



The Breeze

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Linking the Past... the present... Kobe and the world

As we look back to celebrate 65 years of history at St Michael's, it is important that we should also look forward to guarantee that St Michael's International School will continue to occupy a position in the forefront of international education in Japan for the next 65 years and beyond.

When the Hyogo Prefectural Board of Education awarded St Michael's the status of 'gakko hojin' in 2008, the school's governance had to be changed to a two-tier structure of Board of Trustees and Council. The reorganization this has entailed has occupied us for the past two years. Now, however, we are in a position to tackle some of the big issues the school faces.

Foremost amongst these is the physical structure of the school. We have to plan for a time when the present building must be replaced and, in the meantime, ensure that it can provide facilities matching the high standards of teaching offered. The present classrooms were designed for a different era before the use of computers and other technology became the norm in education. We must investigate ways of upgrading so that the facilities can meet the technical demands of the coming decades.

With changing demographics in Kobe and in the light of continuing global economic problems, the Board and Council are now making strategic plans for the financial viability of the school in the years ahead. We will need to find ways of saving money and of generating income. In this task, we request the help of everyone with an interest in and love of St Michael's so that in 65 years' time the future teachers, pupils and parents of the school will be able to look back and recognize our vision, just as we now look back to honour and recognize the vision of the founders of St Michael's in 1946.

Peter J. Mallett
Chair of Council
Member of Board of Trustees

Our History

In August 1945, one could have stood on Kobe's Tor Road in the vicinity of the present site of St. Michael's International School and had an almost unimpeded view as far as the skeletal remains of buildings along the Kaigan-dori seafront. Such was the scale of the war damage that little escaped unscathed. The English Mission School, a Tor Road landmark since the 1890s, was no exception – a pile of charred timbers and rubble was all that remained in the aftermath of a B.29 bombing raid in June 1945.

Phoenix-like, out of this rubble, St. Michael's was shortly to emerge. Founded by Bishop Michael Yashiro and Leonora Lea, a British missionary, the school inherited a tradition of Christian education in Kobe dating back to the Meiji era. The new school celebrated its opening in April 1946, in the presence of Sir Vere Redman from the British Embassy in Tokyo, with a parade of children and English Language School students from Miss Lea's home, their makeshift tatami-roomed school of the previous few months.



The new school, named after the Cathedral Church of St. Michael, opened its doors to both children of the international community and Japanese students wishing to study the English language. All such study had been banned by the Government during the war years, when the school building was occupied by the Japanese military, in a decree enforced by the Thought Police. The dual aspect, international and English language school, established at its opening has remained a special feature of St. Michael's up to the present day.

Amongst Kobe's present day international schools, St. Michael's is the only institution to have existed throughout the late 1940s, and remained so until the others reopened or were established in the early 1950s.

In the beginning, St. Michael's was little more than a wooden shack. This grew into a more substantial wooden building, a big improvement, but still a fire hazard. The rickety structure groaned and swayed during typhoons. Small schools often have advantages concerning the quality of education offered and teacher/student ratios, but disadvantages in relation to fundraising. St. Michael's, however, was fortunate. Bishop Yashiro was a figure of great importance in Japan at this time for his stand against the military government; the harassment he received in return earned him widespread respect. His influence enabled the school to borrow funds to replace the old wooden building with the sturdy steel and concrete structures found today.

These were built in phases: the east-wing overlooking Tor Road, housing the English Language School, in 1964; and the west-wing, containing the main part of the International School, in 1970. Thus the legacy of Bishop Yashiro and Miss Lea, who passed away shortly after in 1970 and 1971 respectively, lives on.

The 1980s represented a period of economic boom and increased enrolment. The

school made its final debt repayment. Much internal restructuring took place, together with the acquisition of new resources and technology, funded by higher enrolment income, which additionally led to the buildup of capital reserves. This contingency safety cushion contributed greatly to the school's survival when subsequent disaster struck.



The Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake on the morning of 17 January 1995 came within a hair's breadth of destroying all that had been achieved since the War. Fortunately, the school building, although surrounded by devastation, withstood the magnitude 7.2 tremors with no major structural damage. Following community relief work by many of the teachers and office staff, St. Michael's was able to reopen three weeks' later. In human terms, like so many other Kobe institutions, there were losses within families, but all children, language school students, and staff survived.

Short-term finance was now critical: an enrolment collapse, resulting in substantial cash-flow problems, exacerbated the need to ear-mark funds for fabric and foundation repairs. Notwithstanding assistance from the Government, alumni and the wider community, without the school's contingency reserves the school's future would have been in danger.

St. Michael's, however, rode out the crisis and subsequent enrolment recovery was rapid. The British National Curriculum was introduced a short while later and today St. Michael's focuses on a structured, integrated learning approach. With an attractive staff/student ratio, care in teacher selection, and facilities greatly enhanced by the new academic building opened in September 2006, St Michael's continues to provide an international education in a Christian tradition its founders would be proud of.

George Gibbons
Former Headmaster

From our School Chaplain

This year is the 65th anniversary for St. Michael's International School as an institution, but the actual history of the school goes back much further to 1877 when the first missionary school was established in Kobe.

Since 1890 there has been an Anglican school on the present site in Tor Road. The original English Mission School was destroyed in 1945 but rebuilt after the war through the great efforts and energy of then Bishop of Kobe, Bishop Michael Yashiro and English missionary Miss Leonora Lea. They founded the school as we now know it: they saw the necessity for a place of learning and acted to create one – to bring together the history of the English Mission School with the needs of the time.

The school started small and grew and developed over the years. When anything evolves, there needs to be a good base upon which to build. The Bible parable of the foolish man who built his house on the sand and the wise man who built his house on the rock is good evidence of this. St. Michael's has been wisely built on firm foundations: strong Christian principles, quality staff and a focus on multicultural primary education. These all help to sustain the vision of the school's founders.

It is testament to this that the school has survived intact many difficulties, including the great Hanshin Earthquake, and still functions well. The school's foundations, tradition, history, reputation and focus, ensure success, growth and continuing excellence.

Time has three phases – past, present and future – and while it is good to look back to remember the past and to value the present, we must look to the future! When we walk, we don't walk backwards looking at where we've been, or walk looking down at the ground, we look to the front, to where we are going, to face head-on what is coming.

The school 'family', to which all pupils belong, helps prepare young people for the future. If the learning St. Michael's pupils gain can be taken out of the classroom into the wider world, it is one small step along the road towards global understanding which leads to respect, love, peace and prosperity.



This year, St. Michael's celebrates 65 years of providing an education based on strong foundations, helping people to 'think, learn, know and grow'. That is surely something Miss Lea and Bishop Yashiro would be immensely proud of. It is wonderful that we can all be part of that legacy together! Long may it continue!

Paul Tolhurst
School Chaplain

From Our Chairman, School Board of Trustees

St. Michael's International School celebrates its 65th anniversary this year. It was founded on a snowy morning on 10th March, 1946 with the school motto *For the Glory of God and Hope of Youth*.

Shortly after, in 1949, I entered SMIS. The school then consisted of rickety wooden buildings and a shack which, by the time I graduated in 1958, had been replaced by more stable structures.

A former headmaster of St. Michael's predecessor, the English Mission School, returned to teach us English. True to his name, Mr. Walker loved to walk. On Wednesday afternoons we walked up Mt. Futatabi behind the school to the Shogahara Pond at the summit where Mr. Walker was instrumental in introducing the Boy Scouts movement to Japan.

The headmistress, and one of the founders of the school, Miss Lea, had stayed behind in Kobe during the War to take care of those who didn't or couldn't leave Japan. She experienced in full the suffering of that War. She was a kind headmistress who taught us Latin, French, English and the Bible. She cared for each student, regardless of their academic ability, their background, or what he or she was. She was always willing to help those who needed assistance. We knew and felt that we were truly loved. She brought out the best in each of us, knowing that there is time for every thing in God's Plan.

I was a late starter and didn't quite understand what was being taught at first. Gradually over the years with kind understanding of the teachers, things began to click and by the time I went to CA I began to understand. At CA, I was asked to tutor Latin to one student.

This November is the 40th year since Miss Lea passed away. Through her daily life, she showed us how to lead a life in God's love, full of hope.

I have been associated with SMIS for 63 years and am thankful for the wonderful education I received there. May SMIS continue to be what it has always been – a School of Hope – bringing out the best in each student through God's love.

Satoru Hamada
Chairman of the Board

St. Michael's Association

The alumni association of St. Michael's School has been principally dormant since the 60th anniversary celebrations, although there have been occasional get-togethers both in Kobe and in the U.K. to reacquaint ourselves with old classmates and teachers. Under the guidance of the School Board the alumni association has been reorganized as a subcommittee of the School Council. We met a few times throughout 2011, and one of the first decisions that were made was to call the organization St. Michael's Association. We believe that this name would capture everybody who has been involved in St. Michael's, and not just the people who graduated the school, as insinuated by the term alumni association. I would like to encourage all of you to take an active interest in St. Michael's Association, and we look forward to continue communicating with yourselves in the months and years ahead of us.

Keyji Johnsen
Chairman of St. Michael's Association
Member of the Council

SMIS Scholarship Fund

The scholarship fund of St. Michael's International School was established in the

recognition that occasionally families fall on hard times and cannot cover the cost of international education for their children. Scholarships are intended as a short-term, stop-gap measure until the family's financial situation improves and are awarded on a year-to-year basis.

The Scholarship Fund has traditionally relied on the generosity of the alumni. In order to ensure the long-term viability of the fund, we have included a ¥1,000 contribution to it from the Miss Lea Memorial Dinner.

In the coming years we intend to hold events for the specific purpose of furnishing the Scholarship Fund. I would like to thank you in advance for your generosity in supporting and understanding this fund for the benefit of all pupils at St Michael's.

Keyji Johnsen
Chairman of St. Michael's Association
Member of the Council