



Japan Society of Scotland Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2008



2008 is the year of the mouse in Japan, and with it comes new aspirations for the JSofS, which we hope will bring Japan and Scotland even more closely together, through business and cultural exchange.

In this issue of the newsletter, we have some inspirational tales of how our two countries have influenced each other in the past and present; the account of a Ranald Macdonald, hailed as Japan's original English teacher who played an important role in the early contact with Japan, and an interview with Neil Mackay who founded the taiko drumming group 'Mugenkyo' which is now based in Scotland – after training under one of Japan's foremost taiko masters.

We are always interested in your Japan related contributions, so please send any pictures, news or articles to the email below.

With that - I wish you ake-mashite-omedetou-gozaïmasu! (happy new year)

Sam Baldwin (JSofS Newsletter Editor)



There is a misconception amongst the West that Japan's climate is hot and tropical all year round. But these snow covered stone lanterns (above) and trees (front cover) are a common sight on Honshu and Hokkaido throughout the winter months and illustrate Japan's snowy reality.

Contents

Snow covered, manicured trees.....	front cover
From Japan to America.....	3
Exporting to Japan and Eastern Asia.....	5
The Gallery.....	7
Finding Japan in North America.....	9
Scottish Company Entwined with Japan.....	12
The Way of the Drummers.....	13
JSofS Events Calendar.....	back cover

We always welcome your Japan-Scotland related news, articles and photographs.

Please email contributions to:
jsofsnewsletter@googlemail.com

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

Honorary President - H.E. The Japanese Ambassador
Honorary Vice President - Consul-General of Japan
Edinburgh
Honorary Patron - Mr. James Howat *Order of the Rising Sun*
Honorary Vice-Patron - Mr. James Wardrop
Council Chairman - Rev. Prof Stuart D.B. Picken
Order of the Sacred Treasure
Hon. Secretary - Mr. Charles Edmond
Hon. Treasurer - Mr. Ken Forman
Membership Secretary - Mr. Tim Steward
Newsletter Editor - Mr. Sam Baldwin
JET Association Liaison - Ms. Janice Leary

Council Members:

Dr. Ian Astley
Mr. Geoff Goolnik
Dr. Helen Parker
Ms. Emi Sakamoto
Ms. Saeko Yazaki

JSofS Scottish Charity Number No SC 03709

From Scotland, to America and Japan – The pre-JET era of internationalisation

By Peggy & Norrie Robertson

Archibald McDonald was born at Leekhentium, on the southern shore of Loch Leven, Glencoe, Appin, in North Argyleshire, on February 3rd, 1790. He was well educated and studied the rudiments of medicine at the University of Edinburgh. As an adult he sought his fortune in the Americas and eventually took charge of Fort Langley as its second chief in October of 1828.

In 1823, Archibald married a daughter of the famous North American Indian chief Comcomly, but she died the next year, giving birth to their son Ranald, who became the first man to teach the English language in Japan. He famously educated Einosuke Moriyama, one of the chief interpreters to handle the negotiations between Commodore Perry and the Tokugawa Shogunate.

MacDonald was born at Fort Astoria in Oregon Country, an area dominated by the Hudson's Bay Company and the Pacific Fur Company. His father, Archibald McDonald was a Scottish Hudson's Bay Company fur trader, his mother was Raven (also known as Princess Sunday), a Chinook Indian, daughter of Chief Comcomly, a leader of

Chinook people from the Cascade Mountains.

As a child, he met three shipwrecked Japanese sailors (among them, Otokichi). MacDonald's Indian relatives told him that their ancestors had come from Asia and the boy developed a fascination with Japan, theorizing that it might be home of his distant relatives.

He was educated at the Red River Academy in Manitoba, Canada, and secured a job as a bank clerk; however, banking was not what he wished to do. He soon quit his job

and decided that he would visit Japan. Despite knowing the strict isolationist Japanese policy of the time, which meant death or imprisonment for foreigners who set foot on Japanese soil, he signed on as a sailor on the whaling ship Plymouth in 1845.

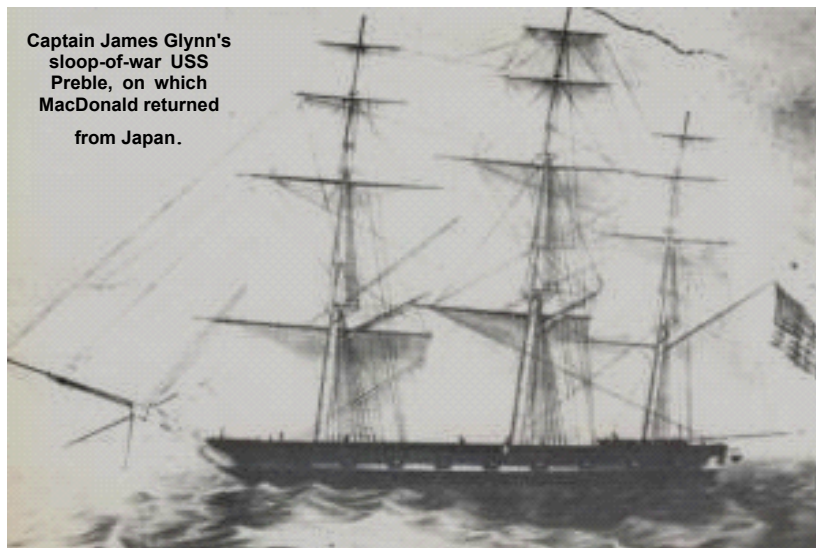
In 1848, he convinced the captain of the Plymouth to set him to sea on a small boat off the

coast of Hokkaidô. On July 1, he came ashore on the island of Rishiri where he pretended he had been shipwrecked. He was caught by Ainu people, who handed him to the Daimyo of Matsumae. He was then sent to Nagasaki, the only port allowed to conduct limited trade with the Dutch and Portuguese.

Since more and more American and British ships had been approaching Japanese waters, and nobody in Japan spoke English



Monument to Ranald MacDonald in Nagasaki, Japan



with any sort of fluency, fourteen men were sent to study English under him. These men were samurai, who had previously learned Dutch and had been attempting to learn English for some time from secondhand sources, such as Dutch merchants who spoke a little of the language. The brightest of these men, a sort of language genius, was Einosuke Moriyama.

MacDonald stayed in confinement in Nagasaki for 10 months, during which time he also studied Japanese, before being taken aboard a passing American warship. In April 1849, in Nagasaki, MacDonald was handed over together with fifteen other shipwrecks to captain James Glynn on the American warship USS Preble which had been sent to rescue stranded sailors. Glynn later urged that a treaty should be signed with Japan, "if not peaceably, then by force".

Upon his return to North America, MacDonald made a written declaration to the US Congress, explaining that the Japanese society was well policed and the Japanese people well behaved and of the highest standard. He continued his career as a sailor.

Although his students had been instrumental in the negotiations to open Japan with Commodore Perry and Lord Elgin, he found no real recognition of his achievements. His notes of the Japanese adventure were not published until 1923, 29 years after his death. He died a poor man in Washington state in 1894, while visiting his niece. His last words were reportedly "Sayonara, my dear, sayonara..." •



A monument indicating the birthplace of Randal MacDonald in Astoria, Oregon.

Exporting to Japan & Eastern Asia

By Geoff Goolnik

North East businesses could be missing out on very lucrative markets in Japan and Eastern Asia, and a free event which was staged in Aberdeen highlighted the situation and offered support.

The seminar, entitled "Exporting to Japan & Eastern Asia: Examining the Why's and How's" took place on Wednesday 8th August, at the historic Grandhome House, Aberdeen (courtesy of Mr. David Paton, OBE).

A Japanese buffet lunch was provided, courtesy of the Japanese Consulate General, Edinburgh and prepared by their private chef. The speakers included: Mr. Shuhei Takahashi (Japanese Consul General, Edinburgh); Professor Stuart

David Paton, OBE, owner of Grandhome House



Picken (Chairman, The Japan Society of Scotland and formerly business academic in Japan); and Mr. Atsushi Inoue (Director General, Japanese External Trade Organisation (JETRO), London).

"Our seminar," said Geoff Goolnik of event organisers The Japan Society of

Scotland, "aimed to offer a very useful insight into the Japanese economy and areas of growth, the practical possibilities of doing business there, and then using that economy as a stepping stone into the other significant markets of Eastern Asia."

A huge amount of media attention has been focused on China because of its explosive growth rate and its



Mr. Takahashi (then JCG) making his presentation

Prof. Stuart Picken making his presentation



chance at lunch for participants to have informal one-to-one consultations with the UK based staff of JETRO – the Japanese government's trade support agency – about their own particular interests and the range of assistance that could be made available.

The event offered a great deal of helpful guidance to businesses in the North East of Scotland who were

seeming appeal for foreign investors. Japan however has the second highest GDP in the world; with purchasing power and consumption levels again second in the world.

Japanese investment in Eastern Asia has also grown steadily over the years and these have proved to be very effective and successful. China, for example, needs a great deal of backing from Japan at many levels, and these needs, contrasted with China's own structural weaknesses, gives Japan a much greater influence in the region than is at first obvious.

As well as discussion at the seminar itself, there was also a

yet to consider exporting to Japan and Eastern Asia, as well as a further aid to those already there.

The seminar also proved to be relevant for firms, organisations and agencies involved in advising businesses about international trade and export opportunities. •



David Capitanchik, chair of the meeting

The Gallery

Recent Events and Activities of the JSofS



Congratulations to Rev Professor Stuart Picken, who was added to the Japanese Honours List on Culture Day (Nov 3rd 2007) as having been awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure.

The prestigious decoration was formally conferred by the Consul General on December 4th 2007.

The award is a very high honour, especially for a non-Japanese person.





1. & 2. Sushi and undon Bounenkai event
3. Emperor's Birthday Celebrations
4. Former CGJ speaking at the JSofS AGM (June 07)
5. Mr Suganuma (current CGJ) speaking on the Emperor of Japan's Birthday
6. Interior dome of Merchants' Hall - the venue for the Emperor's Birthday Celebrations



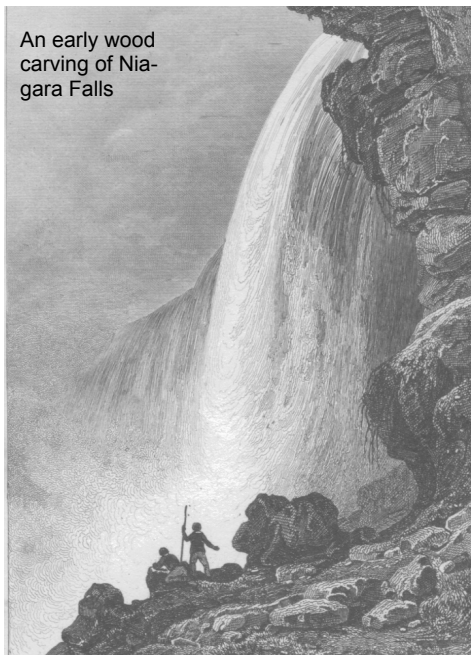
Finding Japan in North America

By Ken Forman (JSofS Hon Treasurer)

This autumn my wife and I went on holiday to North America. Our primary objective was to tour around the north-eastern corner, absorbing some of the magic of the glorious fall foliage that the region is famous for at this time of year. It is also the time of year for gathering seeds and we intended to build on our success of collecting seeds in Japan a couple of years ago (which in some cases have produced small plants). When we were in North America however, we had several experiences that made us wonder whether we had really travelled west, or whether we had got on the wrong plane and ended up in Japan again!

Our first stop on the trip was Niagara Falls – on the Canadian side, not strictly in the north-east but we felt that we could not go so close without actually taking the time to see one of the great natural wonders of the world. And it is really wondrous. We had the added bonus of a perfect aerial view as we approached Toronto airport but the highlight was taking the boat trip upstream to within a hundred metres or so of the bottom of the falls. You have to be prepared to get wet on this trip, although the boat company does provide plastic hooded raincoats which offer some protection. The sheer power of the falls is most apparent when you are closest to them; the boat's engines are working flat out but all it can do is hold its position against the current.

An early wood carving of Niagara Falls



We visited Niagara midweek to avoid the crowds and the strategy certainly paid off as we wasted little of our precious time waiting in queues. We even got a table for dinner on an outdoor terrace looking right into the falls. We were struck by the proportion of Japanese tourists we saw that day. It was almost like being in Japan, and at dinner almost half the customers comprised a group of Japanese tourists and their guide, on this occasion a middle-aged man rather than the young lady who normally fills this role in Japan.

Perhaps we should not have been as struck after all. We all know that Japanese people have an affinity for the natural world and I have read that Niagara is their number one destination in Canada. I have visited some of the famous waterfalls near Nikko and I know how the Japanese appreciate these natural features. However, I would never have guessed what the number two destination for Japanese visitors to Canada is - the relatively remote Prince Edward Island

off the east coast. No natural phenomena here! The magnet in this case is the setting for the novel *Anne of Green Gables* which I am reliably informed is very popular with Japanese women.

After Niagara we spent a few days in the Laurentians. We were lucky enough to be there very close to the peak of the fall colours and they were glorious. Our only disappointment was that we could find no seeds that had fallen off maple trees. We

were told that they fall earlier but I recall that in Japan we could still find plenty of maple seeds at this time of year.

We finished the Canadian part of our holiday with a visit to Montreal. We came across more groups of Japanese tourists in Old-Montreal with their flag-waving guides. But one of the highlights of Montreal was a morning at the Botanical Gardens. A few hours is really not enough time to absorb all that its vast acreage has to offer and after a rushed tour we were glad to rest our weary legs after walking several miles in sweltering heat. It's not meant to be close to 30°C in late September! The layout includes a Japanese garden which was created in 1988. It is now quite mature and we were able to relive our Japanese holiday by walking amongst the many trees and shrubs native to Japan as well as enjoying the stone and water features that are essential ingredients in a Japanese garden. There are also some structures in the Japanese garden including a 'peace bell' and a teahouse.

After a week touring around rural New England we ended our holiday with a couple of nights in Boston. There, we encountered another fall phenomenon in North America – the climax of the baseball season. From April until October, the 29 major teams in the US (and one from Canada) compete in two leagues – differentiated more by history

than skill level. The top four teams from each, then engage in a series play-offs and the winners from each league then battle it out in what is called the World Series (despite the fact that it can involve only North American teams – but this is America!).

This year the Boston Red Sox emerged as leaders in their league after a thrilling final couple of games in which one of their arch rivals – the New York Yankees – had to lose their final game, which they did, in order for Boston to emerge on top. The Japanese angle to this story is that one of the key players in the Boston team is Daisuke Matsuzaka, a pitcher, who was lured away from the Seibu Lions at the end of last year in a record-breaking deal worth over \$50 million.



Daisuke Matsuzaka moved to the Boston Red Sox for a record breaking \$50 million

We attended (for an hour or so) what was called a Red Sox 'rally' in a square outside City Hall. It was effectively a pop concert interspersed with interviews with

some of the players and the coaching team along with replays of some of the highlights of their playing season on a big screen. The atmosphere was charged and the sea of red shirts surpassed even the maples of the Laurentians! You would have thought they had already won the World Series rather than just having a ticket to the pre-qualifying stage! Nevertheless, the Red Sox did go on to win the World Series, for the second time in four years.

During our stay in Boston we made several visits to Quincy Market which is one of the city's great institutions. It's a long building with a central isle and food stalls on each side. Half way along there is an open area under a dome, providing seating at which to consume the food. The idea is that you pick and mix whatever takes your fancy at the stalls and then sit down to eat and drink in the central area.

When I first visited the market back in 1981, most of the food sold there was traditional Boston fare, including chowders, seafood and chocolate brownies. But now a growing number of stalls offer a variety of ethnic delicacies. Some of these are Japanese and with an abundant local supply of fresh seafood it is no wonder that there is a ready market for sashimi and sushi. There is also a Teppanyaki counter.

Many of the Japanese features I have mentioned could equally refer to Scotland. There are certainly plenty of Japanese eateries here these days, and we can enjoy watching Japanese players (well, at least one!) participate in our national sport - football. Groups of Japanese tourists roam the country looking at our natural wonders as well as being drawn to mythical characters in the form this time of 'Nessie' and we can amble around Japanese gardens in places such as Edinburgh and the Isle of Mull. So who needs to travel to Japan? We could do a Japanese tour in our own country.

But it just wouldn't be the same, would it, without all the background experiences that total immersion allows, and that can only be found in the magical world of Japan. •



ENGLISH SPEAKING UNION SCOTLAND

English classes from £4 per hour



Improve your written and spoken English grammar, comprehension and pronunciation

- Part time general English, all levels
- Full time courses on request
- Preparation for Cambridge exams (FCE CAE) and IELTS
- Business English
- Public speaking and presentation skills
- Qualified teachers, small friendly groups
- 1:1 tuition
- Daytime and evening classes
- Saturday workshops
- Conversation club and 'English clinic'
- Creative writing
- Private tuition for children

Term begins on Monday 14th January but you can join at any time. To find out more: call 0131 229 1528, email efl@esuscotland.org.uk or come to 23 Atholl Crescent.

Scottish Company Entwined with Japan

(story taken from The Herald)

The Tayside-based company Nutscene, a renowned garden twine manufacturer is being flooded by orders from the land of sumo and sushi, many of which are written entirely in Japanese, for its traditional garden twine. The interest signals the entering of Nutscene into the lucrative oriental gardening market which worth around £10 billion.

After production was started in 1922 by jute merchants Robertson Ireland, its green twine rapidly became the string of choice for gardeners in the UK. The intention had been to call it "Not Seen" because when tied round plants it was not easily spotted, but the company was refused permission to register that name for patent and decided simply to change the spelling.

For around 40 years the jute business was a major success, but trading then became difficult in the face of increasing competition from cheap foreign imports.

However, four years after a buy-out headed by managing director Shona Young, the business is again booming.

The company has diversified its range of products and last year, after moving into two purpose-built premises in Forfar, bought over The Domestic Paraphernalia Co, which produces the "Sheila Maid" - the traditional pulley.

"The company has enjoyed relationships with companies in Asia for many decades and although we had customers in Japan it

was through them coming to shows in the UK," said Ms Young.

"Earlier this year I attended a trade exhibition in Tokyo and it was a great success. I wore tartan every day and when they had established through my interpreter that I was from Scotland they would say 'Ah, Nakamura' and then 'Ah, whisky' and they loved our products.

"Gardening is very much an emerging market in Japan. They have the baby boomers and they are all going to be retiring and they are trying to introduce them to gardening, albeit the gardens are small.



"One of the first visitors to come to our stand was a team from the Japanese equivalent of BBC's Gardeners' World and they are going to feature our products, as is the Santori brewery which has a mail-order business.

"I am back in Scotland with actual orders and the potential to do much more business and I will be returning to Japan next year. The Japanese loved the fact that our

products are made of jute which is biodegradable.

"Most of our products have some connection with twine and we have taken a fairly boring product and we have made it sexy. We have introduced different colours and shapes and put twine on reclaimed bobbins and the Japanese particularly loved these hanging bobbins. We are developing the giftware side because we see a niche in the market.

"We are selling to the States, New Zealand, everywhere, and I now have a Japanese translator for the e-mails which are coming in." •

The Way of the Drummers

Interview by Sam Baldwin

When Neil Mackie first witnessed a taiko drumming performance, he instantly wanted to try it. But little did he know that a chance meeting with a taiko master in a rural prefecture of Japan would lead to him founding Europe's first and most successful professional taiko drumming group.

How did you begin playing taiko and what attracted you to it in the first place?

I started playing taiko in Japan, about 15 years ago. I had never heard of taiko before going there, but a friend introduced me to an amazing group, Hibiki Daiko. The pure energy in their performance completely amazed me and made me think – I must do this. The leader of the group was Kurumaya Sensei, who became my teacher. When we first met we shook hands and he immediately said “You will play taiko in Britain”. I didn’t believe him at the time, but then here I am!

When you started training, did you ever think that you’d end up founding the first professional taiko group in Europe?

When I started training I had no idea where this path would lead me to. The more I learned about the art-form and the longer I stayed in Japan, the more deeply involved I became in the world of taiko. Even after our return to Britain I had no idea that this would end up being my whole life. I started teaching taiko, and Miyuki and I started performing at schools and small events. Gradually Mugenkyo became more and more popular and we ended up with a completely professional group. There are now 8 of us making a full-time living from taiko: 6 performers/ teachers and 2 office staff.

Taiko is obviously a Japanese art – but are Mugenkyo creating a British style of Taiko?

Neil Mackie of
Mugenkyo Taiko



We deeply respect the roots of taiko, however at the same time we are endeavouring to create a uniquely British style of taiko. Although Miyuki in the group is half-Japanese, all of the other members of the group are Scottish and English, and we aim to bring in our own musical influences. We also work on all kinds of collaborations with other artists, for example last year as part of the Last Night of the Proms we performed with a piper!

How often do you go back to Japan, and what are your favourite places there?

We go back to Japan once every 2 or 3 years, which is not enough! My favourite places are obviously Fukui, where I spent two wonderful years and still have many friends. Then I would have to say Kyushu for its spectacular scenery, Kyoto for atmosphere and culture, and Tokyo for nightlife!

Mugenkyo has already achieved a huge amount, but what are your future goals for the group?

My goal has always been, and continues to be to spread taiko throughout the UK, and convert as many people as possible to this wonderful art form.

Why did you choose to set up the Mugenkyo base in Scotland?

When we first started Mugenkyo we were based in London. In 1998 we relocated to rural Scotland, mainly in order to set up our base: the Mugen Taiko Dojo. We chose South Lanarkshire because of the open space of the countryside (we make lots of noise!) and the proximity of two great cities: Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Taiko Master Kurumaya – the man who you trained under, came to the UK to help kick start Mugenkyo, what where his impressions of Scotland?

Kurumaya Sensei loved Scotland. One of his favourite phrases still is “Nae Bother”! He loved the warmth of the Scottish people and the spacious countryside, which is so different to Japan.

Are your taiko drums all shipped from Japan?

All of our performance taiko are shipped from Japan, from the two top taiko makers in the country: Miyamoto Daiko in Tokyo and Asano Daiko in Ishikawa. Although for performance we use the top quality taiko, we also have taiko drums for practicing and teaching, including an excellent

drum made in Scotland, on the Isle of Arran. Making drums locally is a fantastic development for taiko in this country, and is extremely important for the spread of taiko in the UK in the future.

Has Mugenkyo’s work brought the UK closer to Japan?

I would like to think that we have been able to introduce an aspect of Japanese folk culture to many people who wouldn’t have otherwise had an interest in Japanese culture, and leave them with a positive impression. We hope that if this is their first experience of Japan, it would lead them to look further into the culture. That is our hope, anyway. There is so much to learn from Japan, so many wonderful art forms, and so much that is different from our own country, I believe everybody should have an interest in Japan!



History of Taiko

Taiko, which means “wide drum” in Japanese have been around for at least 2000 years. Originally they were used as a communication tool on the battle field to issue commands to cavalry and foot soldiers during warfare. They were also used in a religious context during ceremonies and are still seen today in Shinto Shrines and Buddhist temples.

It's said that modern taiko music began in the 1950s when a Japanese jazz drummer was asked to interpret an old sheet of taiko music. He found the traditional taiko form too simple so added his own rhythms, and then inspired by western style drum kits, decided to form a group in which each player used a different taiko, paving the way for the many different styles that we see today.

Types of Taiko Drum

Taikos range in size from the huge “O-Daiko”, to the small “Shime Daiko”. There are also a number of different sized drums in between, such as the wadaiko, chu-daiko and jozuke. The biggest have a head size in



A traditional taiko performance



Neil Mackie performing with Master Kurumaya

excess of 3ft, are carved from one solid piece of wood and weigh about a half a ton. These take great strength and stamina to play.

Manufacture of Taiko Drums

The oldest manufacturer of Taiko drums is the Asano company, based in Ishikawa, and these are the only drums that Master Kurumaya (teacher of Neil Mackie) uses due to their exceptionally high sound quality and beautiful appearance.

Traditional taiko are made from a single piece of wood, normally a hollowed-out trunk of the Keyaki tree (a species of Japanese Elm), prized for its hardness and beautiful swirling grain. To make the biggest “o-daiko” very large trees are needed, which may be over a thousand years old. Master craftsmen look as much for the beauty of a grain pattern as for the wood's strength and hardness, which will influence the tone the drum will produce. •

About his first meeting with Neil Mackie, Taiko Master Kurumaya said:

“Neil's great passion and enthusiasm for taiko came over clearly when I first met him, and I also had the impression of a great power and energy. I felt straight away that we could work together in spite of the language barrier and that he would one day become a taiko player in his own country.”

2008 JSofS Events & Related Activities

February

Sat 23rd - JETAA Ceilidh, St Columba's Church Hall, Johnstone Terrace, Edinburgh

Mon 25th - Rebuilding of the Todaiji Film and illustrated lecture, Edinburgh University Faculty Room South, 7pm

Fri 29th -The Milkwoman, Itsuka dokusho suruhi, 8:30pm.

(This is the first in a series of new Japanese films presented by The Japan Foundation at the Filmhouse, 88 Lothian Road Edinburgh, Tel: 0131 228 6382, www.filmhousecinema.com)

March

Japanese Films at the Filmhouse continue:

Sat 1st - Strawberry Shortcakes, 8:30pm

Sun 2nd - The Cat Leaves Home - Inuneko 6.15pm

Tue 4th - Kaza-hana, 8.40pm

Wed 5th - No One's Ark - Baka no hakobune, 6.00pm

Thu 6th - Kamikaze Girls, Shimotsuma monogatari, 8.30pm

Mon 31st - Japanese Meal - Wagamama - Glasgow

April

28th April - Cherry Blossom Fund Raising Event

May

Sat 27th - West Coast Japan Day

June

AGM in the basement of the Consulate General

