

Did Sir Ernest Satow turn his Back on Japan in his Retirement?

EAJS Conference at Tsukuba University
September 14-15, 2019

Date: September 15th

Time: 11.55-12.15

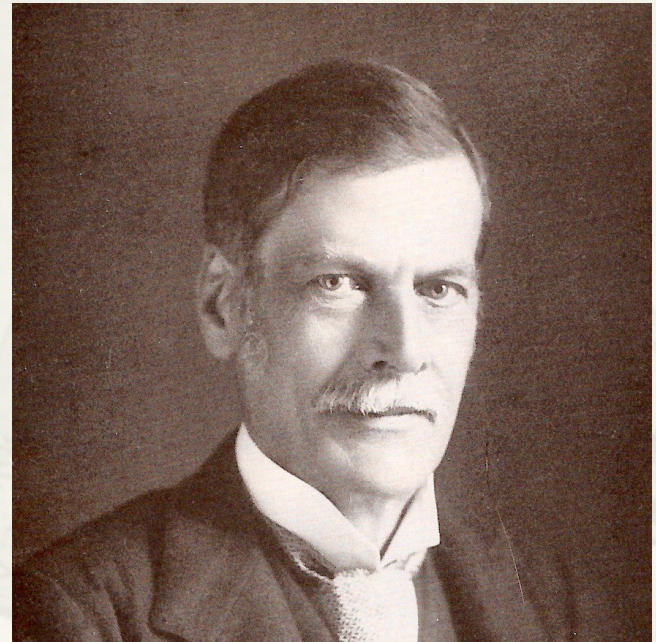
Place: Room C-5-3

Speaker: Ian Ruxton

Kyushu Institute of Technology

Outline

- * **Satow's life and career: scholar-diplomat (1843-1929)**
- * **Satow and Japan**
- * **Retirement (1906-1929)**



Satow in 1903

Satow's life and career

- * Born in London, 1843
- * Attended Mill Hill School and University College London
- * Applied to Consular Service and became a student interpreter in 1861
- * In China 1861-2 – rather wild, but well-read!
- * **In Japan 1862-69, 1870-83 – Consular Service**
- * Served in Diplomatic Service in Siam, Uruguay and Morocco.
- * **Returned to Japan, 1895-1900 - Minister**
- * China, 1900-06
- * Retirement
- * Died in 1929.

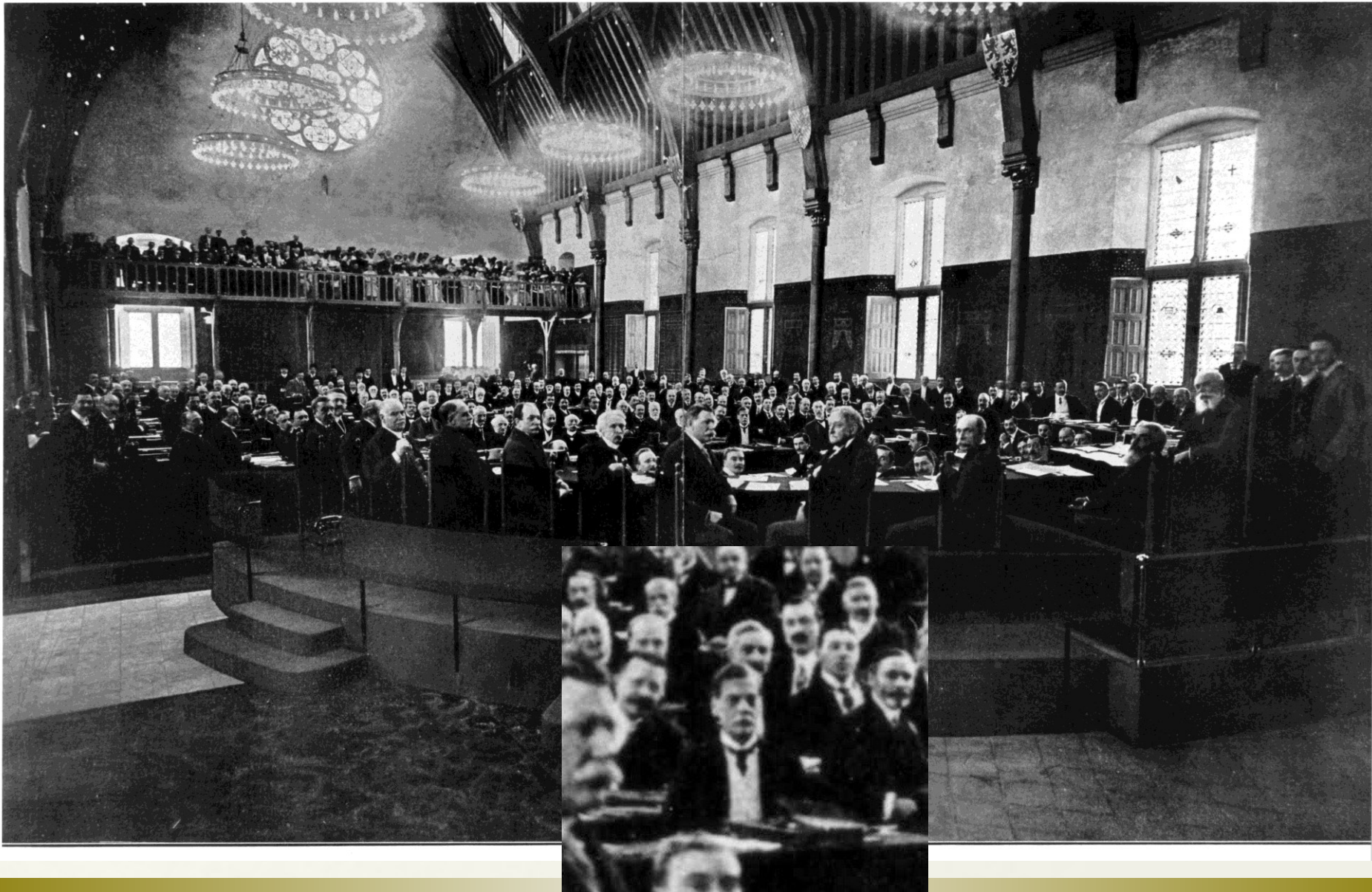
Satow and Japan

- * In the 1860s he was by far the best linguist in the British Legation, indispensable in the complex negotiations with the Shogunate, Court, Satsuma and Choshu etc. Information-gathering. Interpreting. See *A Diplomat in Japan*.
- * In the 1870s he deepened his knowledge of Japan with many visits to the interior. He wrote many papers for the Asiatic Society of Japan, of which he was a founder member in 1871. See his diaries for the period which I have published.
- * He returned to Japan as Minister, 1895-1900. See his diaries for this period.

Retirement

- * He left the Diplomatic Service in 1906, though he served as one of the British delegates to the Hague Peace Conference in 1907. There he had contact with the Japanese delegation, especially [Tsuzuki Keiroku](#), stepson of Inoue Kaoru, and [Satō Aimaro](#). But of course he also had contact with many from other delegations.
- * He settled away from London in Devon at Ottery St. Mary.
- * He avoided the Japan Society.
- * He wrote reviews on Japan and China for *The Athenaeum* for a while.
- * He occasionally had contact with Japanese visitors, and attended a banquet in honour of Field Marshal Prince Fushimi at Buckingham Palace on May 7, 1907, but declined to attend all events in honour of the visit of the Crown Prince (Emperor Showa) including a banquet at Buckingham Palace (1921).
- * He only left Britain twice during his retirement: in 1907 (The Hague, on official business) and in 1914 (to visit his cousin in Blankenburg, Harz). He never went back to Asia.

The Hague Peace conference (1907) – plenary session in the Ridderzaal (Hall of Knights)



Letters to and from friends

- * John Harington Gubbins
- * Frederick Victor Dickins
- * William George Aston
- * Lord Reay (no Japan experience)
- * Lionel Berners Cholmondeley
- * Basil Hall Chamberlain (mainly birthday greetings, 9 letters in General Correspondence, 1906-27)
- * Allan [Shand](#) – 51 letters in General Correspondence

John H. Gubbins (1852-1929)

- * Formerly Japanese Secretary under Satow, 1895-1900. His main work seems to have been reporting on articles in the Japanese press, summarizing and translating them.
- * Correspondence with Satow from 1908 to 1927, with gaps. He was a frequent guest of Satow at Beaumont House, Ottery St. Mary.
- * Gubbins taught Japanese at Oxford University for three years, 1909-12. Classes closed for lack of students.
- * He wrote histories of Japan including *The Progress of Japan, 1853-71* (Clarendon Press, 1911) and *The Making of Modern Japan* (Seeley, Service & Co., 1922). Satow read the proofs for the latter. His *A Diplomat in Japan* was published one year earlier by the same publisher – so he still had Japan very much on his mind.
- * They were both consulted re qualifications for teachers of Japanese at the School of Oriental Studies, including Henry Bonar – already appointed. See Gubbins's letters to Satow February 21, 1918 et seq. (PRO 30/33 11/8)

John H. Gubbins



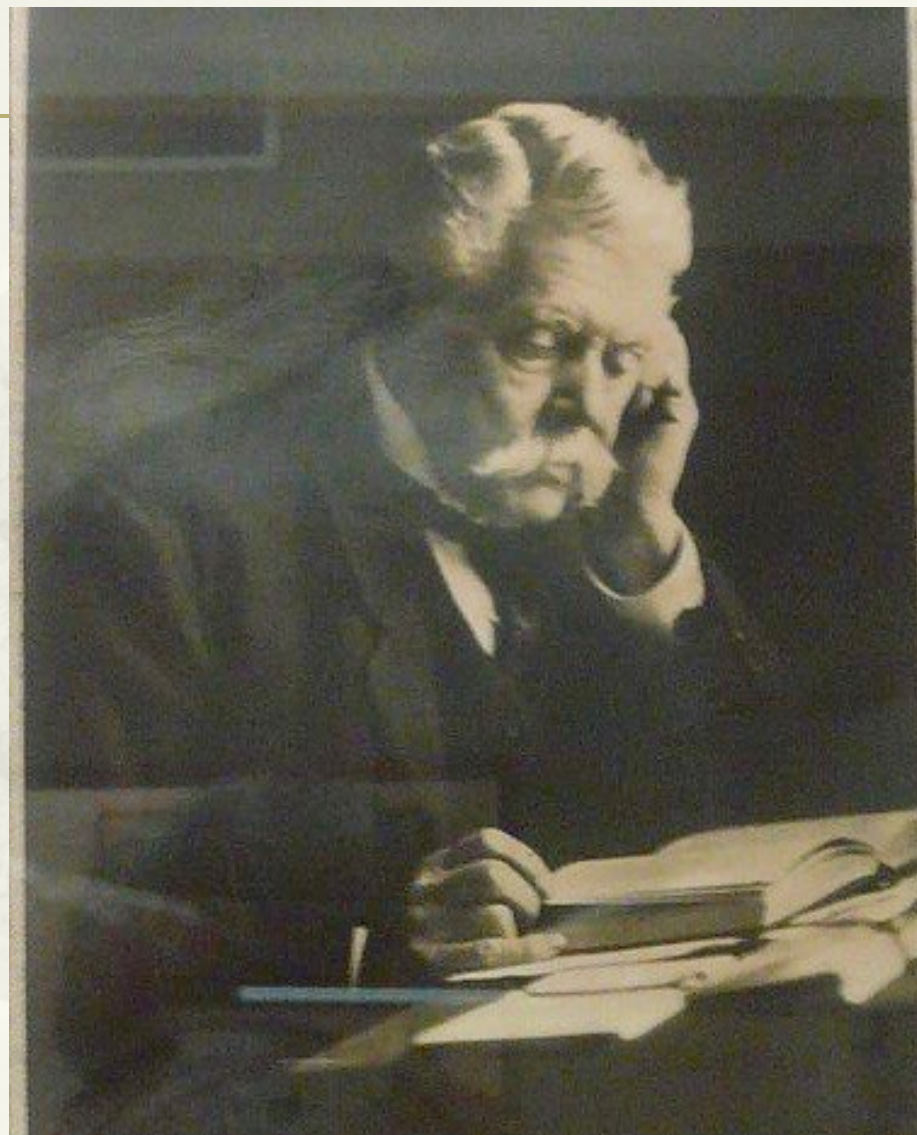
Gubbins - 2

- * Satow expressed concern about Japanese ambitions to Gubbins: they are great soldiers, sailors and diplomats. Presciently he fears an attack on Hongkong and the Philippines. (November 14, 1917)
- * Discusses *butsudan* and *kamidana* with Gubbins (March 14, 1918).
- * Discusses the Shimonoseki indemnity in detail (28 April 1918).

F.V. Dickins (1838-1915)

- * Naval surgeon, barrister, Japanologist, university administrator. Botanist, shared this hobby with Satow.
- * In Japan 1863-65 as naval surgeon.
- * Returned to Japan in 1871, established legal practice.
- * Returned to England in 1879.
- * Satow's letters to Dickins from 1906 to his death are in PRO 30/33 11/7. He expresses reluctance to write about Japanese matters because it "would I am sure prove difficult to avoid making use of knowledge acquired in consequence of my official position at Tokio..." (15 October 1906) This was strictly forbidden.
- * He wrote of Lafcadio Hearn that he "exaggerated Japanese virtues, and saw their mental and social qualities through a misty pair of subjective spectacles." (14 January 1907)

Frederick Victor Dickins



Dickins - 2

- * Satow writes “Many Japanese I like very much, but for all that I cannot bring myself to believe they are equal to the European – I mean taking the best of both.” He continued expressing admiration and confessed “that the Japanese nation has achieved far more than I had ever thought possible up to 1895...” In previous times they had been listless, but had “woken up with great energy.” He thought they had “a great deal of the painstaking plodding character of the German, little of the brilliancy of the French mind or the fine gold of the English genius at its best.” (Letter, 14 February 1907)
- * Unkind comment: “...the Japanese has no humour – he is far too serious.” (February 16, 1908)
- * “I went to town to appear before the Treasury Committee on the Study of Oriental Languages. I told them that in my opinion professorships of Chinese and Japanese history, philology, literature, philosophy and religions might usefully be established, if they could obtain the right sort of men for such chairs...” (15 March 1908) Only four men could be professor of Japanese – Aston, Basil Hall Chamberlain, Dickins, Gubbins?
- * Writing a chapter on Japan for Cambridge Modern History (29 March 1908). But “When I have done this contribution for the Cambridge people, like you I shall turn aside from Japan, and read modern history, that of Italy for choice.” (17 April 1908)

Dickins - 3

- * “Gubbins paid me a visit from the 12th to the 19th, and we had much talk about modern Japanese politics, of which he probably knows more than anyone.” Satow read one of his lectures to be given at Oxford and found it excellent. (29 August 1909)
- * Satow tells Dickins he has several books on the Christian century in Japan, and can lend them for a lecture at Bristol University. (24 October 1911)
- * He describes the *hara-kiri* (ritual suicide) of General Nogi as “a reversal to paganism”. (15 September 1912)
- * He tells Dickins that *The Athenaeum* has begun to send books on Japan for review, as well as Chinese. (12 October 1912) He gives up Chinese reviews as time-consuming and poorly paid (diary, October 17, 1913).
- * After sending books to Cambridge, he sells almost all his remaining books on Japan at Sotheby’s for £677. (June 29, 1913)

William George Aston (1841-1911)

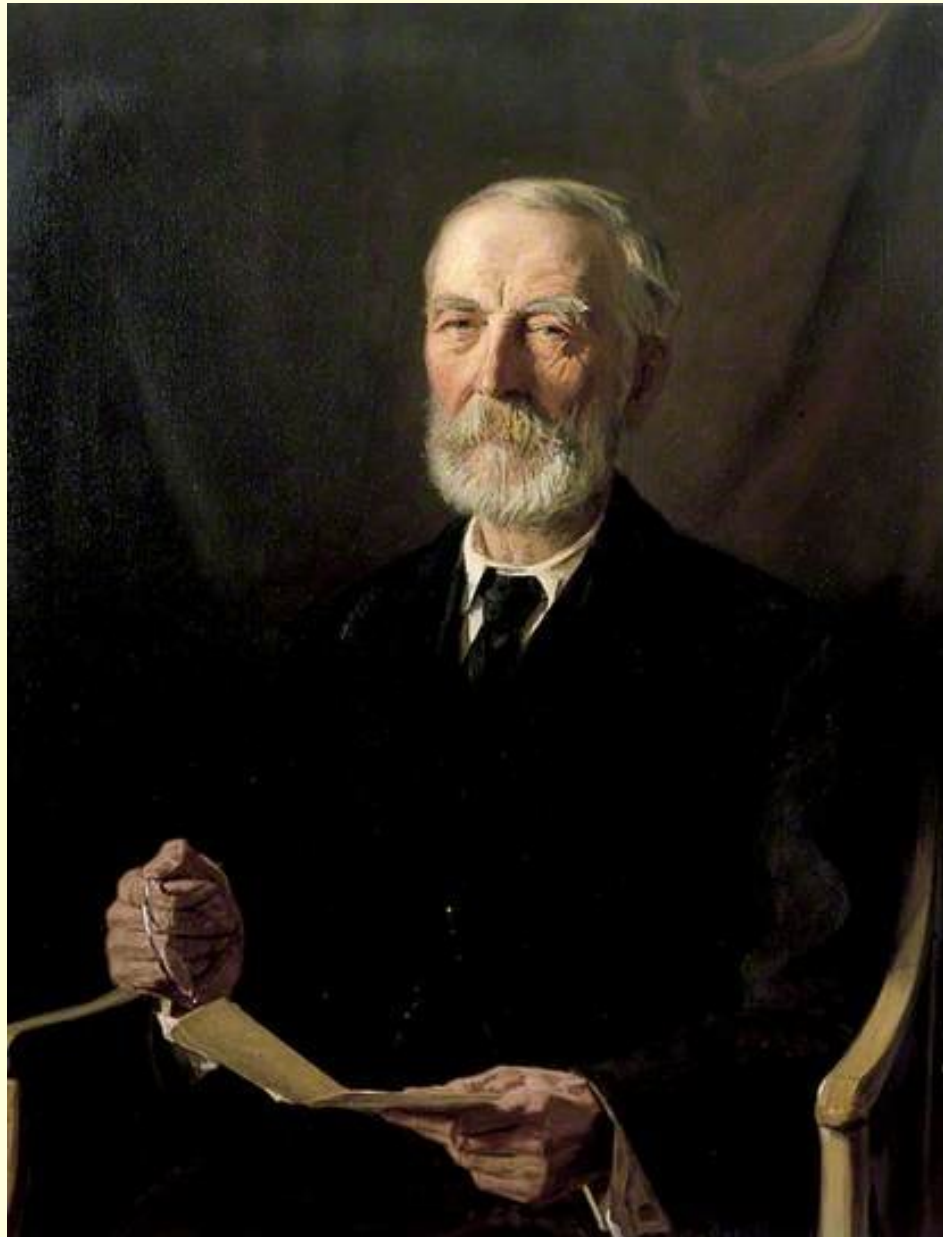
- * Aston died 18 years before Satow, but there are letters surviving from Satow to him in the period 1906-11 (PRO 30/33 11/3). He retired near to Satow in Beer on the South coast.
- * In 1908 Satow writes about Japanese history: lists of daimios, books on Japan, and of U.S. Consul General [Townsend Harris](#) that he was “a very interesting person. How cleverly he used the English and French as a bugbear to frighten the Japanese into at last signing the treaty [of 1858].”(26 May 1908)
- * On 15 June 1908 Satow sends his chapter for the Cambridge Modern History to Aston for his critical comments. On July 2nd he thanks Aston for his comments on the M.S.
- * Satow thanks Aston for an article and notes that ‘bushido’ was used as a word in the 18th century (11 August 1908).
- * He expresses alarm to Aston that Japan is going to reconstruct the Antung-Mukden railway in spite of Chinese opposition. He says that G.E. Morrison used to be pro-Japanese and is now anti. He thanks Aston for his suggestions about Japanese bird names which are excellent (9 August 1909).

William George Aston



Lord Reay (1839-1921)

- * Satow first met him on May 11, 1907 (diary). They were both delegates at the Hague Peace Conference that year, and became close friends.
- * Reay had been a colonial administrator in India (Governor of Bombay). Dutch-born, naturalized British in 1877. Head of the Mackay clan. He had no Japan experience.
- * Reay asks Satow about international lawyer Takahashi Sakue (10 August 1908). He asks about the Japanese tariff (18 August 1910). He asks whether Satow has read A.M. Pooley's *Japan at the Crossroads* (9 November 1917). He mentions an interview in the Daily Mail with Kato Takaaki (10 June 1918). He asks Satow's opinion of Japanese claims on Shantung (August 22, 1919). He regrets that Satow does not consider a war between Japan and the U.S. inconceivable (17 February 1921). (PRO 30/33 11/12, 11/13 and 11/14).



Lord Reay

Reay - 2

- * Satow in his letters to Reay: mentions Japanese verbal assurance to restrict immigration to U.S. and British Columbia (8 December 1907); mentions professors of Japanese history and literature (25 January 1908); says Takahashi Sakue is a good writer (11 August 1908); discusses Japanese tariff (19 August 1910) (PRO 30/33 11/15).
- * Satow says Nogi's suicide will not be admired in Japan (23 September 1912); is negative about Francis Brinkley; says Triple Intervention of 1895 led to Russo-Japanese war (9 November 1912); refuses to give paper requested by Reay on Japanese history at congress, recommends Gubbins or Dickins instead (15 December 1912); regrets there is no learned man in a chair of Japanese anywhere in Britain (13 July 1913). (PRO 30/33 11/16)
- * Satow contacted by Japanese ambassador Inoue Katsunosuke to give reference for Thomas Baty as international lawyer (June 11, 1915); says Russo-Japanese war for first time admitted internment of belligerent war-vessel in neutral ports; says Hayashi's secret memoirs are not worth getting (July 6, 1915).

Reay - 3

- * Satow says Redesdale's book has too much about his translations of Japanese state papers, most already printed in F.O. confidential print (November 9, 1915); says he and Redesdale had a very good time in Japan: "It was the time of my life. Nothing ever came up to it, not even Morocco or Peking." (November 22, 1915); has had a Dutch grammar for 60 years, but in Far East Chinese and Japanese occupied all his time (October 21, 1917). (PRO 30/33 11/17)
- * Satow notes change in Japanese government may delay sending troops to Siberia (22 March 1918); says Japanese willingly entered war in 1914 to turn Germans out of Tsingtao; can't understand views of Kato in Daily Mail; says Gubbins is the only man outside F.O. who knows what is happening in Japan as he reads Japanese newspapers; Japan is very ambitious to occupy Siberia (June 11, 1918). Mentions Dyer, Milne and Ayrton of Imperial College of Engineering, Tokyo (October 8, 1918). Says A.J. Balfour's tribute to Japanese allies will be appreciated there (November 12, 1918). Mentions some U-boats handed over to Japan (Christmas Day, 1918).

Reay - 4

- * Satow writes he is busy revising M.S. of “my story of Japan in the ‘60s” (May 27, 1920). He distrusts the political ambitions of Japan, wanting racial equality (January 23, 1921). Notes speech of Navy Minister on naval programme as “very menacing” and says Anglo-Japanese alliance is now out of date (February 27, 1921). Says he got many invitations for visit of Crown Prince of Japan, but finds travelling uncomfortable, dislikes wearing uniform and decorations, and has forgotten much Japanese (May 7, 1921). (PRO 30/33 11/18)

Lionel Berners Cholmondeley (1858-1945)

- * An Anglican priest and missionary, in Japan 1887-1921. He frequently wrote to Satow from Tokyo: there are 79 letters from him in the latter's general retirement correspondence (PRO 30/33 12 and 13). For example he writes on August 9, 1916 about Lake Chuzenji: "...Now to the main purport of my letter, for I am writing to tell you that I have been to Chusenji again for the first time since I was your guest in your newly built house. Our Embassy have now practically established a summer colony there..."
- * Cholmondeley first came up to Chuzenji on August 11, 1896. (Satow's Chuzenji diary. PRO 30/33 17/16.)

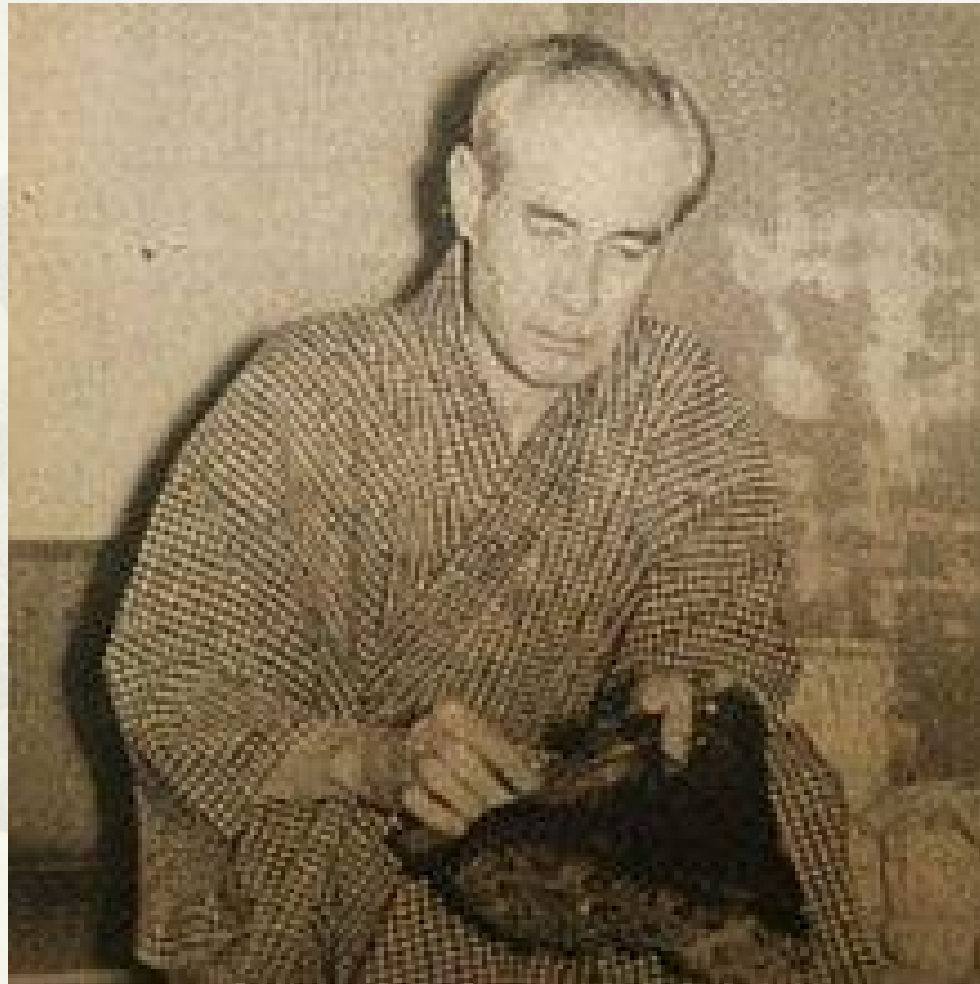
Letters to and from Japanese family

- * These letters are preserved in the Yokohama Archives of History. See the catalogue produced by Nakatake Kanami.

Takeda Hisayoshi in England

- * Hisayoshi was his second son, and an academic botanist.
- * He came to England to study at Birmingham University and the Royal Botanic Gardens (Kew) in 1910 and remained until 1916.
- * He visited Satow at Ottery St. Mary many times, especially at Christmas.
- * Known for his campaign to preserve Oze marshes.

Takeda Hisayoshi 武田 久吉 (March 2, 1883 – June 7, 1972)



The Great Kanto Earthquake (September 1, 1923)

- * Satow was concerned about his family, and relieved when he heard they were safe. He wrote in English to O-kane on February 17th telling her to have Hisayoshi record the cost of house repairs and arranged to send money to them for the repairs (Diary, 9 July 1924).
- * Prof. Robert Morton writes in his foreword to my edition of the 1921-26 diaries: “There is indeed remarkably little mention of his Japanese family: his common-law wife, Takeda O-kane, is never referred to by name... It looks like he did what he saw as his duty towards his Japanese family, but nothing more.”

Diary Entries 1921-6

- * 29 March 1921. Satow's close friend Allan Shand (formerly a banker in Japan) drives over to Ottery with Hayashi Gonsuke, the Japanese ambassador (1920-25). "He told us a good deal about what had taken place in Korea when he was minister there. In his time the war with Russia broke out [in 1904]. He went to Peking as minister in 1906, and that must have been when I met him last. He is an Aizu man, his grandfather & father were killed fighting at Fushimi in Jany. 1868."
- * 13 July 1923. Satow lunches with Shand and Hayashi Gonsuke in Exeter.
- * On January 2, 1924 Shand gives Satow photos of the destruction wrought by the earthquake of September 1, 1923 in Tokyo, Yokohama and Odawara.

Diary Entries - 2

- * “19 June 1922. Shand & Ida motored over to lunch with Prince & Princess Shimadzu. She told me she was a daughter of Tokudaiji, Ld. High Chamberlain of the Emperor Mutsuhito [Meiji], whom I knew very well. Shimadzu’s father I met at Kiôto in 1868 when I went there with old [Dr. William] Willis, who was lent to attend to the Satsuma wounded. We had coffee in the loggia and I showed them my Japanese shrubs, some of which they did not appear to know.”
- * Prince Shimazu Tadashige (1886-1968), son of Shimazu Tadayoshi. Naval officer, in England at his own expense, 1921-23. His wife was the daughter of Tokudaiji Sanetsune (1840-1919).

Diary Entries - 3

- * Satow asks Harold Parlett (Counsellor at Tokyo Embassy) to send him a Japanese translation of Dante's works in 10 vols. by Nakayama Masaki. (28 October 1925) Parlett replies he has bought them (letter dated January 19.)
- * It arrives on 11 March 1926. He 'examined' some volumes on next day and on 18, 25, 29, 30 April; 2-4 May.
- * On May 3 he writes to Dante author Paget Toynbee about the translation. On Sept. 1 he starts reading Toynbee's *Dante in English Literature*.
- * The last known diary entry on December 31, 1926 in which friends and acquaintances who died during the year are listed (as was the case from 1911 onwards) includes a Japanese name: Viscount Kawamura Kageaki (1850-1926) of Kagoshima was a field marshal in the Imperial Japanese Army whose death was reported in the *Express and Echo* of Exeter on April 28, 1926.

Honma Saburo

- * Honma Saburō 本間三郎 of Echigo province, now part of Niigata prefecture, was Satow's faithful manservant for almost 50 years, until Satow died in 1929. He was first hired before Satow left Japan at the end of 1882, and is mentioned as carrying baggage in Satow's diary for 16 January 1881.
- * He was the person who informed Takeda O-kane by a letter written in katakana of Satow's death. The letter is now in the Takeda archive at the Yokohama Archives of History. O-kane died on 16 January 1932, aged 78. In his will Satow made provision for Saburō's fare to return to Japan.

Japanese shrubs and trees

- * Satow was a keen botanist and kept some Japanese shrubs and cherry trees in his garden at Beaumont House, Ottery St. Mary. These would have been a constant reminder of his former life in Japan.
- * He included many newspaper cuttings in his diary, including one from the *Japan Times* of March 31, 1915 which stated that the person who had planted the cherry trees outside the British legation in Tokyo had since died. Satow was the planter and he wrote “!!! not yet” in the margin. (Diary, May 19, 1915) The trees are still there today.

Conclusion

- * Obviously Britain was - and is - a long way from Japan, and in Satow's time communication was much slower than now. A letter might take about a month by sea, and telegram was much faster but more cryptic.
- * Satow's Japanese family was still in Japan (Takeda O-kane, Takeda Hisayoshi) except for his eldest son Eitaro, in Colorado for his health (weak lungs).
- * We could not expect a retired man to take an active interest in a country so far away, yet in his discussions with Gubbins and Dickins we do see that he has not lost his academic interest in Japanese language, literature and culture. However, he regards European literature as superior and spends most of his time on that. He becomes wary of Japanese ambitions for racial equality, domination of the Pacific, and immigration to the U.S. and Canada.
- * He begins to learn Russian during the First World War, after his cousin Lisinka sends him *War and Peace* in Russian. He reads Dutch, Italian, French, German and Greek. Almost no Japanese.

Conclusion -2

- * He was fully committed to English life. He attended innumerable local committees (housing, hospital etc.) and was a magistrate, in Ottery and on the county bench at Exeter.
- * For a while he was chairman of the Ottery council (Urban District Council), 1916-17.
- * He was a strong supporter of the work of missionary societies in India, China and Africa, and church administration in Britain. He spoke at missionary society events, and regularly attended church in Ottery and Exeter.
- * We have to conclude that, while he did not totally turn his back on Japan, it certainly occupied his mind and energies much less in retirement – except of course for the completion and publication of *A Diplomat in Japan* published in 1921 which was written about the best time in his life.

Blue Plaque installed at Beaumont House, 2019



Select Bibliography – Satow's Retirement

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