



Wellington Sakai Association

2012

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Hours of training never so worthwhile



Catherine Quinn (centre) with her homestay family and other visiting runners

I was thrilled to find out I'd been chosen to run in the Senshu International City Marathon in Japan as a guest of Wellington's sister city, Sakai City. I studied Japanese at high school and university, had been there on a school trip in 1987 (Sasaki san, our Sakai City Council representative, told me, he wasn't even born then). Since then I have had a keen interest in the culture. Travelling and running are my two favourite things and I am always looking for opportunities to combine the two. The chance to fuel up pre and post race on delicious Japanese food was an added bonus!

My training was going well until I tripped over a tree root and sliced my knee open exactly one month before the marathon. It caused some anxiety, both for me and the selection panel, but I wasn't about to let eight stitches stop me. I was back running again the day the stitches came out and was confident I would be race-ready by departure day – 16 February 2012 – and ready for my 19th marathon in the 19th running of the Senshu Marathon.

My first full day in Japan was all about race preparation. I'd met my fellow Sakai City runner Steve Rego, from Berkeley, and his wife Cheryl the night before and that day we toured the marathon course with the sister city runners from eight other cities. It snowed while we were out and I started getting nervous. The nerves increased when we got a look at the two "coat hanger" bridges at the end of the course. As one of the officials put it, Senshu is the easiest marathon in Japan for the first 35km and the most difficult for the last 7km. I had already spent a good few months worrying about the bus that would pick up the runners that didn't make the cut-off times along the course. Our interpreter for the bus ride was making her third attempt to finish – last year, she had to get on the bus at 36km. (I heard later that she was successful this time!) Luckily, the cut off times were not as tight this year as the race was being run as a charity race to raise money for tsunami victims and the race time had been extended from 4.5 hours to 5 hours to encourage more people to enter.

Article continued on next page

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Wellington

That evening we attended the official marathon reception at our hotel. I met Mayor Takeyama and then all invited runners introduce ourselves. There were runners from Korea, California and the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, including the male and female winners of the Gold Coast Marathon. Pre-race, I couldn't enjoy the beer and wine on offer but I did load up my plate with delicious sushi and noodles – carbo loading Japanese-style! Race day dawned clear and chilly.

We arrived at the start two hours before the 10am start. There were already hundreds of runners waiting about in the cold but the invited runners had warm changing rooms to wait in. This race was the first time I would start at the front of the field with the elites. Some of the other invited runners were well used to it (the Aussie girls took out 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in the race) but Steve and I were a little worried about being trampled. Luckily that didn't happen. The temptation was to sprint to keep up with the runners streaming past me but I made a conscious effort to slow down and let them go and settled into my usual pace. Crowd support was fantastic all along with lots of school children and even some taiko drummers out to support us. I was glad I had decided to run without jacket or gloves as it soon warmed up – in fact, I ended up with sunburnt shoulders.

The bridges were tough - the worst bit was running out the few kilometres after the second bridge to the turnaround point, knowing that I had to cross back over both bridges again. In the end, I finished in 3.53, around about my usual time and well ahead of the bus! I got my towel, a bowl of miso soup (a nice change from bananas) and congratulations from Mayor Takeyama. That night, we enjoyed a well earned feast of okonomiyaki, traditional Japanese pancakes. We had a full schedule the next day. One of the highlights was a visit to Mikunigaoka Kindergarten. Steve and Cheryl's host mother gave a presentation on Berkeley and Wellington. The children sang us some traditional songs, we played a few games outside and did a spot of folk dancing. The children then served us tea and sweets in the staff room. Historically, Sakai was one of the main centres of the tea ceremony in Japan and the children were already learning about it. We spent the afternoon sight-seeing before a formal meeting with Mayor Takeyama and his staff at City Hall. We exchanged gifts and the Mayor talked about Sakai City and the importance of the sister city relationship. He congratulated us on finishing the race and showed us his pedometer – he was trying to do 10,000 steps a day but had only got to 4,000 so far that day. We then went to the Sakai Sister and Friendship Cities Council Reception.



Learning Japanese calligraphy



Standing by the entrance of Kiyomizu temple

Now post-race I could have a glass of beer and was less nervous about speaking! It was lovely to meet so many people who were so enthusiastic and eager to talk to me. A lot of them had visited Wellington in the past and some hoped to be able to visit again this year as part of the sister city relationship. The reception was also the first time I met my host family, the Koshiba family, though I had been in email contact with them before I left New Zealand. I went home with them after the reception. They lived quite a way from Sakai City.

The next day we visited Hamedera Isizu Elementary School. We introduced ourselves to the assembly, the children sang some traditional songs from the region and the orchestra played a rousing version of the Pirates of the Caribbean theme. We then spent some time with each grade, practicing calligraphy (my translator was very impressed with the boy who was demonstrating for me, he took private lessons and was a budding master), origami and Japanese games with the first graders. We finished with a marathon training session with the fifth graders. Steve and I stuck to dispensing verbal advice as we were both still a little sore. Luckily, Cheryl was a marathon runner too so she was able to demonstrate an efficient running style. We then had lunch with a class each. According to my translator, the standard of the lunch had improved since she was at school and I certainly enjoyed it. It was good for us too – the nutritional value of the meal had been broadcast over the loudspeaker before we ate.

On Thursday we visited Kyoto and spent a lovely day visiting some of the city's many shrines and temples, including Kinkakuji (the Golden Pavilion), a World Heritage site and one of the most popular buildings in Japan, Ryoanji with its famous rock and sand garden, and Kiyomizu Temple, an independent Buddhist Temple and also a World Heritage site. There were many shops and restaurants lining the steep lane on the approach to Kiyomizu Temple and we had the opportunity to try some green tea ice cream and buy souvenirs and green tea Kit-Kats for workmates back home.

My time in Japan was wonderful. I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to run a great marathon, meet so many lovely people and eat so much fantastic food! Everyone I met was incredibly welcoming and hospitable. Thank you to the WSA and the Wellington City Council for giving me this fantastic opportunity and to WSA members Christine and Bev for their invaluable pre-trip advice. I would encourage all Wellington marathon runners to apply to represent Wellington next year – your hours of training will never be so worthwhile!

- Catherine Quin

SCNZ conference

The last day of the Sister Cities New Zealand (SCNZ) conference had three themes:

- using sister city relationships to create business opportunities;
- encouraging youth engagement and
- building relationships with educational institutions.

Business initiatives are becoming increasingly important given the need to demonstrate the tangible economic benefits of sister city relationships to local government. The Hutt City Council and Gisborne City Council gave good examples of sister city connections to foster business relationships.

In 2010, Hutt Chamber of Commerce took over a delegation of business owners from Hutt City to their sister city Tempe, Arizona. The Hutt Chamber organized the trip with the intent to create links with Tempe businesses, and in particular research, tech-

nology and engineering businesses. What they also found on this trip was that the Hutt City Council could also learn a lot from their sister city Council. The trip was highly successful and it opened a number of doors for businesses on both sides. This story illustrates that sister cities relationship can offer opportunities for economic growth if the initiatives have focus.

Cameron Oldfield, the youth director for SCNZ, discussed how he planned to get youth engaged in SCNZ. Youth engagement is an issue that face most volunteer organisations including the WSA. For the most part membership is made up of older people, and this is not due to lack of effort to attract younger people to help out and get involved. The message he conveyed was that volunteer organisations need to offer a clear value proposition for young people as we are competing for the limited time they have to allocate to volunteer work.

The Asia:NZ foundation, Auckland Girls Grammar and Auckland City Council. Auckland City Council talked about their experience with the Asian-Pacific Children's Convention in Fukuoka, Japan. Annually since 1989, 11 schoolchildren from Auckland each year are being sent to the conference. School children from 33 countries from around the Asia Pacific are sent to the conference to promote peace and understanding among different cultures. Realising that the children first attended this conference in 1989 are now adults, the 'Bridge Club' was created. This club reunites the past participants of the conference to maintain understanding and create future benefits.

The conference provided some useful insights for our planning in 2013. We are hoping that with this additional understanding we can create some new and exciting benefits from relationship with Sakai City.

- Nic Keating

WWII dead remembered at Featherston

On a windy but fine Friday February 24, 2012 WSA president Rosemary Jones together with Akiko Omundsen and myself travelled over the hill to Featherston to remember the fallen 56 Japanese sailors and the one New Zealand guard who died on February 25 1943.

The service was conducted by Mayor Staples of the South Wairarapa District Council.

The Japanese Embassy was represented by its deputy head of the Mission Tadashi Fujiwara. Other guests included members of the JNL Industries, Featherston RSA, Featherston Heritage Museum, Featherston Community Board and South Wairarapa District councillors.



In keeping with tradition, wreaths were laid at the main memorial and at the Japanese and New Zealand areas.

The service concluded when Father Donald Morrison of St Teresas in Featherston led the gathering in a prayer hoping that peace will prevail between Japan and New Zealand.

After the service everyone went to the Tin Hut for light refreshments.

-Jim Barnes

Jim Barnes, Akiko Omundsen and Rosemary Jones after the wreath laying

Award presentation to Jim Barnes

As part of the cherry tree planting on Saturday 8 September 2012 Jim Barnes, who has given WSA many years of sterling service, was awarded with a Certificate of Appreciation by Wellington City Council. Jim has been a WSA committee member, president and secretary for many years, as well as having provided homestays for many visiting Japanese. Jim is well respected within the WSA committee and by its members.

He was presented the award by Mayor Celia Wade-Brown. Jim was most delighted. On behalf of WSA I would like to congratulate Jim for receiving this award.

Congratulations Jim, and well deserved.

- Rosemary Jones



Jim Barnes receiving the Award from Mayor Celia Wade-Brown

Photos provide inspiration for ikebana

The Japan Society of NZ and the Wellington Chapter 158 Ikebana International combined for a Photos and Flowers display at the Kia Kaha Japan Festival of Wellington 2012. Japan Society members were asked to submit photos that had a connection with Japan to provide the inspiration for floral arrangements provided by the members of Ikebana International.

Photos had to be of good quality and suitable for enlarging to an A4 size for display with the arrangement. A selection was sent to Ikebana International and they selected nine photos with subjects ranging from vegetables or a steam locomotive in Japan to the Peace Garden and Flame at the Botanic Gardens in Wellington.

The photos inspired beautiful and varied arrangements which were displayed in the foyer of the Ilott Centre. The Festival attracted about 42,000 visitors, many of whom passed through the display area. Members of the public were invited to select their three favourites and enter them, in any order, on the voting form. Those with the highest number of votes were awarded prizes and the names of three members of the public drawn later also received prizes.



Steam Locomotive, Benkei. P Anderson/E McMillan



*On the Imperial Palace Moat
P Anderson/N Kwok*



Cheerful Carved Couple. S Brooks/H Wareham

The winning arrangements were: The Steam Locomotive (P Anderson), Arranger: Elizabeth McMillan; Cheerful Carved Couple in the grounds of the Matsumoto Folkcraft Museum (S Brooks), Arranger: Helen Wareham; Garden Pagoda in the Tatsumo Japanese Garden in Te Kuiti (P Anderson), Arranger: Valerie Ting.

- Melda Townsley

Tokyo Lane – unveiling the plaque

On a sunny and windless day in September the final step was taken to restore Tokyo Lane to Wellington. The original Tokio Lane, between the Terrace and Lambton Quay, became Farmers Lane in 1942 and over many years efforts had been made to return the name to Wellington. Finally, two years ago, an unnamed walkway from Bolton Street to the cable car was named Tokyo Lane and the street sign was unveiled but the plaque that was given to the Mayor Kerry Prendergast, commemorating this significant step had yet to be displayed on site.

The bronze plaque had a date error and a kanji error that needed correction before the plaque could be installed. That completed we were ready to take the last step.



HE Hideto Mitamura, Mayor Celia Wade-Brown, Akiko Omundsen, Rosemary Jones, Melda Townsley, Gregory de Costa

HE Hideto Mitamura and Mayor Celia Wade-Brown together unveiled the plaque which was fixed to a large stone. The inscription read: Presented by the Japan Society of Wellington, New Zealand established 15 June 1959 celebrating peace and friendship between the people of Wellington and the people of Japan 15 June 2009. Replacing the original Tokio Lane near this site 1924 – 1942. Tokyo Lane in Kanji was down the side.

It was a friendly and happy event. After the speeches and the unveiling, mutual peace and friendship were toasted with champagne.



Cherry tree planting at Katherine Mansfield Park

As part of the 2012 Japan Festival, the cherry tree planting event was held on 8 September at Katherine Mansfield Memorial Park. This ceremony was attended by Mayor Celia Wade-Brown, the minister Tadashi Fujiwara, Kanji Maeda who was the Japanese delegation leader and accompanied by all the Japanese visitors and members of the WSA.



Japanese visitors attending the Cherry Tree Planting event

The weather on the day was far from ideal. It was raining and very windy, but it was fortunate that the WCC had the wisdom to construct a marquee as shelter for all of us to witness the official unveiling of a plaque donated to Wellington by the residents of Sakai city who were represented by the Sakai-Wellington Association president Kanji Maeda. It commemorates the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Japan and New Zealand.

The unveiling was performed by Mayor Wade-Brown, Minister Tadashi Fujiwara, who stood in for the Japan Ambassador H.E. Hideto Mitamura, and the Japanese delegation leader Kanji Maeda. As president of WSA, I was asked to be the MC of this event. I welcomed all our guests, and then I gave the attendees a brief history of this project.

This project started in August 2007 when members of the Sakai-Wellington Association generously donated a beautiful garden of 28 Japanese cherry trees to Wellington city to celebrate our sister cities relationship. Back then it was opened by the then mayor Kerry Prendergast on 4 August 2007 and attended by the then ambassador Takahashi, and Seiji Tsuruno from the office of the Sakai mayor Keisuke Kihara. There were also four members of the Sakai-Wellington Association who had travelled from Sakai to witness the opening. Besides these VIPs, there were also about 100 people in attendance.

The inspiration for this gift came from Mr Nakao, then president of the Sakai-Wellington Association. He visited Wellington in November 2006 to find a suitable location for this project. Katherine Mansfield Park was the unanimous choice, and its tranquil setting seems to be most befitting for a Japanese garden. It is intended that the garden will become a venue for future Japanese activities in Wellington and will



The unveiling of the Plaque by Mayor Celia Wade-Brown, Minister Tadashi Fujiwara and the Japanese delegation leader Kanji Maeda



Mayor Celia Wade-Brown with delegation leader Kanji Maeda planting the first Cherry Tree

encourage more Japanese tourism and community events. Following the historical background Mayor Wade-Brown, Minister Tadashi Fujiwara, and Mr Kanji all gave short speeches and then they proceeded to unveil the plaque. After which we went outside to plant the cherry trees that were kindly donated by the Sakai City Cultural Organisations' Union, the Council of Sakai City Local Community Association, and the Kansai Women's Organisation.

The first tree was planted by Mayor Wade-Brown, the Minister Tadashi Fujiwara and the president of the SWA Kanji Maeda. The second tree was planted by the Sakai visitors, and the third by the members of WSA, the Japan Society and our local citizens.

After the cherry trees were planted we all moved back to the marquee to have some refreshments. Despite the bad weather this event was well attended and enjoyed by all.

- Rosemary Jones



Taken at the end of the Cherry Trees Planting ceremony - from left to right - Toshio Tanaka, Donas Nathan, Mayor Celia Wade-Brown, Rosemary Jones, Kanji Maeda and Bill Nathan.

The 2012 Japan festival



Attendees at the 2012 Japan Festival Opening Ceremony held at the Mayoral Chambers

This year the Kia Kaha Japan Festival was held in Wellington between 5–10 September 2012 – the third consecutive year the Festival has been held here. This year, it is particularly important because it also celebrates the 60th year of the founding of diplomatic relations between Japan and New Zealand. Besides the diplomatic and economic connections, we also share people-to-people links in the arts and culture, education, and sport by conducting exchange programmes in these areas.

The official opening ceremony of the Festival was held on 7 September at the Council Chambers. It was conducted by Mayor Celia Wade-Brown. Attendees included the Ambassador of Japan Hideto Mitamura, the deputy Mayor Ian McKinnon, Jennifer King from Asia:NZ and from the Sakai City side, the chairman of the Sakai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, artists and visitors from Sakai City. There were also members from a number of Japanese organisations who were to participate in this Festival.

As per previous Festivals, the programme was full and interesting. It consisted of indoor programmes held mainly in the Wellington Town Hall, the Illot Theatre and the Michael Fowler Centre including taiko drum-

ming, Sakai judo demonstration, Sakai traditional dance, Yosakoi dance performance, a children's choir, hip hop performance, an Okinawa karate demonstration, a Japanese fashion show, the Hutt Kendo Club demonstration, ikebana demonstration, bonsai demonstration, calligraphy demonstration, arts display, tea ceremony demonstrations, and of course the 60 metre sushi roll challenge.

In the Town Hall auditorium there were also display stalls showcasing our local Japanese community organisations. The WSA put on two kimono photo stands which we offered for the public to have their photos taken. These two photo stands proved to be very popular, and many people had great fun having their photos taken with these stands. Other stalls also included the ikebana arrangements, the Sakai knives, the bonsai displays, Japanese book stall, images of photos and flowers by the Japan Society as well as many others.

In the West Court there were Japanese food stalls including sushi, gyoza, pastries and many more others. All the food stalls were very well patronised and their foods were certainly delicious.



Japanese Calligraphy demonstration - on stage in the Wellington Town Hall

Outdoor events included laying a plaque in Tokyo Lane on 5 September and the cherry tree planting on 8 September at Katherine Mansfield Memorial Park.

Reportedly this 2012 Japan Festival was very well attended and has been a tremendous success. I would like to thank the WCC, the many sponsors, and all the participants for making this festival such a joyous and successful event.

- Rosemary Jones



The 60m Sushi Roll Challenge by Mayor Celia Wade-Brown and LH Mayor Ray Wallace

AGM

The WSA annual general meeting was held on September 11, 2012 at the WCC, Committee Room #2.

There were a number of apologies but we still had a good group of members attending.

The president's report by Rosemary Jones contained many highlights of a busy year. Among the items covered were: the Skype conversation to Sakai, Christmas Dinner which we hosted with the Xiamen Association, the Featherston Memorial Service, the WSA dinner, the Sister Cities New Zealand conference and the Festival of Japan from September 7 to 10 with visitors from Sakai.

-Jim Barnes



Election of officers
 President – Rosemary Jones
 Vice president – Bill Nathan
 Treasurer – Nic Keating
 Secretary – Jim Barnes

Committee
 Donas Nathan, Roger Mainwaring,
 Melda Townsley and Christine Jones

Bev Hodge, who did not stand, was thanked for her service to the Association over the years. After the meeting closed light refreshments were served.

WSA annual dinner

WSA conducts a get together at least once a year with its members. This is the one occasion when we can get together and update them with the various activities that their association has been involved in. Activities like the Senshu Marathon; the Featherston Memorial service; and the on-going planning for the 2012 Japan Festival etc.

This year, our annual dinner was held on Tuesday 17 April at the Ozeki Restaurant in Tory Street. This restaurant offered a wide range of dishes, mainly Japanese and some fusion. Their prices were also quite reasonable.



WSA Annual Dinner held at Ozeki Restaurant left to right - Annette Gittos, with Donas and Bill Nathan

We had over 20 members attending and everyone said the venue was a good choice, and they all enjoyed the food. It was a happy and successful event.

-Rosemary Jones



WSA Annual Dinner - left to right - Melda Townsley, Rosemary Jones, Janet Andrews. In the background - Nic Keating and Graham Townsley

Highly successful WNES exchange

This year 22 students and two teachers along with myself as the parent helper went to Sakai for the Japan 2012 Exchange Programme from Wellington Nakano Educational Society (WNES). All were excited and looked forward to the adventure. Overall, we were impressed with the Japanese people and their culture and their polite and giving attitude with genuine warmth. The home stay parents were accommodating and very welcoming and the students gave their one hundred percent to this trip from the green tea ceremony to tasting the Japanese eel lunch.

The first two days were school visits and studying along side host brothers and/or sisters – a unique and memorable experience and very well organised. The students clean the schools after the day is over, which meant they learned to be responsible. The schools are huge and with good facilities. It was neat to observe a different method of school operations.

We were met by the mayor of Sakai on a semi formal basis, which meant a lot as a cultural exchange for our students to be acknowledged by such a senior official. We were then taken to a fabulous lunch where they served us sea eel, which is a delicacy here in Osaka.

Then on day four we had some unique activities arranged for us by the Sakai City Council. We went to a traditional Japanese sweet making lesson and tried to make sweets with an expert teacher showing us how. We sampled our own sweets and then visited the knives museum to shop for famous Sakai knives. We went to the Sakai City Museum and a green tea ceremony – a highlight of the day. The tea was bitter, but so formal with a proper Japanese woman dressed in kimono serving the tea and all of us sitting on the mats trying hard to balance ourselves. I loved that day the most, as we got a glimpse of true rich heritage of Japan.

The next day we went to the Osaka City aquarium and enjoyed the sea life and various marine species showcased beautifully. It is the largest aquarium in the world, I believe, where we saw a diver feeding fish and cleaning the tanks. I had the opportunity to meet the volunteer helpers and they were so good with us patiently helping us shop after the trip in the downtown area of Osaka. We stopped for two hours there on the way back.

Sakai City made excellent arrangements for all the students, distributing them in five schools. Each school had a great principal who showed us the school and classes. These impressions will be etched positively on my mind and heart forever and I shall think of this trip with fond memories. The last day was sad and exciting at the same time, as we went to the Universal Studios and saw some fabulous shows and shopped for lovely souvenirs.

One thing stands out for me, and that is the people of Japan. The staff at the Sakai City Council office, the host parents, and the school principals, all of whom were so very kind and lovely that they each made this trip special for all of us. Our farewell function was absolutely great and the New Zealand students did the haka and sang the national anthem with great enthusiasm and dignity. We said a fond goodbye and came back happily full of memories.

- Smita Shangarpawar



Students from Wellington in Sakai outside The Kaiyukan Aquarium

The President's Report – 2012

Our Wellington Sakai Association has had another busy year. Since our last AGM which was held on Tuesday 20 September last year, our committee have held a number of functions and participated in many events. These events are being reported in separate articles by me and members of our committee. However, for the purpose of this magazine, I shall report on the remaining events that have taken place in the course of the year.

Cross Cultural Skype Communications

On Friday 14 October WSA ran a trial run with Mr Shiro Nagashige of Sakai city on the Cross Cultural Communication Programme using Skype. The purpose of this trial run was to iron out any problems if and when they occur before the planned event on Sunday 30 October. This event took place in one of WCC meeting rooms where the facility of Skype is installed.

On Sunday 30 October we made a successful connection with Mr Shiro Nagashige and his members of Sakai City. We met on the screen and we talked about a number of topics. Amongst them were our different cultures, languages, foods, sports, leisure activities, and of course earthquakes which occurred in both Japan and NZ. We talked about the effects it had on both our population, and how we can share support to overcome these emotional atrocities. We finished our discussion by sharing with them our Maori songs and poi led by Bill and Donas Nathan. Overall, it was a very successful project.

2012 Sister Cities Conference – Te Papa

This year the Sister Cities Conference was held on 9-11 May at Te Papa Wellington. Because this conference was held in Wellington which enabled our association to save money on airfares and hotel accommodation. Thus, this enabled us to send more committee members to attend the conference. The conference was attended by Bill Nathan, Bev Hodge, Nic Keating and myself.

The theme of the conference this year was "Celebrating Relationships" with the focus on Youth, Education and Business Development. The conference was attended by VIPs like the PM Mr John Key, the Ambassadors of Japan, China, and Korea. There were many outstanding speakers giving some of the most interesting presentations. A combined report of the Conference will be given by Bill Nathan, Bev Hodge and Nic Keating of our committee.

Farewell to JETT

On Friday 3 August, I was invited to the Japan Ambassador HE Mr Hideto Mitamura's residence to farewell the JETT students and teachers who were embarking on their exchange programme in Japan. This programme is very popular and well supported. There were over 30 students and teachers participating in this programme.

Kendo Association Dinner

On Sunday 2 September, a few of our WSA committee and members attended this dinner function at Southern Cross Restaurant to support the Kendo Assn. The Kendo Assn also had a small team of Japanese visitors visiting them, and this function was mainly to farewell them. The function was well organised by the President Ms Sue Lytollis. The food was good, and it was a very enjoyable night for all who attended.

Laying of the Plaque at Tokyo Lane

On Wednesday 5 September, and as part of the 2012 Japan Festival programme, the Japan Society held a Plaque Laying ceremony at Tokyo Lane. This ceremony was conducted by Melda Townsley, Presi-

dent of the Japan Society. The unveiling of the Plaque was performed by Her Worship the Mayor Celia Wade-Brown and HE the Ambassador Mr Hideto Mitamura. There was a small group of people attended this ceremony, and we celebrated with a glass of champagne at the end of this official function.

Opening Ceremony of the 2012 Japan Festival

This opening ceremony was held on Friday 7 September at the WCC Council Chambers. This function was hosted by the Mayor to welcome all the Sakai City visitors. These included the VIPs like Mr Kanji Maeda, who holds three separate positions – as Leader of the Sakai Delegation, President of the Sakai Wellington Assn as well as being the Chairman of the Sakai Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The second VIP was Ms Noriko Yamaguchi who is the VP of Sakai Wellington Assn, as well as the Chairperson of Sakai City Women's Organisation. Mr Maeda led a delegation of 36 Japanese visitors who came to participate in the 2012 Japan Festival.

Undoubtedly the biggest event of the year has to be the 2012 Japan Festival. From all accounts it was a tremendous success, and everyone was praising what a great event it was. All the hard work by everybody who worked and contributed had certainly done a great job. Some even said they can't wait for the next Festival which will take place in 2014! I think WCC and all the sponsors who have contributed to this Festival can be very proud of this wonderful event and its great success!

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Her Worship the Mayor Celia Wade-Brown, WCC and their staff who have given our association a good deal of help in the course of the year. Finally I would also like to thank my committee for the co-operation and hard work they have displayed in the last 12 months, and all our WSA members for their continuous support for our association.

- Rosemary Jones



From left to right. Nic Keating (WSA), Matty Blomfield (JETRO), Hon. John Key at the 39th Japan New Zealand Business Council Conference in Auckland

Nic reports that the conference highlighted successful business relationships between Japan and New Zealand and gave delegates the opportunity to network and to discuss opportunities for future collaboration. He said the conference has an important role in growing and sustaining business relationships.

SAKAI CITY WEBSITE

If you are thinking of travelling to the Sakai region check out the Sakai City website first:

www.city.sakai.osaka.jp

CONNECTING TO WSA

e-mail: president@wellingtonsakai.org

Facebook: Wellington Sakai Association

Google+: Wellington Sakai Association

Twitter: [wellingtonsakai](https://twitter.com/wellingtonsakai)

- For further information please write to PO Box 7215, Wellington South.
- The committee meets every third Tuesday of the month in Committee Room 2, WCC.