience in Japan stood out. Discussing difficult science with non-native English speaker in Japan had developed my presentation skills to a very high level, a key skill for a lecturer.

### How have I continued my relationship with Japan?

I have been fortunate enough to visit Japan several times since finishing my fellowship supported by both the JSPS, with a Furusato award, and as a Visiting Lecturer funded by Kyushu University. This has allowed me to have those all-important face-to-face discussions which help to drive and develop collaborative work. The opportunity to teach undergraduate students as a Visiting Lecturer has introduced me to the next generation of researchers in Japan, with students I taught as undergraduates now pursuing doctoral courses.

### How did I develop new collaborative links?

My research field of nucleic acids has a very strong history in Japan, with research conducted by several highly ranked

professors. One of these, Professor Naoki Sugimoto of Konan University, conducts research very close to my own and in July 2014, I was very pleased to invite him, Professor Sasaki, and 3 others to talk at a seminar supported by a JSPS Symposium award. The ability to discuss my research with leading academics from Japan, and show them the facilities available in Reading was incredibly worthwhile, and resulted in a new collaborative link with the Sugimoto group, with a joint manuscript currently under development.

### Would I recommend pursuing research in Japan to others?

Absolutely, the opportunity to work and live in Japan, gave me many useful skills for a future career in science. The environment was supportive and the facilities excellent, but most importantly, the people were friendly, knowledgeable and passionate about their research. It would be very hard not to be inspired under these conditions and I would recommend it to anyone.



One of many group trips during my time in Japan. This time to the top of Mount Kujū, one of the highest peaks in Kyushu.

1. Kikuta, K., Piao, H., Brazier, J., Taniguchi, Y., Onizuka, K., Nagatsugi, F. and Sasaki, S., Stabilization of the i-motif structure by the intra-strand cross-link formation, *Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry Letters*, 2015, 25, (16), 3307-3310.

Hironori Koda, John Alan Brazier, Ippei Onishi, Shigeki Sasaki, Strong positive cooperativity in binding to the A3T3 repeat by Hoechst 33258 derivatives attaching the quinoline units at the end of a branched linker, *Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry*, 2015, 23, (15), 4583-4590.