

# Queen Elizabeth II's birthday

## A lifetime of dedication and service

Tim Hitchens  
BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

I am delighted to have been asked to provide a message for The Japan Times to mark the birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

A message of this kind would not be complete without a look back at a remarkable year for the United Kingdom and our Royal Family. Last year of course saw the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, marking the 60th year of Her Majesty's reign, which began when she succeeded her father King George VI in February 1952. I remember, while serving as one of her Private Secretaries



in 2002, helping to organize her Golden Jubilee; it was wonderful to see the nation and the Commonwealth rising to the occasion once more (and knowing that this time I could just sit back and enjoy it!). Many people found the celebrations a fitting tribute to Her Majesty, whose keen sense of duty and absolute commitment to her responsibilities have rightly won her the admiration of millions of people across the world. She is, so far, our second-longest-serving sovereign. When she came to the throne in 1952, her first Prime Minister (of the 12 who have served in that office during her reign) was Sir Winston Churchill. She is of course also the Queen of 15 other Commonwealth States — all of which marked the anniversary in their own ways.

And Japan took part in the celebrations, too. It was heart-warming to see our links strengthened further when Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko visited London for their Jubilee state visit. Following on from that visit and the tremendous work done by a whole range of British people in supporting the rebuilding of Tohoku, it was very good to see a plaque from the Emperor unveiled last month in Holland Park's Fukushima Gardens in London.

And then of course the eyes of sports fans around the world focused on the U.K. last July, when the triumph and brilliance of the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics presented not only a magnificent festival of sports but also showcased the diversity of modern British life.

The enthusiasm, creativity and celebration of 2012 are still resonating. The games were designed to provide a lasting legacy for the Olympic Park's host community of Stratford in East London — the most diverse in Europe, with over 300 languages spoken. The park itself, which is the largest of its kind to open in Europe for generations, will this year become the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, providing new homes, parkland and sports facilities for the local communities, for generations to come.

It is with this emphasis on sustainability in mind that this year I have decided that our Queen's Birthday Party celebration in Japan this month will follow the theme of "Green is GREAT" showcasing U.K. excellence in low carbon growth and sustainability, as part of a wider three-year campaign we are running that invites the world to take a fresh look at everything Britain has to offer, focusing on areas of British excellence: technology and innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity, knowledge, conservation, heritage, sports, shopping, music and countryside. We want to send out a clear message that Britain is one of the very best places in the world to visit, live, work, study, invest and do business. I was very struck in Fukuoka in March by the young Japanese entrepreneurs, especially in the digital world, keen to learn from Britain's digital expertise, and signing a memorandum linking London's Tech City in Old Street with the city of Fukuoka.

And change continues



Enduring achievement: Queen Elizabeth II smiles as she visits Baker Street underground station in London to mark the 150th anniversary of the London Underground on March 20. AP

to amaze. Who would have thought, in the midst of the Troubles (1960s-80s), that the British government would choose to invite the leaders of the world's top economies to Lough Erne in Northern Ireland? But that is exactly what is happening in June, when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and other world leaders will once again travel to the U.K. in June to at-

tend the 2013 G-8 Summit in Northern Ireland. The rich ironies of history, indeed.

Because the history of Japan and Britain goes back so far, and is so deep, there are few years that don't mark some significant milestone. 2013 marks the 400th anniversary since the presentation of credentials from the British King to the Japanese Emperor — when our trading relation-

ships first started. The letter from the Emperor is at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. And this year also marks the 150th anniversary of the visit to the U.K. by the Choshu Five, the young warriors who broke Japanese law by traveling on a British vessel to the U.K. and who studied at University College London — later returning to Japan to become the first generation of Meiji political

and industrial leaders. Events to celebrate these anniversaries will be taking place here and in the U.K. over the summer and autumn.

Hard work and dedication make anything possible. Her Majesty embodies those values — that our countries share. I am delighted to be able to provide this message of appreciation on her 87th birthday.

### *Birthday Greetings to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II*



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JAPAN TOBACCO INC.

JT Bldg., 2-1, Toranomon 2-Chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-8422, JAPAN  
Phone: (03) 3582-3111 Fax: (03) 5572-1463 URL: <http://www.jt.com>

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