

Remarks by H.E. Mr HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
on the occasion of the bestowal of
The Foreign Minister's Commendation upon Mr Robin James Maynard
on Friday 8 March 2024

Distinguished Guests,

It is a great pleasure for me to present the Foreign Minister's Commendation to Mr Robin James Maynard.

Mr Maynard became involved with Japan through his experience of working there – in fact, he was in Japan for well over four decades, even longer than the lifetime of some participants today. I was delighted to know that his business there had flourished and his long engagement with Japan had become a source of great satisfaction to him. After his retirement, driven by a desire to give something back to Japan as well as his home country, the UK, he founded the William Adams Club in 2015, in part to prepare for the 400th anniversary of his passing.

No doubt many of you are familiar with the important role William Adams played in connecting our two countries during what can be considered the first phase of Anglo-Japanese relations at the beginning of the 17th century. He is truly a famous historical figure always mentioned in Japanese school textbooks and has appeared in numerous dramas and novels, including a recent year-long TV drama *Dosuru Ieyasu* broadcasted in Japan by NHK last year.

Supported by researchers and people who have contributed to the promotion of Anglo-Japanese relations in various fields such as business and culture, including a descendant of the Tokugawa family, the William Adams Club, has done a great deal to raise Adams' profile. Through this means it has promoted Anglo-Japanese exchange, especially involving the towns of Yokosuka, Hirado and Ito, with which Adams was associated.

Among Robin's various achievements, one must mention his assistance in funding the project to investigate William Adams' remains in 2017. It is very interesting to note that, according to a report first published in *Nature* in 2020, a forensic examination, including DNA analysis, has concluded that the remains are indeed likely to be those of William Adams. Thus, exactly 400 years on from Adams' death, we have finally found him again.

Robin contributed from Japan to the efforts then under way in the UK as well to remember and honour William Adams. He helped organise Japan400, a series of events held in both Japan and the UK in 2013 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the start of the Japan-UK relationship. He provided support for the manufacture of a telescope to be gifted to Japan like the one which was presented to Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1613 as a gift from King James I, when the first English ship arrived in Japan to establish relations.

These are not his only accomplishments. We should not forget to mention that Robin provided financial support for the local community in Oshika Peninsula in Miyagi Prefecture, which was devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011.

In recognition of his longstanding dedication to promoting our bilateral relations in Japan, Robin was one of the recipients of the Japan-British Society Awards in 2021. It is thus no surprise and perfectly fitting that he has now received the Foreign Minister's Commendation.

May I take this opportunity to formally congratulate Mr Robin James Maynard for his outstanding achievements.

Congratulations, Robin.