REMINISCENCE AND ARTS FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN JAPAN
AND HOW JAPAN CARES FOR ITS GROWING NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

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WINSTON CHURCHILL TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIP 2017
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I am dedicating this report to my mother, Barbara Aubrey, aged 102, with thanks for allowing me to leave the UK for five weeks with such a good grace. She is a great Winston Churchill fan and was very proud that I was able to travel in his name.
Background to my work:
In 1983, I founded the Age Exchange Theatre Trust to develop a special kind of theatre derived from older people’s recorded memories. These professional productions were designed to play for older audiences in order to entertain and stimulate further reminiscence. They were also played for mixed and younger audiences to stimulate inter-generational understanding and appreciation. The shows focused on important themes in the social history of the 20th century, as remembered and experienced by older ‘ordinary’ people whose voices were not normally heard. The scripts were built on the original recorded words of the older interviewees; a new idea at the time, now more widely known as verbatim theatre. Audiences responded appreciatively to the performances, joining in carefully chosen music related to the theme and the time, then shared with the actors and each other the memories stirred.

In addition to the 30 original theatre shows I created in this way, I was always looking for new ways for older people to express, explore and record their memories. In 1987, I created the first Reminiscence Centre in London, making a home for reminiscence projects and training and a small museum of everyday life in the 1930-40s to stimulate reminiscence and intergenerational understanding. Open every day, this centre drew in many older people and led to many community projects, exhibitions, publications and festivals around exchange of memories.

At this time, in the 1980s and 90s, there was a growing recognition of the value of reminiscence to healthy, but often lonely, older people; and also for those who were frail and being looked after in care settings. By the turn of the century there was a heightened sense of need for interventions supporting the ever-increasing number of people with dementia and their carers. At first sight, reminiscence did not seem the obvious tool, as it might be distressing for people who were losing their memories. However, there was evidence to suggest that long-term memories were less impaired for longer, and indeed could sharpen with age, even despite the advent of dementia. Perhaps new kinds of creative reminiscence would need to be developed to increase its likely success.

The European Reminiscence Network, which I established in 1992, had been considering how it could contribute to this new situation and develop a Europe-wide ‘best practice’ example of reminiscence in dementia care. In 1997, we created the project "Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today", with twelve partner countries, coordinated from London. The project, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, works with people with dementia and their family carers together. Our key aim is to improve the quality of life and reduce the isolation of families living with dementia. For people who are losing their capacity to remember the recent past, it has been shown to be highly beneficial in maintaining a sense of identity to recall the more distant past and to bring into the present the key events and achievements in their long lives. Doing this in a friendly and well-structured group also helps the family carers to take a longer view of their current situation, to learn new ways of coping and to make friends with other families in similar circumstances. The families involved assert that they have gained greatly from this experience and feel a stronger sense of belonging and self-worth as a result of their involvement in these groups.
Background to my Churchill Fellowship in Japan:
I had heard much about the knowledge and experience of Japan in exploring positive approaches to ageing, including supporting the huge number of people with dementia and their family carers. Over the years, I had met Japanese speakers at conferences and heard of their innovative approaches, but I really wanted to see the work on the ground and learn from the experience of Japanese workers. I was looking for new ideas and inspiration which I could bring back to share both in the groups I run in London and with my partners in the European Reminiscence Network.

The “Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today” project in London, run by the European Reminiscence Network for families living with dementia

Objectives for the Travelling Fellowship in Japan:
My objectives when planning my 5-week Churchill Travelling Fellowship in Japan were as follows:

1. to visit and learn from practitioners in Japan who are trying many ways of supporting people living with dementia.
2. to look at community initiatives which support people with dementia and their family carers together.
3. to see examples of work involving reminiscence and the arts, especially drama work directly involving older people, and reminiscence training for professionals and family members.
4. to visit inter-generational projects and see whether older people with dementia are able to make positive links and relationships with children in schools, university students and younger workers.
5. to use what I will have learned in Japan to strengthen our "Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today" project in the UK and in Europe, incorporating, in culturally appropriate ways, the strongest ideas and best practice observed on my trip.
My step-by-step approach to creating the Travelling Fellowship was as follows:
First, I wrote to Japanese academics I had met at various international conferences, especially those held by the International Institute of Reminiscence and Life Review in America and Canada. Although some were slow to respond, all these contacts were eventually part of my Japanese Fellowship and it was excellent to reconnect with them all after a gap of about 10-15 years.

One person I was keen to connect with was Noriko Kato, who had worked with me over several months when I was Artistic Director of Age Exchange Theatre and Reminiscence Centre (1983-2005). I spent many hours on the Internet searching in vain for this very special person who I knew would unlock many doors for me, as she had specialized in reminiscence in dementia care. How we eventually re-met will feature in a later part of my report.

Next, I wrote to my contacts in the dementia world who already had established links with Japanese groups and individuals. Mary Marshall, Barbara Haight and Dawn Brooker connected me with practitioners and thinkers they had met through their lecture tours and through Japanese translators of their publications. They were extremely helpful in linking me with project leaders and academics who agreed to arrange visits for me to relevant organizations and research bodies. Through these contacts I was able to see how positive dementia care was being established and adapted in Japan. I also made good new personal relationships with a small number of these ‘friends of friends’.

I also called on Churchill Fellows for support and was not disappointed. They gave me leads and invaluable advice in writing, in person and over the telephone. These contacts and friendships will last and feed our work in future. Kate Organ, Diane Amans and Karin Diamond were particularly important to me in planning and delivering my Fellowship.

Early on in my planning, I structured in attendance at the International Alzheimers Conference in Kyoto in late April 2017. I had attended previous ADI (Alzheimers Disease International) conferences in India and Africa and realized that this was a very good way to develop an overview of what was happening in the host country, as well as seeing current approaches to dementia care in a world context. With this in mind, I requested and gained help from ADI in making contact with leading practitioners of non-pharmacological interventions in support of people with dementia and their families. The Alzheimers Association of Japan agreed to support me in making visits to care homes and day centres.

The disadvantage of making this ADI conference central to my planning was that it dictated the time of my trip to Japan. As it was in late April and the result of my application was not known until February, this left little time for detailed planning. Responses to my requests for help had often remained unanswered, or only answered after long delay. For this reason, I was extremely grateful to make contact through Diane Amans, another Churchill Fellow, with a young Japanese dancer in Kyoto, Sonoko Chishiro. Sonoko spoke perfect English and agreed to chase up all my contacts and complete my schedule of visits and the often extensive journeys they entailed.
Major findings:

1. Japan has recognized the need for government reaction in response to the exponential increase in the longevity of its elderly population and the large number of people with dementia within that population. There have been many significant initiatives at national and local level, and I was able to observe some of these in action.

2. A National Insurance scheme has been introduced into which all workers of 40+ contribute in order to subsidise any necessary care, support and domiciliary care they may need in later years. This has regulated the amount that families have to contribute to their relatives’ care to far more manageable levels than we in Britain are experiencing.

3. There is now official Japanese government support for the concept of the ‘Group Home’ catering for 10-12 people with professional, community and volunteer support, following successful trials in Japan over the last 20 years. In parallel with the building of such homes, there is a move to break the large institutional homes into smaller manageable units, which can be run on more person-centred lines.

4. In the face of the growth in the elderly frail population, and the reduction in the birth rate in recent years, many schools in Japan are being converted into day care centres and even residential homes. Such transformations can give rise to intergenerational initiatives benefitting all participants.

4. There are many architect-designed high-quality care homes with light attractive indoor and outdoor spaces, as Japanese architects engage with the needs of the ever-increasing number of people needing residential care and the wishes of their families.

5. Many care homes in Japan are also opening their doors to the local community and thus enriching the lives of residents and staff alike. Initiatives such as setting up a gardening group, starting a choir, running a bar in the home, having a cooking club supported by local people, involving children in the home on a regular basis and not only for an annual concert; all of these small initiatives can impact massively on people’s levels of contentment, stimulation and life quality.

6. Welcoming relatives into care homes can be a crucial initiative. Spouses or sons and daughters have often cared for their relative for many years and hoped to be able to continue. Finding the ex-carers a role in the life of the home has been shown to relieve any remaining sense of guilt and to enable them to continue to contribute to their person’s well-being. It has also enabled staff in Japanese care homes to build deeper and more meaningful relationships with the people with dementia in their care.

7. The Dementia Friends movement, which began in Japan, emphasizes the role of the community in contributing to the well-being of older people. The idea is gathering momentum world-wide, proving that it can be adapted to local and national circumstances. By raising awareness of the problems faced by people with dementia and their families, Dementia Friends can increase the local community’s will to take on some responsibility for them. At the conference I heard about initiatives to help people who are lost to find their way home, to support people to go on doing what they enjoy and to give time and energy to people living alone, or in local care homes.
It is clear that even small local offers can improve the quality of life of older people and those who care for them. Dementia-friendly initiatives are now wide-spread in Japan, with very positive results.

8. There is in Japan a broader recognition of the value of objects of beauty and quality in the care homes and the need for furniture to be practical and stylish at the same time, and for food to be nutritious but also attractively served. There is a striking emphasis on all things visual, an awareness of the aesthetic impact of the surrounding environment on residents’ welfare. The presence of flowers everywhere, most artfully arranged, and delightful origami inventions on display lift the spirits of all.

9. The arts community in Japan is playing its role in supporting people with dementia and some are attracting government and local government subsidy to develop this work. Although there is less coordination nationally between these groups than in the UK, the individual initiatives are often of a high quality and deserve more profile.

10. The academic community is also contributing by undertaking research projects, and monitoring the impact of these programmes on the participants. Most of these initiatives involve people with dementia in enjoyable programmes and activities.

11. Although a country of rapid change and extreme modernity, Japan has very strong cultural roots and highly valued traditions. When day and residential care establishments observe and conserve these traditional practices as part of their regular programme of activities, they ensure that the older people in their care can still be socially and culturally engaged.

I shall report on what I observed in action during my 5-week Travelling Fellowship in April and May 2017.
Recommendations for the UK and Europe more widely from my Japanese Churchill Fellowship:

1. A radical re-think at national level is needed concerning provision of care for older people with dementia and their families. This will involve recognizing the scale of the growing need for realistic financial planning, treating old age care in a similar way to health care and with equal importance.

2. Encouragement is needed at the highest level for high quality small-scale residential units (known as ‘Group Homes’ in Japan) which operate on a ‘small is beautiful’ basis. In these small units it is easier to build trust, a sense of belonging and a stronger sense of individual and social identity among residents, workers and the local community. As far as possible, these units should be lived in by people local to the area, so that places and people are familiar and they can continue to go out and about, knowing that they will be ‘rescued’ if something goes wrong in their planning.

3. We need to expand and deepen initiatives such as ‘Dementia Friendly Communities’ to raise awareness of the needs of people with dementia and to support people with dementia and their family carers to rebuild their social confidence in order to remain in contact with their communities. This will require local community members to accept some responsibility for looking after people with dementia if they get lost or forget what they were going to do or who they were going to see.

4. Care homes in our country should be encouraged to open their doors to family members so that those who wish to, can play a continuing role in the life of their relative and support the professional staff in giving person-centred care.

5. Care homes and day centres need also to open their doors to their local communities, including schools, community groups, local associations such as choirs, allotment and gardening clubs, swimming clubs to enrich the lives of all involved. The care home should be seen as part of the community and even an important resource for the community.

6. There are isolated initiatives involving intergenerational work and shared activity on a regular basis between very old and very young. These initiatives fulfill many mutual needs and deserve support and encouragement for the social and emotional enrichment of all.
Report Overview:
The International Conference on Dementia:
The decision to begin my Fellowship with attendance at the Alzheimer's International Conference in Kyoto was vindicated by the clear overview it provided of dementia prevalence, care and research in Japan, and also in the broader world-wide context. The pre-conference Symposium on creating a Dementia Friendly society, an initiative born in Japan and now widely embraced in many countries, drew attention to the need for society as a whole to adapt to a new situation where people with dementia will be counted in millions and where care in the community will have to become much more of a reality, with local residents and businesses receiving further awareness training to help sensitise them to the needs of people with dementia.

The Conference also gave me the chance to meet some of the ‘movers and shakers’ in the field of dementia care from Germany, USA, UK, Israel, Australia and, of course Japan.

Three important meetings made this conference particularly worthwhile for me. It was indeed an unexpected bonus to meet the impressive Dr Yukimi Uchide about whom Karin Diamond had spoken so movingly in her Churchill Fellowship report. This remarkable doctor had been responsible for creating innovative group homes and day care centres, all embedded in and supported by their local communities and dedicated to ensuring fulfilling lives for older people with and without dementia. I watched as Karin’s film showed the residents physically engaged with the staff, hugging and cuddling, going shopping and keeping contact with local people they had known for years, actively involved in growing, preparing and eating together delicious nutritious meals, and participating in traditional arts such as flower arranging, traditional tea ceremonies and songs connected with annual festivals. The mutual affection and respect between residents and staff seemed to me the gold standard in dementia care. Karin had described her horror at hearing about the devastation of the Sendai area where Dr Uchide was based, as it was swept up in the Tsunami of 2011. Lives, homes and entire possessions were lost, though miraculously all the older people in her projects survived.

Meeting Dr Uchide, (third from the left) and friends at the conference in Kyoto
I was so delighted to meet Dr Uchide at the Kyoto conference with a group of her staff and volunteers, some of whom had lost relatives and their own homes, who were delighted to share their very positive experience of coping with and adapting to the cataclysmic situation and starting all over again. We spent much time talking together, and discussing our common approaches to using performing arts with people with dementia and as a means of raising consciousness concerning the positive value of older people in the community. Karin Diamond’s description of Dr Uchide’s work had deeply impressed me before leaving for Japan and it gave me a benchmark against which I could measure the visits I would make once in Japan.

The second important meeting was with Yasuko Murata, President of the Japanese Society for Person-Centred Dementia Care. This wise, quiet woman was quick to see the relevance of creative reminiscence arts to their Dementia Care Mapping work, inspired by the UK’s University of Bradford Dementia Unit. She felt that the very personal approach, the light touch and the ready humour which she observed in films I showed her of our European project “Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today” were important ingredients which had not been sufficiently recognized in Japan.

She requested me to give impromptu interviews and discussions with her contacts from Osaka and Tokyo who were also at the conference and I was very happy to do this and widen the impact of my visit. A couple of weeks later in Tokyo, Yasuko and her translator colleague Michiko Nakagawa gave me a very rich and varied day of visits to care facilities leading to much discussion and strong agreement. They really are convinced of the value and importance of our project for Japan and are seeking to publish a Japanese version of our handbook. Both plan to come to the UK for training in RYCT prior to setting up their own project in Japan.

On our return to the UK, Yasuko wrote:

“I was impressed with your relationship to persons with dementia and others in Japan. I feel this is the most essential element in person-centred care with persons with dementia, care-givers and friends in communities. In Japan we have been introducing a philosophy of person-centred care correctly for more
than ten years and we have understood that social psychology is very important. But sometimes it is just told that you must not do this or that, for example, I mean Personal Detractions, and that having fun together and making a positive relationship has been undervalued, I’m afraid. I give gratitude to you for giving us the opportunity to realize the significance of expressing oneself and having fun together again.”

The third important meeting was with Noriyo Washizo, a connection made for me by James Smith, one of the Alzheimers Disease International Conference organizers based in London. Noriyo is responsible for large volunteering and training programmes of the Alzheimers Association of Japan. I attended some of her volunteer-led sessions in the conference lounge, including yoga sessions where I realized that physical flexibility is the hallmark of Japanese old age and how some of us have shamefully neglected our physical exercises and needs! Noriyo arranged a series of visits for me to care homes and to creative projects in the Kyoto and Osaka areas, acting as interpreter and informing me on the background to the projects. More of her role later on.

Noriyo Washizo (to the right of Pam) arranges a visit to Tenjin-No-Mor care home, meeting with Mr Isozumi and Mr Chiba. She also translates for us so we can talk with the older people and the workers
The Itinerary for my Travelling Fellowship:
Despite some anxious moments before my Fellowship began as replies to my emails were so slow to come in, I in fact started my Travelling Fellowship with a packed programme with 30 meetings in 35 days. Some were with reminiscence and arts organizations, some with care facilities for older people and some with individuals. Some days were packed with activity as our hosts for those days wanted us to visit up to four different facilities. Some involved observing and participating in reminiscence, music or art sessions. A few involved in-depth discussions over meals with individual researchers and practitioners. Many involved meeting older people from 70 to 104 years old and engaging with them through ever-helpful interpreters. Some of these moments with older people involving greetings, bowing, hand-holding, singing, miming, hugging and laughing will stay with me for a long time to come.

Seven venues also involved me in presentations about my own work with reminiscence in dementia care in the UK, and these proved to be of great interest to Japanese audiences. There is a distinct possibility that my book about this work will be translated into Japanese. Hopefully, the “Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today” project will run in Japan in the near future, as it has been taken on by two of the leaders of the positive dementia care movement. There was also great interest in my reminiscence theatre work in the UK and this is contributing a new element to two dance and drama initiatives now being taken in Japan about which I shall report later.

The five-week programme was very demanding with several hotel moves, many long rail journeys and extensive knowledge of the brilliant Tokyo and Kyoto Underground system. My plans to write Blogs and Face Book reports were soon abandoned as I found myself exhausted at the end of each day. Instead, I kept an old-fashioned diary, writing up each night the events of the day, the people I met and the lessons learned. My level of tiredness is sometimes evident as the pen slid to the bottom of the page mid-sentence, leaving a mere squiggle behind.
Midnight diary scrupulously maintained as the only means of remembering all we saw and did and who we met. The photographs by Alex hugely aided my memory too.

I could not have managed the Fellowship without the support of my husband, Alex. I had initially planned to make the trip alone, but realized that five weeks of such intensive activity and so much travelling would be too much for me to manage on my own. Further, Alex has been a volunteer on my “Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today”, reminiscence in dementia care project, for the last 20 years, and has built up a strong awareness of the potential of reminiscence to awaken and engage people with dementia. I knew this experience would make him a great asset on the tour. As an experienced photographer he was able to document the whole journey, and this has helped me to recall all our visits in detail, together with all the people we met. I shall illustrate my report with some of these and hope to make a photographic exhibition with the best images. We did not expect that his experience as an architect would prove so relevant, but in fact we were shown around new and well-designed homes by architects and designers who were happy to have his experienced eye and answer his searching questions.

The Travelling Fellowship was immensely rewarding, especially as the logistics of it were master-minded by our Japanese coordinator, Sonoko Chishiro. I got to know so many committed and caring workers and so many delightful older people and came back invigorated and tremendously stimulated. I want to extend my warmest thanks to all those who organized and participated in the visits I made, which will stay with me for many years to come.

My grateful thanks to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for trusting me to make this Travelling Fellowship worthwhile and enabling me to carry it out with their continued support. I also wish to thank all my friends and relations who helped me cope with some of the inevitable anxiety in making this journey and listened to my rapturous reports on my return.
The Travelling Fellowship Findings:
In the next section, I shall describe the most memorable visits I made and the best practice I observed. This section will be divided into three main categories, matching some of the main objectives outlined in my Churchill application:

* Living arrangements for older people with dementia
* Reminiscence practice in Japan involving older people, especially those with dementia, and my lectures on reminiscence during my Fellowship
* Arts initiatives by Japanese Arts organizations, especially those involving people with dementia

Living arrangements for people with dementia and their community links:

My itinerary included visits to many residential care facilities, so I saw a wide variety of approaches, from the clinical hospital environment with white-coated nurses, to the informal Group Homes for about ten older people supported by professional staff and volunteers from the local community.

I shall describe what I was shown in just some of these facilities and highlight best practice from which we can learn in the UK, starting with the most ground-breaking projects I saw or heard about.

The Kirakuen Group Home, case study
The most important initiative, now about 16 years old, is the establishment of Group Homes. These cater for about ten elderly people, including people with dementia, supported by professional staff and volunteers from the local community. The idea has been endorsed by government and the model approved, as it evidently promotes well-being and satisfaction for residents and staff alike.

I visited Kirakuen, one of the first group homes in the Osaka region. It was opened 16 years ago and I met the founder, now the chief executive, Mrs Reiko Ichikawa. She explained that as a student-nurse, she had been horrified by the sight of old people held in their chairs by restraints and how she had worked for a lifetime to eliminate this practice. Instead, she wanted to see all residential care homes operating much more as older people’s ‘real’ homes, with strong connections in their local community and a relaxed approach to routines and schedules. The residents in such homes often shop, cook and eat together with staff and volunteers supporting them, and they undertake many shared activities from a varied programme. Their bedrooms, sometimes shared, but mostly single
occupation, usually have their own toilets and washrooms, are decorated with their own momentos. Furniture from their own homes is brought in to make their individual spaces feel more like home. The emphasis is on creating a warm family atmosphere, with bedrooms nearby and a generous communal space for relaxed leisure and cultural activity.

*Plenty of photos and reminiscence stimuli in each person’s bedroom*

I toured the original group home and a more recently converted group home in the same building, and appreciated some of the special features pointed out by the head of home, Takako Nishikubo, and the architect Azusa Sekkai. It was very light and bright with primary colour window frames and views onto the local fields and crops.

*Kirakuen Care Home and with group home opposite*

Rooms were grouped around a communal kitchen and I saw a resident helping to prepare the lunch, dividing the portions into individual servings. The final completed dish looked attractive and nutritious. I was told that other residents enjoyed laying the table and washing up, and that everyone had a role.
People are encouraged to help with food preparation and serving

I was allowed to visit people’s rooms where I saw personal touches everywhere, with specially chosen items on display. One lady had many pictures of the Emperor and his wife and I was told this marked a genuine connection. Another lady had a Noh theatre drum, and a message on the wall in her own calligraphy announcing ‘Work hard and live well’, together with photos of her extended family and her precious library of books. In another room an ex-teacher had letters from her pupils and a jacket she had woven herself.

I was told how the care staff really get to know their residents. They visit their previous homes and places they have lived, sometimes accompanied by a relative of the resident, in order to get a picture of their lives before coming to the home. Staff also take residents out at cherry blossom time to enjoy the celebrations together and remember earlier celebrations in their young days. This approach to reminiscence work makes for strong relationships between staff and residents. I noticed the warm and affectionate, but respectful attitudes of staff to the elders. Nurses and care staff were very physically present and there were few instances of staff chatting among themselves. Television was still in evidence and more than I thought the situation merited, but apparently there
is resistance to having it turned off, so some attempt was made to put on appropriate material, such as old newsreel or classic films.

Flowers in abundance in all the facilities we visited

Special features and adaptations enabling older people to flourish were explained by the architect and the interior designer. A great deal of thought had gone into the place. Pictures were placed quite low down on the walls so that they could be more easily seen and enjoyed. Special individual name-plates were fixed to the wall beside residents’ doors to help them identify their own rooms.

There was plenty of access to daylight and greenery in rooftop gardens with small sitting places with attractive garden furniture. There was a bar run by local volunteers on a weekly basis and thought had been given to the counter height and seating, so that it would feel familiar to residents and not intimidating.

The bar in the care home run by local volunteers

Each room had a sliding panel in the wall giving on to the passage way, like a window on to the street. The resident could open or close this depending on how sociable he or she was feeling. Greetings could be exchanged with those passing by and it was an unobtrusive way for staff to make sure the resident was well.
Residents were able to come and go as they wished, since the support of neighbours and locals could be absolutely relied upon. Local volunteers worked on the garden with the residents and others came in to run a bar once a week. There was a special room for relatives to stay over if they wished and this had tatami mats and facilities for a traditional tea ceremony.

With the architect, designer and head of home, there was discussion around large and small spaces, intimacy versus greater choice of companions and activities. But I noticed that the atmosphere was notably warmer in smaller units and a greater sense of community was palpable. Big spaces often felt like lonely spaces, even if more choice of activities could potentially happen there. All the best homes I visited shared this profoundly personal approach, with the result that staff told me that they found it pleasurable to come to work, where they had built deep relationships with the elders and enjoyed an attractive and stimulating environment. This lengthy description is because I feel that the small Group Home with strong links to the local community is the best model for us in the UK to adopt in care planning.
I understand that some of the best practice I saw in Japan owes a debt to those leading care provision in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries, who have visited Japan in recent years. It is also the way some of our own most progressive homes in the UK are already moving. I took with me to Japan a film entitled “Giving: hope for the future of dementia care”, made by the radical UK agency Dementia Care Matters. DCM works with care homes who want to change their culture and create smaller much more personal units where residents feel at home, and where staff build very close relationships with residents over time.

The film shows the drastic re-thinking required to genuinely change the philosophy of a home. It required the establishment of smaller living units with the emphasis on family feeling, practical involvement and enjoyable fun activities. Uniforms and pill trolley rounds have gone, as have separate meal times for staff and remote food preparation. “Them and Us” is out-dated. Doors are open to families to come and go, rather than the tyranny of visiting times. Reminiscence and life story work are part of the fabric of daily life. This feels very similar to the best practice in the care homes and group homes I saw in Japan.

I was touched by Mrs Ichikawa’s long-term commitment to her vision.
Other case studies in residential care:
While still considering the lessons I learned in Japan concerning residential care, I wish to describe three other noteworthy homes I visited and the best practice they embodied.

1. Rakuuraku-mura Care House in Kinosaki is the most beautiful care home I have ever seen. Kinosaki is a small spa town about two hours' travel from Kyoto famous for its hot springs. People come to take the waters, but many people live there permanently. The care home, with day centre attached, has panoramic views over a great lake with mixed forests and mountains beyond.

It is light and airy with outdoor areas which are maintained largely by residents supported by local volunteers, who also help with general maintenance of the home. I visited people in their own rooms and all were smiling and welcoming, with an obvious sense of ownership of their spaces. Although the home has 80 beds, they are in four groups of 20 with special smaller units for people with very advanced dementia. This means that the residents and day centre users belong to a small and friendly group and there is no sense of the dreaded ‘warehousing effect’ where large numbers sit around the outside walls of communal areas, feeling anything but communal and waiting for the day to pass.

Rakuuraku-mura has its own communal hall for events and concerts with a stage and lights. The head of home, Taeko Kitani, showed us around the home and day centre. She knew everyone and greeted them personally in an unrushed natural way. Everyone was busy with colouring, origami or flower arranging. A day-centre user apparently brought flowers from her own garden every day to decorate the home.
Another lady, who was apparently initially very aggressive and unapproachable, had made a real relationship with one young member of staff and they worked together on flower arranging on the floor behind a big desk where the lady felt private and comfortable. This demonstrated to me how adaptable the staff here were, and how very person-centred was their approach. Apparently tea ceremonies and pet therapy are also regular events in the home.

A very private flower arranging session in a space where the resident felt safe

Mrs Kitani said she felt it important that she could imagine living happily in her care home in her own old age. It seemed to me that this should be the acid test and that by setting the bar as high as this, the importance of providing top quality care can be more fully recognised.

Mrs Kitani makes sure the atmosphere in her care home is positive and loving
2. **Alice Koushien Group Home** is run by Tamiko Ishikawa, a lively, humorous and charismatic woman, who is also a staff trainer across the prefecture. I joined the residents for a special tea for the Boys’ Festival, 5th May, a traditional religious festival involving songs, dressing up and street processions with decorated floats. The elders sang some Boys’ Festival favourite songs and a cherry blossom song, accompanied by a young worker on an updated traditional instrument, and I sang to them an English folksong. The residents showed me their rooms while the oldest lady (aged 104) dressed in her kimono.

She looked very fine and obviously enjoyed having her photograph taken, feeling very glamorous. The staff had cleverly cut away the back of the kimono so she did not have it all scrunched up behind her in her wheelchair.

What impressed me about this home was the very informal atmosphere and a feeling of fun and laughter. Clearly, these activities around the Boys’ festival, singing and dressing-up are a kind of practical reminiscence, even though no organised or structured approach or any group work was involved. In fact, this was a common thread in many of the care homes and group homes I visited in Japan. There were hardly any organised reminiscence sessions for groups of residents or day care visitors to join. Instead, activities organisers called on well-remembered traditional activities around festivals and ceremonies to sing old songs together, to make appropriate origami pieces, to make beautiful seasonal flower arrangements, to enjoy cherry blossom together and to wear traditional clothes. All of these activities are part of living traditions and are highly valued across Japanese society. One could say that this is the special quality of Japanese reminiscence: that it uses traditional but current activities as a bridge to talking about the past.
3. Kotoen Intergenerational Home:
This remarkable care home was run by two brothers who inherited it from their father and grandfather. The latter had been a scrap metal dealer after the war and been able to purchase a slice of land on which to build a care home. The special idea was to incorporate into the home a nursery school for about 60 infants up to the age of six.

Children learning Sumo. Note the elderly lady behind supporting the children.

A shared exercise session: children and residents

The children did their morning exercise with the elders and then visited them in their various areas on the upper floors within the home. There seemed to be a very good chemistry between young and old, with each group feeling easy in the presence of the other.
The 5-6 year-olds were working with professional trainers to learn Sumo wrestling, with very vigorous holds and collisions. Some of the older people enjoyed watching this too, as Sumo is very popular in Japan and they followed it closely on television. On my return to the UK, I came across a very similar project in south-west London and thought the arrangement had a lot of potential value, especially as many small children do not have access to their own grandparents and great grandparents. Of course the British children were not doing Sumo wrestling, but running egg and spoon races in the traditional English sports-day style!

*Photo-collage on the wall showing inter-generational work in the care home*
Reminiscence In Japan:

1. Kitanagoya Museum of the Showa Era:
When researching my visit to Japan, I had come across Kitanagoya Museum of the Showa Era and Reminiscence Centre. I gathered that Mr Ichihashi, its director, had visited my Reminiscence Centre in London back in 2004 and had been greatly influenced by it. I was impatient to meet him and see what he had done with the ideas and luckily we had the chance to spend a day with him right at the beginning of our trip. My translator/coordinator Sonoko Chishiro accompanied me on this very special day.

Cars and clothes to evoke memories and promote discussion in the Museum of the Showa Era in Kitanagoya

Mr Ichihashi has made a really remarkable museum of daily life in the Showa Era (1926-1989) with a huge array of objects, photos, costumes, installations, special exhibitions and recreations of typical scenes of the period. The Museum is free and is visited by older people's groups from far and wide and also by children and local young people. During my visit, a very elderly lady came with her teenage grandson and was very stimulated by the displays. She was more and more animated, telling him about the objects and what they were used for and admiring the fashions so well remembered. The museum is run directly by the local government and remarkably, its future appears to be secure.

One of the greatest pleasures and surprises on this day was finding Noriko Kato, the friend and colleague who had worked with me at Age Exchange all those years ago and who had vanished without trace. When I mentioned her to Mr Ichihashi on the off-chance that he knew of her, he told me that she had married and changed her name (which was why I had not managed to trace her) but that she lived ten minutes away. Apparently, she had been working with him for many years on the project, only stopping recently as she had had a baby (now a
two-year old child) to take care of. This was great news and better still that Noriko arrived at the museum about 15 minutes later!

(Left to right) Sonoko Chishiro, Mr Ichihashi, Pam, Noriko and baby and Alex

It was wonderful to see Noriko after a 15-year gap and to learn about the important role she had played in the life of this very special project in Kitanagoya. She had initiated the kind of reminiscence theatre activity she had seen at the Age Exchange Reminiscence Centre in London and supported Mr Ichihashi in all his endeavours. Noriko also arranged for me to meet her long-term colleague in Kyoto that same evening in order to find out all about her reminiscence theatre experience.

Another surprise on this very eventful day was to learn that a film had been made by director Koichi Kumano for Silver Channel independent TV company in Japan about the Reminiscence Centre in London and the ‘Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today’ project. The film was completed in 2005 and shown on Japanese TV. Mr Ichihashi found a copy and sent it to me the same evening. The experience for me of watching this TV film (about which I had no prior knowledge) made over a decade ago, was really strange and very emotional, seeing people and projects I had not thought about for a very long time. Because it was in Japanese, it was the perfect vehicle for me to use to explain my work to the Japanese people I was going to meet on my various visits, so Noriko and I circulated it immediately to all of them. Later in the tour, I met the director and was able to thank him in person.
2. Kitanagoya Reminiscence Centre:

In the afternoon in Kitanagoya, I visited Japan's first dedicated Reminiscence Centre, near the museum, and also supported by the local city council. This was housed in beautiful gardens with a listed building belonging to an absent but beneficent landlord, who is happy to have it used as a museum and community meeting place. The Reminiscence Centre runs regular reminiscence groups of 8-10 older people. They meet over a number of weeks to participate in a series of professionally led reminiscence sessions.

At the end of these sessions, they remain as a group, meeting regularly and taking on community responsibilities. Using their own life-skills and work skills they make links with local school children and also with very young children in nursery.

I met a group of older men who had participated for some years in the project, getting involved in all sorts of local activities and making new friends. They showed me photo albums of some of their recent work with children, especially around craft skills, woodwork and gardening. The project was clearly very important for the men, who spoke warmly about how they had feared a lonely retirement but instead started a new and interesting life.

*These men showed me pictures of the community projects they enjoy helping with and which enable them to contribute to, and belong to the local community*

For me, seeing this sort of instrumental use of reminiscence was fascinating and important. It made me think about how to encourage some of the groups I have run, who could, on completion of their 12-week projects in London, remain in touch with one another and undertake further community work, perhaps passing on what they have learned to other family carers in the area.
3. Kayo Hosomi, Drama Teacher and Reminiscence Director
Kayo is a theatre professional who has worked with Noriko Kato and Mr Ichihashi at the Reminiscence Centre in Kitanagoya. She also teaches at the Ryukoku University in Kyoto and runs her own reminiscence projects at Atelier Gekiken in Kyoto, with theatre as her main medium. I had not heard about her work before, but Noriko was very keen that we should meet, as Kayo had developed reminiscence theatre projects with her on her return from her attachment to the Age Exchange Reminiscence Centre in the UK. So that evening, I met Kayo and her translator, Tamami Yamada, at my hotel in Kyoto. Tamami is a community dance expert, so she joined the discussion as well as translating.

An impromptu lap-top session on Reminiscence Theatre in UK for Kayo & Tamami

Left to right: Tamami Yamada (translator) Pam and Kayo Hosomi

It was a huge pleasure to learn about Kayo’s brilliant work with reminiscence theatre and intergenerational projects over the last ten years, and to hear how she had adopted and adapted the Age Exchange approach. She showed me photographs of shows performed by people over 60, which were clearly finely
choreographed and dramatically effective, with simple but imaginative staging. Kayo showed me examples of exhibitions and books of memories, and many intergenerational projects, all involving older people in highly creative ways, and all based on true stories about their lives. In 2013, Kayo and Noriko Kato had created a play with older people from Kitanagoya based on the elders' life stories and performed for the community and for students who were aiming to be museum workers. Another interesting “narrative project” was called “Showa 20th.” That is how people in Japan refer to 1946, that is the 20th year of the Emperor Showa period. Kayo writes about this project:

“Kyoto City West citizens activity centre has been engaged in activities to record older people’s stories from this period. 19 people from 27 to 93 years old participated as narrators and listeners in a programme of memories of the end of Second World War. The listeners expressed their reactions to the stories and the story-tellers. All were recorded for a brochure exploring the feelings of the generation living in Showa 20 and the people of later generations. I hope this booklet will be a small opportunity to think about future times.”

Kayo puts the old people and their memories at the centre of her work, and is constantly developing new ways to share and tell old stories. For her, the art of theatre is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Of all the workers I met in Japan, she was the closest to my heart, both in what she did and how she did it.

Kayo Hosomi’s reminiscence theatre production with Sorairo Senior Theatre Company, 2016
3. Media Therapy and Reminiscence iPads and Video:
Noriyo Washizu from the Alzheimer's Association of Japan took me to the Terado Group Home in a suburb of Kyoto to meet Teruko Doi (research director) and Yoshihiro Niki (Vision Ace producer and photographer). Terado tries to implement person-centred care, as developed by Tom Kitwood in the UK in the 1990s. This involves providing quality care in a supportive environment based on the individuality of people with dementia and creates an environment that 'celebrates life, love, and the pursuit of overall well-being'. In a recent article by Teruko Doi (et al) she explains that putting such an idealistic approach into practice can be hard in the field of dementia care, highlighting problems as follows:

“1. Some care staff members have difficulty building good relationships with the residents
2. Some family members of the residents cannot believe the possibility of residents’ QOL improvement and often disagree with the group home’s care proposals.
3. The level of care skill among the care staff varies considerably.”

To ensure that person-centred care is delivered consistently by staff, Teruko Doi argues, they will need training in active listening and will need to understand how a knowledge of the resident’s past life can be the means to build a meaningful relationship. Where the family are also involved and contributing, they too can forge a stronger and more trusting relationship with the staff. These processes have been shown to increase staff job satisfaction and improve what is known as BPSD (Behavioural Personality Symptoms of Dementia) such as ‘challenging behaviour’.

Noriyo Washizu and Teruko Doi share their research into using iPads and video with staff and clients at Terado Day Centre and home near Kyoto.
Mr Yoshihiro Niki worked with the families of two very elderly women with dementia to build up a slide show of photos on an iPad. These collages would be shown to the person in order to stimulate memories and increase the person’s sense of self through seeing familiar people, places and events. The two women were at very different stages in their dementia. The first was close to death and now bed-ridden, looking up to the ceiling in her room. The family had, some time before cooperated with Mr Niki to make a photo-library of important moments in her life, featuring those closest to her. As the pictures were projected onto the ceiling above her bed, the lady responded with smiles and murmurs of pleasure. The family members watched with her, prompting her with names and places. They felt that some kind of tie-ing off process had been achieved in this way and that some important communication had occurred. Clearly, this process could have been undertaken much earlier so that she could be more involved herself in selecting images and lingering over enlargements of these photos, enjoying newly visible detail.

The second lady was younger and better able to communicate her memories and wishes. She was able to sit with Mr Niki and family members and sort through photos, often identifying relatives when no-one else could. She responded very well to the eventual collection projected on to a large screen, producing new spontaneous memories at each showing. It clearly worked well as a stimulus and means of orientation over an extended period, enabling her to revisit the different periods of her life, and the many people who had been important to her. We also discussed in our meeting the value of adding favourite music and videoed interviews to the mix to ensure more and multi-sensory stimulation.
Some UK parallel developments:

This work, by Mr Niki and his colleagues reminded me very strongly of two current initiatives in the UK. One is a project called “My Life Films”, in which Jorg Roth and colleagues have been working with families living with dementia to create films capturing their lives. This has led to very active participation from different generations in the families concerned, together with long-standing friends, as they contribute their memories. The film-makers have researched the significant locations in the person’s life and found images and sounds to remind the person and to comfort families. The resulting films have been given to the families to use, and some have even been shown at funerals. A shortened 5-minute version of the 20 minute films is produced, so that if a person has to go into residential care where they are not known, the film can help staff to understand their background, likes, skills and interests.

The second is the wealth of iPad-based digital reminiscence projects currently setting up in the UK. Partnerships of academics, researchers and digital artists in the UK will explore the potential for people with dementia in particular. One such, based at King’s College London, even plans to look at using digitised reminiscence as a preventative measure to help people remain oriented much longer, by seeing their life in a longer perspective from a much earlier age. Just as healthy life-style choices are recommended by doctors as a means to avoid many illnesses in later life, including dementia, these digital life-story projects are aimed at emotional and intellectual stimulus and at strengthening the sense of identity to stand one in good stead for whatever the future holds, and keep deterioration of brain-power in check for longer.

As with almost all the projects I had the privilege to visit in Japan, the work I saw was closely connected in thinking and execution to our most progressive approaches in the UK and seems to be developing on parallel lines. It did seem to me that the effectiveness of interventions like that of Mr Niki and UK equivalents rely on good technology and good communication skills if they are to stand a chance. Those projects relying on technology alone, with no facilitator or intermediary, often do not seem to impinge on the consciousness of intended participants. For example, in one of the care homes, I saw people ‘watching’ black and white footage of old TV programmes and news-reels, but mostly these programmes were being ignored. It was a good idea in principle to show historical documentary material relevant to the generation of the viewers, but it occurred to me that what was needed was a facilitator to help the potential viewers to focus on the film and its significance to them, connecting it with their lives, as in “Where were you when you heard about this or that? How did it affect you? What was your job at that time?” Only when their attention was captured would such showings impact on the watchers and enable them to engage. Certainly in my own project in London (“Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today”) I suggest that couples go through the Radio Times together and consider what will be interesting to watch together and then discuss. This might include programmes about hobbies, trades, favourite films, big moments in history of the 20th century, travel to beloved quarters of the world or favourite music. Families report back that this leads to less unfocused sitting in front of the television and more engagement with what is actively chosen to watch.
4. Keiseikai Institute of Gerontology: Reminiscence and Music:
One of the people I had been most anxious to meet again, after a 20-year gap, was Yukiko Kurokawa. I had invited her to London in 1997 to participate in the international conference “Widening Horizons in Dementia Care”, where she had spoken on her reminiscence research with couples. She had held a series of sessions with couples where one had developed dementia. These sessions were designed to strengthen the central relationship, currently under huge stress from the onset of dementia, to revisit their whole life together and to help them see the present in the longer perspective of their lifetime. Yukiko had encouraged the couples to draw or paint their memories in order to recall them more sharply. These sessions were very stimulating and enabled the couples to focus for a while on other areas of their lives, and to recall how they had overcome difficulties in the past.

Yukiko Kurokawa has had a highly successful academic career in Japan, only recently leaving her academic post to set up her own research Institute, Keiseikai Institute of Gerontology, while continuing practical reminiscence projects, one with centenarians and others with groups of older people with some dementia.

The music and reminiscence group which has met over several years for a weekly uplift from music and memories

I had the pleasure to attend Yukiko’s music reminiscence group. This is a long-standing group of elderly women who meet weekly to sing together and to share memories. On the day I attended, there were six ladies present, one clearly distressed as her daughter/carer was unable to stay in the room with her, an occupational therapist and a group facilitator. Their topic for the afternoon was childhood games and songs. A young man facilitated with a few props to get the ball rolling. The ladies made origami figures around the Boys’ Festival theme, like those they had made as children, and they talked about hop-scotch, skipping and clapping games. The group were happy and relaxed, especially following
some gentle stretching, breathing and meditation exercises. They enjoyed sharing good and bad memories of their childhoods, including the war years and the American occupation, and welcomed me to join in with my own memories.

The Reminiscence weekly singing group meeting in Keiseikai Institute

In the second half of their session, they were joined by a music therapist who knew the group well. She brought her own high-quality piano and accompanied the ladies in singing the songs they remembered, gently feeding them the next lines of the songs so they could proceed with confidence. There was a wonderful atmosphere in the room, as the therapist was clearly enjoying herself, playing beautifully, and as the very elderly ladies had found their full-blooded voices again. Even the lady who was distressed succumbed to the music and, when her daughter returned, left in much better spirits. It was a delightful example of the power of music to lift the spirits, to bind people together and to remind them of so many past associations.

Yukiko Kurokawa with her music reminiscence group singing their memories
My experience of giving Reminiscence Training in Japan:

1. In Kinosaki Day Centre:
In the day centre in the small spa town of Kinosaki, I was given a chance to run a reminiscence workshop myself. This was a rather alarming prospect as I would have to work through a translator and the group was quite large. There were about 12 older people, most with some dementia, and six members of staff or volunteers, and another five people who had come from far away to participate in the session. They paired up at my request, so that each old person had individual attention. I asked them to share childhood memories of one of their parents, what they looked like, what they wore, where they worked, how they spoke, what they were usually doing when they were at home, etc. The older people then told their memories to their partner who drew a picture of the remembered parent. We provided coloured pencils and paper and the stories began to appear. The stimulus of having someone draw what they remembered led to some detailed memories resurfacing for the first time in many years.

The pictures were then passed round, discussed and admired, with the associated stories being shared more widely. A very old man who was very resistant to the exercise began after a while to draw the aeroplanes he worked on during the war and to describe the bombs they carried. After this, I asked if anyone could share a song their mothers or fathers had sung to them when they were little. Two or three people came up with songs which most people knew. There was a very positive atmosphere in the room and a feeling of achievement. Thanks to Sonoko’s fluent translation, my instructions and questions were easily transmitted. Two visiting activities organisers said, on leaving the day centre, that they were determined to give this approach (which was quite new to them) a trial with their own older clients. They could see how running such groups would deepen their understanding of their elders’ lives, and also how it could enable the elders to make new connections with one another through sharing common experience.
2. In Keiseikai Institute of Gerontology in Tokyo

Here I was asked by Yukiko Kurokawa to give a 2-hour lecture-demonstration with translation by Yukiko, to members of the Institute and interested visitors. It was a daunting commission: to show how a group could be introduced to reminiscence and how they could use art and drama to explore their memories. Preparation was meticulous. Yuko Nagasaka, Yukiko’s assistant, had prepared some Japanese subtitles for my talk, so the audience did not need to feel excluded by the language barrier.

The arrangement of chairs in theatre-style facing a PowerPoint did not bode well for spontaneous creativity on the part of the audience, many of whom seemed to be ‘men in suits’. When I asked them questions, only one brave man spoke up each time and everyone else was too shy or resistant. So, after a formal opening in PowerPoint with an explanation of current reminiscence work in the U.K., I asked the audience to work in pairs and share some memories of the place where they grew up. I asked a whole series of questions (which they did not have to answer this time) concerning their neighbourhoods, home and garden, brothers and sisters, games and places they played and the rooms where they ate and slept. Suddenly the room was buzzing as memories were stirred and shared. The volume level in the room was high, with people smiling and laughing.

When I circulated paper and coloured pens and asked them to take it in turns to draw their partner’s house, everyone did this most willingly. We shared the resulting pictures around the room, with much hilarity and recognition as the pictures were explained to the wider group.

Next, some reminiscence artefacts were produced that Yukiko had brought along, including an old telephone and a stone hot water bottle. I arranged the audience into 3s and one from each group came and chose an object which had a memory for them. Their task was to share this memory with the other two people in their group and make a short scene out of it to share with everyone. I must admit I was half-expecting adamant refusal, but in fact everyone gave it a
good try and clearly enjoyed sharing and interpreting the new-found memories. Each group shared their short 'scene' and the rest of the audience responded.

Yukiko tried to keep me up to speed by translating crucial parts of stories, but I could understand quite enough to catch the thread. The atmosphere in the room was very positive and bubbly, and Yukiko was very pleased that the inclusion of drama had been achieved. For me, the transformation of the room was important as it showed the power of reminiscence to help people make connections in the present with their own past lives and the lives of others around them. Yukiko wrote: “Thank you ever so much for the super fantastic lecture and workshop. I fully enjoyed being with you and translating your speech, so much so that I almost became you! We got such positive feedback from the participants”.

Yukiko Kurokawa and Pam working together as one in the reminiscence lecture. Yuko Nagasaka (centre) had stayed up all the night before inserting Japanese subtitles into the PowerPoint to help delegates to focus.
A feature article appeared in Yomiuri Newspaper on 8th June 2017 entitled "Reminiscences with family carers... Recognition of the bond", reported by UK expert. Yomiuri is the best selling major newspaper in Japan. Here is the text:

Yomiuri Shimbun: YomiDr. Web Article (June 8, 2017)
Researcher from UK reports:
Reminiscing with people with dementia and their carers

TOKYO, JAPAN May 23, 2017 Researcher from UK Pam Schweitzer, had a lecture on reminiscing in dementia care and introduced its effectiveness through sharing experiences during her long years of research.

In 1993, Pam Schweitzer founded the European Reminiscence Network with partners in 16 European countries to seek the value and possibility of reminiscing in dementia care. Her research not only focuses on caring for people with dementia, but also on supporting their family carers. More specifically, she evaluates the effectiveness of dementia care by organizing sessions for people with dementia and their carers (mostly spouse) to come together to recall their past using family photographs and other familiar objects from their past.

Revisiting pasts shared only with family

What are the benefits of reminiscing with both people with dementia and their carers?
Ms. Schweitzer answers, “There are certain pasts that are shared only within family. By revisiting their joint pasts, many family carers re-bond with the person they are now caring for.” She also mentions that regularly visiting a safe and sociable environment allows the carer to meet other families which can prevent social isolation.

Case one: A man has difficulty speaking due to the progression of dementia. His wife presents him their wedding photograph. The man looks at the photograph and begins talking about the tie he wore on his wedding day. People around him said, “Your wife is beautiful in that photograph.” He replied, “She is still beautiful.”
In this case, the wife realizes that although her husband was suffering from dementia, their relationship hadn't changed in his memory. She also realizes that her husband still hadn't lost his ability to communicate with others. Ms. Schweitzer comments, “By realizing their relationship, they were able to reconnect. This is what makes dementia care more effective.”
Handling familiar objects from the past (used in their everyday lives or work) can help when reminiscing because it helps the body recall past skills.

**Using objects from past and dramatic improvisations are effective in dementia care**

**Case Two:** A hand plane was given to a man with dementia who once worked in architecture. He has difficulty speaking, but by using the given hand plane, he was able to demonstrate motions using the hand plane.

**Case Three:** A woman who used a typewriter for her job in the past enjoyed the familiar feel of the old typewriter and remembered how to use it.

In the lecture, the participants were given an exercise to draw a memory of their childhood and to present their childhood memories using familiar objects from the past such as a dial phone and a ramune bottle (Japanese carbonated soft drink).

Ms. Schweitzer also introduced “dramatic improvisations” in which she has worked on for many years.

Participants were given 5 minutes to think of a theme and setting of their drama. They each chose a role to be either the person with dementia, family carer, or a volunteer staff. Ms. Schweitzer shared her experience, “There was a woman with dementia who chose to play the role of her mother. She portrayed her mother scolding ‘You cannot climb up the tree!’ and other participants were surprised by her acting!”

Ms. Schweitzer mentions, “As dementia progresses, some people have difficulty speaking and are left with very few words. However, by using non-verbal forms of communication, they will be able to recall certain things from their past. This will promote communication and encourage exchange, which will not only benefit the person with dementia, but it also creates an encouraging environment for their spouse and family.”

https://yomidr.yomiuri.co.jp/network/20170608-OYTEW214076/
3. Dance Box in Kobe

Dance Box is an independent dance company, which began in Osaka and then moved to Kobe where they have a studio and offices. They run on cooperative lines, with dancers creating new shows in the community and giving dance workshops to groups of all ages and levels.

Dance Box had asked for a lecture and advertised it quite widely, so the audience was made up of dancers, care workers, university lecturers from health and arts faculties. Sonoko Chishiro was translating for me as she had worked with Dance Box before and it was not too far for her to travel. This was a very lively questioning audience who immediately engaged with the idea. We even tried some spontaneous performance around the theme of teenage memories and it was such a pleasure to see the dancers in particular using such skilled expressive movement to share the stories.

Dance Box had been wondering if they could make a show featuring elders’ memories and the workshop helped them decide to do this, with the earthquake in Kobe 20 years before as their theme. The owner of a new care home in the locality, which is also taking in ethnic minority elders, was there for the lecture (being an ex-dancer himself, and he committed himself and his home to the project. So now, the dance company will start to listen to the elders’ stories of the impact of the earthquake on their families’ lives. This will be particularly poignant, as the company’s base and studio, and the care home, are in the part of the city which was devastated by the earthquake.

My lecture to Dance Box on reminiscence arts. The young man in the dark suit in the foreground runs the new care home which will cooperate with Dance Box on their project on the Kobe earthquake and its impact on their lives.
Arts organisations and older people in Japan:
Following up on David Cutler’s report on the British Council’s Arts and Older People tour in 2015, I made contact with the companies he cited. Most of these contacts led to interviews and discussion with the directors of each group, rather than seeing and talking to the older people involved and observing their work on the ground.

These were the organisations I visited:
Dance Box
Saitama Gold Theatre
OîBokkeShi Theatre Company
Setagaya Public Theatre
ARDA

1. Saitama Gold Theatre:
The Saitama Civic Theatre has a magnificent older people’s theatre company created and developed by the late Founder and Artistic Director, Yukio Ninagawa. He died over a year ago, but his place has not been filled, and certainly he is going to prove a difficult person to follow. However, the company of older people in the Saitama Theatre are continuing to work keeping the flame alive.

Following a very warm and positive exchange of experience with their interim directors, Hiroshi Watanabe and Sachiko Ukegawa, I was invited to attend a performance of a new play about warfare which incorporated a 1960s absurdist playlet by Fernando Arrabal entitled “Picnic on the Battlefield.” This playlet was performed by about 25 older players from the Saitama Gold Theatre. The production was superb with the older people showing astonishing discipline and power. I had read about the extraordinary training they had received under Yukio Ninagawa, with daily three-hour rehearsals and it seemed to me that they have become totally professional. Apparently no-one who joined the company has left it and it has become the central focus of their lives.

“I have weak hearing and poor sight. I have problems all over my body, but I am still young in spirit,” says amateur actress Etsuko Shigemoto, 87. “I have already reached the afternoon of my life, but it is wonderful to spend my last days with the company. I really like acting. This is what I live for,” she said. “Drama makes me vigorous. I am too busy to get senile. I still feel as if I was 20 years old and now my dream is to become a good actor,” said actor Kiyoshi Takahashi, 85.

I greatly enjoyed and admired this company's work, and recognised how it had had a huge impact on the lives of the participants, in terms of physical, social and psychological welfare. I felt that it was a real showcase for what could be achieved. It reminded me very strongly of the older people I have worked with over a number of years in the 1990s and 2000s, creating theatre from their memories. However, I felt it was perhaps more of a ‘one-off’ experiment in what could be done by sheer rigour and discipline, both of which are so evident everywhere in Japan, rather than a beacon of what should be done more generally to improve quality of life among older people.

2. OîBokkeShi Theatre
In the words of the director, Mr Naoki Sugawara, translated by Paul Essing:

“Began in 2014, OiBokkeShi is a theatre group that combines the insight of theatre with the human richness found in a care home. It is on this principal that the workshops offer education tailored to foster a more positive relationship between aged-care workers and their patients, particularly those with dementia. Further, it stages plays with those directly involved – again both patients and carers. In a country known worldwide for its aging population, OiBokkeShi is a unique approach to handling a serious issue.

OiBokkeShi (in Japanese, “oi” means “aged”, “boke” means “senile, and “shi” means “death”) was first conceived by Mr. Sugawara while he was working in aged care and active in theatre. He noticed two key things during his time. The first is that old people make excellent actors. As people age, individual personalities become stronger and stronger. Stubborn young people become stubborn old people, lecherous young people become lecherous old people. It is this kind of character-watching that Mr. Sugawara finds so enjoyable about theatre in the first place.

The second thing Mr. Sugawara became confident of was that care-workers should become actors to better deal with their patients. A personal example is when an older lady greeted Mr. Sugawara as a watchmaker. Initially, he corrected her, restating that he was a care worker. However, eventually after meeting again Mr. Sugawara decided to try playing the part of the watchmaker and from there communication developed much more naturally.

Mr. Sugawara believes that rather than being caught up with rigidity, it is best to engage with dementia patients on an emotional level. If the patient can’t help it, isn’t pretending, then by seeing things the same way they do is a better way of showing respect. For this reason, OiBokkeShi developed to show the fun to be had and skills necessary to be an actor in a care home. A focus is placed on being empathetic. Workshops have participants taking turns to play both dementia patient and their carer, in order to get an understanding of what that position might feel like (such as in the case of a dementia patient, being curtly corrected or flat out ignored).”

When I visited this fascinating company in the Nagi art Gallery in Okayama Prefecture, they were looking to develop a programme for a new group of what the director calls the ‘Bad Old Boys’, a good-humoured name for self-excluding male elders, often drinkers or drifters, alienated from society and living lonely lives. The company are looking to engage them creatively and were seeking a possible venue. I was invited to go with them to visit the place, which had been offered by members of the local community for weekly meetings of these old men. It was a remarkably beautiful house and garden with views over paddy fields and distant woods. A band of older men were playing popular songs of their youth for a visiting care home group and a beautiful tea was served by volunteers. There was a truly delightful atmosphere of relaxation and inclusion. The very old people from the care home looked very happy. Two of them took up the microphone and led the singing, conducting everyone else the while.
I took a few minutes away from the group and with a young interpreter to help, interviewed a member of staff from the care home who had been supporting one of the old singers, to ask her about her job and how she felt about it. This delightful young worker said how she loved it and really enjoyed being with the very old people. It was very fulfilling for her, she said, and she looked forward to going to work each day. Then she hurried back to take care of the old man who might be missing her.
It was rather difficult to understand what one of Mr Suguwara’s plays might look like, but I was intrigued by the emphasis on empathising with the person with dementia and seeing the world from their point of view. I have used similar exercises myself in training courses in person-centred dementia care and found this approach helps people to understand and identify with the person with dementia.

Some of Mr Suguwara’s work evidently involves “invisible theatre” techniques, along the lines of Augusto Boal, wherein the audience get caught up in the action, not realising that it is a drama. This is a well-tried way of engaging the audience in the underlying dilemmas, raising their consciousness in the process, and Mr Suguwara clearly uses this method to catch casual viewers off-guard and to help them acknowledge (and maybe change) their underlying attitudes to and fears of dementia.

I noticed that when theatre people in Japan engage with the dementia theme, they are most likely to dramatise the experience of having dementia or of living with a family member with dementia. As far as I could observe, none of these companies were using reminiscence theatre as a method. However, having been introduced to this British style of working, some groups expressed an interest in developing it in Japan. This includes Dance Box in Kobe, OiBokkeShi theatre in Okayama Prefecture and Saitama Gold Theatre in Tokyo. I await the results with great interest and all three groups agreed to keep in contact with me to share their findings.
3. ARDA
ARDA is an arts organisation bringing artists into communities, rather along the lines of the UK organisation, SHAPE, but on a much smaller scale. I met the coordinator, Emiko Namikawa, in Saitama Prefecture and she explained the background to the organisation. It seems that they have a wide variety of artists on their books, including visual artists, musicians, dancers and theatre workers. They give workshops to community groups of all ages, either on a one-off basis or for a series of sessions. Emiko indicated that it was getting increasingly difficult to raise the funding to enable this programme to happen, but that she was hoping the climate would improve. She escorted me to a meeting with the inspiring leader of a day centre for people with dementia, Natsuko Takeda, an ex-dancer who had trained at the Laban Centre in London. I was to participate in a visual arts workshop entitled “My Hands” led by the artist, Yumiko Fujiwara.

A lady who had been lethargic and unenthusiastic was transformed by the activity

About thirty people were seated at tables, four or five to a table. Everyone was given high quality paper and colours. They were asked to draw around their hands, which everyone managed to do. Then they were asked to turn the paper round by 45% and repeat the process, so that the second hand was drawn on top of the first but pointing in a different direction. This process was repeated two more times, so that the picture was of layered hands. They were then invited to colour in, in whatever way they wished, the small or large spaces between the lines. Yumiko showed everyone what she meant by this idea so that everyone understood the task. Staff and volunteers supported the older people, working one-to-one with those who needed encouragement.
There was plenty of comparison and discussion at each table as people saw and admired the resulting images emerging. Everyone seemed to be really enjoying the activity and I too found it very stimulating making my own picture. These pictures were then mounted on quality paper and presented to the whole group by Yumiko, who clearly took the elders’ work seriously and pointed out the differences and the special features in each one, giving praise to the originators as though they were ‘proper artists’. The whole atmosphere was very positive and I felt that everyone had relished making art in this way and would enjoy seeing their effort displayed on the walls in future, alongside other very attractive examples of their work.

The artist facilitator Yumiko Fujiwara, analyses the pictures and picks out individual strengths of colour and design, making everyone feel acknowledged

I could not help comparing her approach as an artist with my own as a reminiscence artist. I have often used the “My Hands” theme, but in a rather different way as a means of reflecting on the older people’s activities and skills over a lifetime. The exercise begins with the group sitting, or standing, in a circle and starting an action with the hands, which everyone copies. People guess what the action is and the person explains more fully why they chose that action. It could be polishing shoes, digging in the garden, cooking for a family, stroking a baby to sleep, carefully counting money, painting a room or a picture. As each person takes it in turn to lead an action and to speak about it, the group responds with recognition and shared experience. Later we might also draw round the hand and write down some of the activities remembered, or maybe make a group poem incorporating everyone’s contribution. This activity is subtly different in intention from the art workshop described above. Its aim is to promote self-esteem and confidence by remembering and bringing into the present one’s past skills and strengths and to build links with others in the group. Both approaches have the effect of promoting, communication and enjoyment, but Yumiko’s session work is more concerned with bringing the art experience to more people, whereas the art and drama in the reminiscence session would be a means to a rather different and rather more personal end for the older participants with dementia.
Conclusions:
I had expected to encounter in Japan a great deal of Reminiscence work both in groups and on a one-to-one basis. I had expected to see arts and health workers involving older people in reflection on their lives in structured sessions, encouraging elders to share their experience with others, both staff members and fellow-residents. I had expected to see artists and writers helping older individuals over a number of weeks to create life-story books, collages or maybe Memory Boxes. However, I saw very little of this, beyond some modest albums which some of the care staff in a group home had made. It may be that there is plenty of this one-to-one work and group work going on, but I did not encounter it. Or it may be that the emphasis on upholding traditional values and practices takes the place of formal reminiscence sessions in that those festivals and anniversaries probably trigger memories in a very natural way.

However, I did find that the Japanese groups and individuals I met were actually very interested to hear how far reminiscence work has gone in the UK and across Europe. They responded very positively to the various ideas, including the creation of personalised Memory Boxes made by individual artists with older people and their families, reminiscence theatre based on older people’s memories and using arts approaches such as drama and dance and visual arts in reminiscence sessions. I was happy to be able to share with them our experience, and especially how we had been developing reminiscence in dementia care in our European Reminiscence Network.

Although I did not encounter as much reminiscence work as I anticipated, what I did see was a very high standard of care for older people and a commitment to taking care of them in beautiful places. Everywhere I visited in Japan, I saw evidence of strong attachment and affection for older people on the part of staff and volunteers, including people with dementia, and a prevailing atmosphere of respectful attentiveness. I saw staff looking engaged with older people and not spending a great deal of time talking to one another or ignoring the residents. I saw care being taken over food, including the growing or buying of fresh vegetables, food preparation and serving, often with small floral gestures to make them attractive.

Outside the context of care homes and day centres, I saw plenty of evidence of the high standard of health amongst the elderly population, with many riding bicycles into great old age and remaining supple enough to do quite advanced yoga poses. I also met older people working in the restaurants where we ate and serving in the local shops, keen to play their part in society for as long as possible. I saw small meeting groups in Kitanagoya, Saitama Prefecture and Tokyo, where older people enjoyed getting together to reminisce and to plan small-scale activities, which would enable them to make a difference in their local communities.
A regular reminiscence/discussion group in Saitama Prefecture led by Mihoko Otake from the Centre for Advanced Intelligence. They use photos old and new, sharing them in PowerPoint format on screen to trigger discussion of past and present. Like other groups we met, they have been meeting weekly for many years.

I have not included in this report my visit to Hiroshima, as it seemed outside the scope of my project. On reflection however, it is important to mention the very different kind of reminiscence which happens there. Staying in the World Fellowship Centre, I was introduced by the warden, Bernd Phoenix, to a survivor of the atom bomb, Hibakusha Soh-San. There are now relatively few survivors who are willing to give their personal testimony. I felt the full significance of this meeting and the power of reminiscence to bring alive the past. Mr Soh San told his story, as he does very often, sometimes reading from a paper and sharing his terrifying experience in a matter-of-fact manner.

Hibakusha Mr Soh-San relates experience, showing a burned roof tile from 1945.

Hibakusha Soh-San burns inwardly with a desire to see people learning from that terrible time, and the yearning for world peace is what drives him on, even though he is now rather frail. In fact the Peace Park and the Peace Museum are
dedicated to keeping alive the memories of what happened here. I had anticipated that speaking about the war at all in Japan would be a no-go area, but this was not my experience. When the subject cropped up in reminiscence-related conversations, people seemed willing to speak of it openly and it certainly did not seem to be the impediment to memory work which I had feared.

**Implementation plans and next steps:**
I am currently preparing papers about my Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship to present at three forthcoming conferences in the UK:
1) Dementia and the Imagination: Arts and Design for Health at University of Lancaster Centre for Ageing Research, 7th September 2017
2) Best Practice in Dementia Care: Dementia Congress 7-9 November 2017 at Nottingham Race Course
3) European Reminiscence Network Conference on “Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today” Reminiscence in Dementia Care at the University of Greenwich

I have invited Japanese speakers to this conference in London and I await their replies.

Outside the UK, I have lecturing engagements, in which my Japanese Fellowship will figure as follows:
1) Dublin in September to launch a new reminiscence theatre project
2) Norway for a Reminiscence Theatre festival, with special reference to reminiscence in dementia care: a 3-day workshop
3) Malta, introducing creative reminiscence 2-day workshop

I plan to set up an informal schedule of visits to care homes in the UK early in 2018 to see how close or far they are from the ‘Group Homes’ which impressed me so much in Japan.

I hope to continue working with Yasuko Murata from Person-Centred Dementia Care in Japan and Michiko Nakagawa, her colleague and translator. We plan to investigate setting up the project “Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today” and hope to translate the accompanying handbook, although we know this is a long-term aim.

*A farewell to new-found friends Yasuko and Michiko on our last night*
Acknowledgements:

Grateful thanks to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for supporting this Travelling Fellowship

Many people gave me practical help and psychological support. My warmest thanks to the following:

Churchill Fellows:
Kate Organ
Diane Amans
Karin Diamond
Adele Owen
Glenda Cooper
Michelle Miller
David Slater
Richard Coaten
Fergus Early

Friends and family:
Alex Schweitzer
Mike Hougham
Wendy Troy
John and Mitzi Moritz
John Spruell
Alice Schweitzer
Jonathan Petherbridge
Faith Gibson
Sue Benson
Sally Knocker
Mary Schweitzer

Others who shared contacts and advice:
Mr Kosuke Wada (First Secretary Health) Embassy of Japan
James Smith, Alzheimers Disease International, London
Angelika Welzel Dementia Dialogue
Mary Marshall, Emeritus, University of Stirling
John Killick, Dementia Positive
Dawn Brooker, University of Worcester Dementia Research
Barbara Haight, International Institute of Reminiscence and Life Review
# PAM's JAPAN Itinerary

[Updated end April 2017]

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 April 2017</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Fly Heathrow to Japan (Tokyo)</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 April</td>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>Arriving Japan / Travel to Kyoto (Resting)</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 April</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Exploring Kyoto / [6pm] Meet Sonoko Chishiro, tour coordinator and translator</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 April</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Kyoto Sight Seeing</td>
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</tbody>
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| 25 April   | Tue | [10:30am] KITANAGOYA with Sonoko Chishiro The Showa Era Life Style Museum to meet Mr Ichihashi  
Kitanagoya Reminiscence Center  
Kyoto(8:58)→Nagoya(9:34) SHINKANSEN HIKARI460  
Nagoya(9:59)→Nishiharu(10:09) MEITETSU  
Nishiharu(15:33)→Nagoya(15:44) MEITETSU  
Nagoya(16:09)→Kyoto(16:45) SHINKANSEN HIKARI475  
Evening meeting re Reminiscence Theatre with Kayo Hosomi (director) and Tamami Yamada (dancer and translator) |
| 26 April   | Wed | ADI Conference Day-1 Kyoto pre-conference session on Dementia Friendly communities |
| 27 April   | Thu | ADI Conference Day-2 Butoh-Kan Theatre in evening                    |
| 28 April   | Fri | ADI Conference Day-3 / My Poster Session  
meet YOKO HAYASHI from Arts Alive & Yasuko Murata and many others |
| 29 April   | Sat | ADI Conference Day-4 / Manga Museum                                  |
| 30 April   | Sun | Travel to KINOSAKI & meet Sonoko Chishiro at Ryokan  
Meet members of Bufo Makmal Dance Collective, Margarita Kennedy, Rosie Toogood and Clea Onori |
| 1 May      | Mon | KINOSAKI Day Care Center  
Ms.Horie and Sonoko are organizing.  
1hour Workshop by Pam for people who have dementia.  
[1.30pm] Meet Ms.Horie (head of this day care)  
[2pm-3pm] Pam’s Workshop with elderly (age 80-95)  
[3pm-3.20pm] Feedback / Talk with Ms.Horie |
| 2 May      | Tue | Visit Rakuraku-mura Care House  
Meet Head of Home, Mrs Taeko Kitani  
Travel back to Kyoto |
| 3 May      | Wed | Ms.Noriyo Washizu translating and coordinating. VISIT “TERADO” and meet Ms Teruko Doi, dementia advisor and Yoshihiro Niki, film maker |
| 4 May      | Thu | TENJIN-NO-MORI  Ms.Noriyo Washizu as translator  
[1pm] Meet Mr.Isozumi at TENJIN-NO-MORI-I  
[2.30pm] Meet Mr.Chiba at TENJIN-NO-MORI II |
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| 5 May | Fri | **OSAKA VISIT Coordinated by Ms. Satoe Sugimoto**  
[9am] KYOTO Station  
[10am] Meet at AMAGASAKI Station  
[AM] Visit Kirakuen Care Home and Lunch with Mrs Reiko Ichikawa  
[PM] Some discussion @Alice Koushien Care Home with Ms Amiko Ishikawa  
Ms Satoe Sugimoto & Pam give work presentations with slides.  
[5:30pm] Dinner with Ms. Ishikawa to discuss what we saw |
| 6 May | Sat | Day Off VISIT NARA |
| 7 May | Sun | Travel to Tokyo |
| 8 May | Mon | Day Off in Tokyo incl Kabuki Theatre with Yasuko Murato & Michiko Nakagawa |
| 9 May | Tue | **ARDA Arts Workshops in Homes (Saitama) Coordinated by Emiko Namikawa**  
[PM] VISIT “Day-Service RAKURAKU”  
http://tsujihojun-clinic.com  
Observe Workshop: “My Hands”  
Artist: Ms. Yumiko Fujiwara  
Evening meeting in Shinagawa outside Tokyo with Yutake Inoui, architect and expert on design for older people |
| 10 May | Wed | [9.30am] Kotoen Intergenerational Exchange  
[1-3pm] Setagaya Public Theatre meeting Eshi Minako (outreach worker and Komi (Director care homes show) |
| 11 May | Thu | VISIT hospital & care facilities with Yasuko Murata and Michiko Nakagawa  
NPO Person Centered Care People |
| 12 May | Fri | [5pm] Meet Professor Toyoko Nomura from International Institute of Reminiscence & Life Review and Professor Kazue Inami Tokyo Fuji University @Shibuya |
| 13 May | Sat | **SAITAMA ARTS THEATER**  
[Ms. Sachiko Ukegawa is organizing]  
5pm Meet Ms. Ukegawa & Hiroshu Watanabe  
7pm-10pm Performance “Waiting”  
https://goo.gl/maps/SURXYXSVCaA2 |
| 14 May | Sun | Travel to Matsumoto & explore |
| 15 May | Mon | Day Off in Matsumoto including castle  
Travel to Tokyo (for next day) |
| 16 May | Tue | **VISIT Coordinated by Mihoko Otake**  
Visit new Government-backed Centre for Advanced Artificial Intelligence and meet researchers about to start new projects  
Meet Mihoko’s discussion group using new technology in the afternoon  
Travel to Kyoto (for next day) |
| 17 May | Wed | Ōi Bokke Shi (Okayama Prefecture)  
Paul Essing, translator and cultural worker  
[8:40am] Get a Coach from Kyoto Station [5,660 yen]  
[11:35am] Mimasaka-Inter Change |
<table>
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| 18 May | Thu   | Day-off in HIROSHIMA  
Listen to the testimony of a survivor (Hibakusha Soh-San)  
Guided tour of Peace Park with Mrs Akiko-San and visit Peace Museum. Take boat to Miyajima Island and visit temples |
| 19 May | Fri   | Travel to Kobe, Sonoko Chishiro translating lecture to  
Dance Box at 1.30pm Meet Fumi Yokobori, programme director to hear about their work  
Talk Session by Pam @Dance Box 3-5pm  
Travel to Nagoya  
(http://www.hotel-louest.com/english) |
| 20 May | Sat   | Day-Off at NAKASENDO TRAIL  
[11am] Nagoya Station  
[11:48am] Nakatsugawa Station  
Lunch & Walk around MAGOME |
| 21 May | Sun   | Day-Off at NAKASENDO TRAIL  
Walk to TSUMAGO (9km) and bus back |
| 22 May | Mon   | Travel to Tokyo  
Supper with Yukiko Kurokawa and Yuko Nagasaka |
| 23 May | Tue   | VISIT Yukiko Kurokawa’s work @Keiseikai Institute of Gerontology  
[10am-12pm] Pam Lecture(90min) and Discussion(30min) *Using an interpreter makes your lecture 45min  
[2-4pm] Observe and join the group with dementia Music + Reminiscence |
| 24 May | Wed   | Shopping and packing for flight next day |
| 25 May | Thu   | BACK TO UK / Haneda Airport fly to London Heathrow |
My name is Pam Schweitzer and I am visiting Japan on a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship. I know that there is much knowledge and experience in Japan in exploring positive approaches to ageing, including supporting the huge number of people with dementia and their family carers. I have met Japanese speakers at conferences over the years and heard of their innovative approaches, but I really want to visit community-based projects, day centres and group homes, to see the work on the ground, and learn from the experience of Japanese workers.

For the last 35 years, I have been listening to and recording the lives of older people in Britain. From their memories I have made professional theatre productions, books and exhibitions. I have also led a network of partners across Europe, celebrating the life experience of older members of society at international festivals and conferences.

For the last 20 years, I have been running the international project "Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today" both in the UK and across Europe. This is a reminiscence arts project for people with dementia and their carers. During this project we re-visit key stages in the past lives of participants and explore them through discussion, song, dance, re-enactments, drawing and handling old artefacts. Families make new friendships based on shared experience and joint activity and they learn new ways of supporting their relatives with dementia.

I am looking for new ideas and inspiration here in Japan which I can bring back to share with the groups I run in London, with my partners in the European Reminiscence Network and with the students I teach at the University of Greenwich.

I am particularly interested to investigate the use of the reminiscence as a means of enhancing the quality of life for people with dementia & their family carers and for increasing social cohesion in the community.

If you are working in this area, and would like to meet me, then please make contact with me. I shall be in Japan from 22nd April until 25th May 2017. My telephone number is +44 780 3296 899. My email is pam@pamschweitzer.com My visit is coordinated by Sonoko Chishiro, email sonokochishiro@gmail.com Websites: www.europeanreminiscencenetwork.org and www.pamschweitzer.com and www.rememberingtogether.eu and www.reminiscencetheatrearchive.org.uk
私はパム・シュワイツァーと申します。この度はウィンストン・チャーチル協会の一員として来日致します。日本は高齢化社会の理解、サポートを幅広く行っていると熟知しております。特に、増え続ける認知障害者へのサポートにも力を入れて居ると講義で日本人の方から伺いました。その中には革新的な方法もあるようで、今回来日の際には実際に老人ホーム、デイサービスの訪問などを行いたいと考えております。現場を自分の目で見ることによって学べることがたくさんあると思うからです。

過去３５年間私は、イギリスでの高齢者の経験や体験を元に、劇を作成したり書物を出版したり展示会を開いたりしてきました。ネットワークを通じて、ヨーロッパへも活動を広げ、高齢者の経験や、体験を幅広い世代の方に理解していただけるよう努めてまいりました。

過去２０年間は国際的なプロジェクト「昨日のことを忘れず、今日のケアも忘れず」を立ち上げ活動しています。このプロジェクトは認知症の方々が自身の思い出を元に美術品を作り上げるというプロジェクトです。このプロジェクトでは、彼らの過去をディスカッションや歌、ダンス、再演、絵画にすることによって人生で最も影響的だった出来事を表現します。家庭ごとに悩みは様々であってもこうした環境を提供することによってお互いの理解をより深めることができます。そして、新しいサポートの仕方を見つけることにもつながります。

日本でも新しい方法があるのなら、それを見つけてイギリスで活かす方法を考えたいと思います。そして、私の運営する協会とヨーロッパにある協会そして私が教員を務めるグリニッチ大学でも共有したいと思います。

特に私は人の思い出を重点に置き、認知症の方そして、その家族、ケアをしている方の人生の向上に努めたいと考えております。

ご興味のある方はこちらまでご連絡ください。
2017年、4月22日から5月25日まで滞在予定です。
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