

## **BDOHP Biographical Details and Interview Index**

### **CORTAZZI, Sir (Henry Arthur) Hugh (2 May 1924-14 August 2018)**

**GCMG 1984 (KCMG 1980; CMG 1969)**

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## **RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR HUGH CORTAZZI GCMG IN CONVERSATION WITH ABBEY WRIGHT, MARCH /APRIL 2014**

AW: This is the 5<sup>th</sup> of March and Sir Hugh Cortazzi in conversation with Abbey Wright, giving his recollections of his career in the Diplomatic Service.

Hugh, you joined the Office in 1949, how did you come to this?

HC: Yes, I think it is worth noting how I came to be interested in this. I remember that before the War my father was a master at Sedbergh School and among his pupils were people who had joined the Indian Political Service, the Indian Civil Service. That was my first idea of what I would really like to do. And then, of course, during the War I remember hearing about the Eden Reforms of the Foreign Service and I thought “Ah, that’s where I would like to go and what I would like to become”.

I was never a real Sedbergh type, I am not a rugby man, so I didn’t really make much of a success of school but I did manage in 1941 to get a Scholarship to St Andrews University and that was for me the beginning. I had five terms at St Andrews before I joined up. At the time they were recruiting people to learn Japanese and other languages. I joined the Air Force in 1943 as an Aircraftsman Second Class and started doing Japanese. We were in barracks in London and I was there from late ’43 to early ’44. I then went out to India. I was commissioned in India and from there went on to Singapore where I was at the time of the Japanese surrender. I was acting as interpreter to General Dempsey who was Commander of 14 Army. Interpreter is a bit strong, as my Japanese was not that good only having started learning it during the war but I wasn’t bad as far as spoken Japanese was concerned.

Then I was involved, immediately after the war, at looking at the history of the Japanese Air Force in Singapore and in India and Sumatra. I then got a posting to Japan for intelligence and security duties where I was acting Flight Lieutenant and I had about 15 months in Japan from June ’46 to September ’47. During this period I couldn’t make up my mind quite what I wanted to do except that I wanted to join the Diplomatic Service.

I applied under the Civil Service Reconstruction Competition and when I came back at the end of ’47 I did the Stoke d’Abernon weekend. I didn’t do particularly well and I didn’t do particularly badly! I think I got 230 marks. At that point in time they were only taking people who got 240. I recall my final interview where the chairman was Sir Percival Waterfield. I shall never forget him saying to me “Mr Cortazzi, I think you were at St

Andrews University, were you not? Do you not think it is really like an extended sixth form at public school?" I thought to myself the answer had to be simply "No Sir". I didn't want to get into a silly argument. I was not Oxbridge and I was one of the very few people at that time who had not been to Oxbridge.

As I failed in 1947 I went and took my degree in Japanese at SOAS, graduating in '49. I did not know what I was going to do if I didn't get into the Diplomatic Service. I suppose I would have gone into business, but nobody was particularly helpful. In those days the Universities had no career structure advice and the government employment people didn't seem to help. So I was in some concern. I took the final interview again and came out with exactly the same mark, 230.

In August or September '49, it was indicated to me that in fact the Foreign Office were not getting all the people they wanted and they were reducing the pass mark from 240 to 235 and they might reduce it (it was all done in fives) to 230. So I was on tenterhooks and eventually they did make me an offer. That was in October 1949 that I joined the Office. I think it was a Mrs Atkins who rang me up and told me.

The extraordinary thing now, looking back, was that there was no training at all. My first day in the Office I was simply put into the Third Room in South East Asia Department where I worked with a man called Leslie Glass on Burma. He was an expert, ex Burma Civil Service, an interesting man. He didn't dress particularly like a Foreign Office man, he liked to wear sandals. Other people in that Third Room included Curtis Keeble, Leslie Fry who was ex Indian Civil and Reg Hibbert ...

AW: It was quite a Third Room! ...

HC: "What did one do?" one asked! Writing minutes, drafting, you just learned on the spot. The Head of my Department at that time was Rob Scott and the assistant, if I remember rightly, was John Lloyd and the Under Secretary was Bill Denning, Esler Denning who I came to know later on. I was there for about three months and was then told that I'd been posted as Third Secretary to Singapore to the office of the Commissioner General.

### **Third Secretary, Singapore, 1950-51**

I think when I joined the Service the salary had just been increased to £400 a year. To me it was at least better than I was getting on the Further Education Scheme Grant. Going to

Singapore I had to get tropical kit. Normally people went out in those days by sea, but I was needed quickly so I flew out to Singapore and found myself in the office of the Commissioner General where Malcolm MacDonald was the Commissioner General, but he was a fairly remote figure.

I worked basically to the Head of Chancery who was Dalton Murray and the Deputy Commissioner General who was a man called Sir John Sterndale-Bennett. Dalton Murray was kind to me. I found him a little irascible but he was a decent sort of person. He was succeeded by Dudley Cheke, who I knew much better later on, as Head of Chancery. Among the others in the Chancery was Oliver Wright. Oliver was a fairly arrogant young man who took it upon himself to disagree with Malcolm MacDonald on various things.

I shared a house in Singapore, first of all with Robin Mackworth-Young and then with John Heath. I nearly killed myself at one point by putting my hand up to a light bulb, we were giving a party on the lawn. I still have a scar. Fortunately while putting in the bulb I fell and broke the circuit. I had to have a minor skin graft.

I found the work of the Commissioner General's office was rather odd. First of all Singapore was still a colony. We were therefore, in a sense, coordinating policies towards South East Asia. Of course none of the missions particularly liked the Commissioner General being involved. It was another layer between them and the Foreign Office. Sometimes one felt that one wasn't actually getting very far. I suppose the value of the thing was that we were able to advise and work with the intelligence community. Of course that was the period when Britain had forces in South East Asia. The Naval Commander was Admiral Brind, the Army commander was General Harding, the Air Force man's name was Fogarty. We worked out of the headquarters in Phoenix Park and of course we had the friends and MI5 as well, SIFE, and there were regional information people, a man called John Rayner if I remember correctly. I think chief friend in those days was Maurice Oldfield who of course became C. So there were some interesting people.

Jack Sterndale-Bennett was a very hard-working, able, nice man. He was very conscientious. I am sure the only time he ever had off was Sunday afternoon. He was meticulous and I found I naturally responded to his work, working long hours oneself. Jack, or Benito as we used to call him, had been Head of the Far Eastern Department during the War. He got his K while I was there and he then became Ambassador in Bulgaria or Romania and retired. I think in some ways he deserved better. He knew how to write. He did most of the real work

of the Commissioner General's Office. I remember having to deal with some of the problems that arose with the Governor of Singapore who was a man called Gimson who frankly was not of the highest intellectual calibre. That's the fairest way of putting it and he certainly didn't know how to write.

We saw Malcolm MacDonald occasionally. He lived in Bukit Serene which was outside the Causeway. We had a conference; I think it was in December 1950, of all the Commanders in Chief, the Governor of Hong Kong, and the Ambassadors from the different missions. Dudley Cheke was to be the Secretary and I was to be his assistant but Dudley Cheke got sick, so with a single year's experience, I was the Secretary of this conference. The conference occurred at a time when there was trouble in Singapore over an Indonesian child, I can't remember the exact reasons, but there was rioting. Singapore was unsafe for a time. By that time Robin Mackworth-Young had gone and I was sharing with John Heath, a nice person, he died not so long ago. That was, in one sense, a baptism of fire.

A lot of the work was to do with economics and Frank Brenchley was the economic person. There was a big Rice Conference and the Japanese, who were still under occupation at the time, sent down a man called Kitahara. I thought "Poor man, first Japanese to come to Singapore after the War, not easy" so I thought I would try and help and go and meet him. I had bought my first car which was a Topalino, tiny and I'm fairly tall. But Kitahara was even taller than me and he almost had to be folded in! He eventually became Japanese Ambassador in Paris, he was a French speaker and I got to know him later on.

We lived in modern houses that had been put up, our little house was in Holland Road not very far from the botanical gardens.

AW: Were you able to carry on with your Japanese studies?

HC: Not really, I was basically learning the ropes.

AW: But you had a chance to practice with Kitahara?

HC: Yes, but he spoke such good English and French.

AW: And did you travel?

HC: There were two interesting visits with Malcolm MacDonald. We went to Burma twice, flying up in an old Dakota. Malcolm was very effective, I saw him charming General Ne

Win. We went once to Rangoon and the other time to Rangoon and up to Mandalay and the Shan states. It was fascinating, talking with people in Burma. And I did one trip to Medan in Sumatra. We weren't able to go up into Malaya much because of the troubles there.

I didn't have any leave when I was there. Being a tropical post, it was 18 months. I was due for leave in the middle of 1951 and at that point I was told that my next posting was to be to Tokyo, which was of course absolutely sensible as I'd got Japanese. Interestingly enough the Foreign Office said "We train our own people in Japanese, we don't really care about university teaching, we prefer to do it ourselves". And they did. As far as they were concerned I had to pass all the Civil Service exams in Japanese. In fact, later on, I became the Civil Service Examiner for Japanese, but that's in the future.

Of course the biggest issue while I was in Singapore was the Korean War. We had, I think, six cypher officers, but they were overwhelmed and I, as Third Secretary, was drafted in to assist. It was all done by book cypher, by one-time pads. You had to subtract numbers and look up the wording, so it was time consuming and via diplomatic wireless. The groups often got scrambled. As we were receiving reports from all the different posts we had an immense amount of traffic, too much I think. People forget what it was like in the days when everything had to be done by hand and when everything was typed with carbon copies. The carbons didn't always work properly and to have something photocopied was an expensive business and you had to send it to a photocopying office.

I was thinking about the communications within the Foreign Office in those early days and the conditions. I expect people have told you about the tubes and of course the various boxes, RJs and BJs and all that and the messengers and of course the fact we were not properly heated. I'll come to that later on, the working conditions.

AW: So the impact of the Korean War on ...

HC: Yes, there wasn't much that we in Singapore could do, but we were coordinating and bearing in mind that we had forces in Malaya, Singapore and of course in Hong Kong. There was the whole logistical business, the intelligence business and the whole question about recognition of Communist China.

## Second Secretary, Tokyo, 1951-54

I went home on leave. I was allowed to fly home and then had a boat trip to Japan by cargo ship. It must have left mid September and I got to Japan by the 18<sup>th</sup> October. It was a good four or five weeks and a good opportunity to do some revision of Japanese. I arrived in Japan in the late autumn 1951 and I think I was promoted to Second Secretary in the United Kingdom Liaison Mission to SCAP. Bill Denning, Sir Esler Denning, had just been appointed as Head of the Mission with the rank of Ambassador, and would be appointed Ambassador to Japan when the Peace Treaty, which had been signed in San Francisco in September, was ratified. So we were first of all accredited to the Supreme Command of Allied Powers.

Soon after I got to Japan I shared a house in the Compound with two other language students. One was David Simon and the other was Dick Ellingworth. David Simon later died in a skiing accident and Dick retired eventually from the Foreign Office, I keep in touch, he's in a home now. They were learning Japanese, teachers came to the house.

I was the dogsbody. The then Head of Chancery was a man called Arthur de la Mare, later Ambassador in Thailand, he was an ex Japan Consular Service man as, of course was Bill Denning. The number two in Tokyo was a man called George Clutton. We had to face the fact that, up to that period, everything had been provided by the Japanese because we were part of the Occupation Forces. We had, therefore, to prepare for the situation in which we administered ourselves and paid for ourselves. There was a huge tail which had to be reduced and Arthur de la Mare gave me the job of running the administration. We had a very junior administration officer, I think he was a Grade 9. One of the things I had to do was to deal with the people in the Embassy who had it very easily. They were over staffed. There were local staff where everybody had been provided by the Japanese and we had a major problem of getting accommodation outside, as there wasn't enough room in the compound. One of my real tasks was dealing with the administration and having to cope with senior officers who said "Why do I have to give up this?" "Why should I have to do that?"

AW: No, people never like anything being cut?

HC: No, it was quite difficult but I had support from Arthur de la Mare and it was good training.

Apart from doing a certain amount of political reporting and so on, another major task was that we had to look at the UN Status of Forces Agreement. The United Nations forces were

using bases in Japan for the Korean War and therefore we had to get a Status of Forces Agreement with the Japanese. After the Peace Treaty the Americans had worked out a Status of Forces Agreement for US forces remaining in Japan, but the Japanese were not very happy with it because it included criminal jurisdiction and other issues which they didn't like and they used the UN Status of Forces Agreement as a way of getting back at the American one. Hour after hour we would argue with the Japanese. I remember have to go to the Japanese meetings in an overcoat because there was no proper heating. The Japanese were difficult. It was basically a British Commonwealth affair, so there was myself, an Australian, a New Zealander and a Canadian. We had to argue the toss for a long time. I must have sent goodness knows how many telegrams about the Status of Forces Agreement! It was a very difficult negotiation. I remember sending one telegram which had been signed off by someone who probably hadn't read it properly. I said "It's time we gave up flogging the dead horse of the American umbrella". John Pilcher was then Head of Far Eastern Department and wrote to de la Mare a letter which consisted totally of mixed metaphors. I shall never live down that mixed metaphor! It was appropriate! Those were the two big issues.

And those were the days when Japan was still very poor. I'd known that of course in the Occupation. Roads were poor. The Ambassador had a villa, sadly it no longer belongs to the Embassy, in Chuzenji, in the mountains. Bill Dening was a strange man. He was a very able man, but he was a dour old bachelor and I found him rather intimidating. One incident, in the middle of 1952 after the Peace Treaty, but before we got the Status of Forces Agreement settled, occurred in Kobe when a sailor, it might have been two, from HMS Belfast got drunk and beat up a couple of Japanese. They were arrested and because there was no Status of Forces Agreement, there was an unholy row with the Japanese about this. For some reason or other I was left in charge at a weekend. Whether Arthur was away I don't know, but Bill Dening was up in the mountains. In those days the telephone did not work, you had to book a trunk call. There was a court case in Kobe. We had a not very competent consul in Kobe, his name was Woodford Booth. He rang me up to ask what he should do and I told him to try and get it postponed. Eventually I got onto Bill Dening at Chuzenji. He said crossly "I'm coming down". I thought "What have I done? Cortazzi's on the skids!" He came down looking thunder and said "Have you consulted the Americans?" I said, no and he said "Go and consult them", so I consulted the Americans. I felt he resented having his weekend disturbed.

One found oneself doing Duty Officer at the weekend at different times. I remember one evening being summoned by the Japanese Police to a police station in central Tokyo where they'd got a drunken Englishwoman who'd been trying to black market. I tried to reason with her and suggested she apologise. She got more and more difficult but I sobered her up by saying "My good woman", awful phrase, one shouldn't use that and one certainly wouldn't be allowed to do so now, but it helped in this case!

AW: Did you have normal relations with the Japanese ..?

HC: I think one's got to divide this into two. To put aside the period up to the end of April 1952 when we were accredited to SCAP and it was only afterwards that we were accredited to the Japanese. May Day 1952 was quite an insecure period because there was rioting in Tokyo and the riots around the Imperial Palace were quite close to the Embassy. So we were becoming more and more involved first of all with the Japanese and the question of privileges and problems of British subjects in Japan and with the major issue of compensation. We had a claims First Secretary and we had a large staff, a few of whom did the real work. Apart from Service attachés, we had a Labour Attaché, a Claims Officer, but the actual core of the Embassy was quite small. So that was one issue, the administrative work, that I had to deal with.

I managed to do one tour of Japan while I was there, going up to the North of Japan, looking at the changes being made in Japanese agriculture. One of the great benefits of the Occupation had been the land reform. A lot of my work was with the Americans and with the Commonwealth but then increasingly with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We had the problem of foreign doctors being allowed to operate in Japan, these were the sort of issues that came up. I didn't get involved at that point in commercial work, later I was Commercial Counsellor and that was very interesting, but in those days I did a good deal of dogsbodying in the political reporting, departmental letters, drafting.

We were then very much concerned about three major issues, the threat of communism, the threat of the right wing and the dangers from the Japanese economy. Our friends were declared to the Japanese and they were trying to keep an eye on the Soviet mission. They existed and the Japanese knew of them, no point in disguising the fact and they were very much involved in watching the communist threat. The third major issue was Japanese rearmament. Rearmament is the wrong word but the Japanese Self Defence forces were established on American encouragement. They were just starting, so that was one element

and the other was what could be done for the Japanese economy, how could poverty be overcome. Its infrastructure had hardly started. I came back from Japan in '54. I went out at the end of '51 and I was posted back to London and got back in April '54.

AW: So you saw enormous changes in those years?

HC: Well yes but in '54 the economy had not taken off. It was different in '61, it was a different issue.

AW: And had you managed to make friends with any local Japanese people?

HC: With some but it was not easy. It was very difficult to penetrate Japanese houses but we did get to know some young students. We had meetings with them with Dick Ellingworth and David Simon. We had a number of friends coming over, particularly Dr Carmen Blacker who I'd known from before. She later became prominent in Japanese studies at Cambridge. An old friend of mine and when she came the three of us gave a party for her and she went and stayed with her Japanese friends so it developed our Japanese friendships with young people and also with the younger people in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We tried to entertain but I didn't travel as much as I would have liked. The roads were so bad. To get to the tip of the peninsula it could take all day. I had a Morris Oxford that I had taken out because they had said "Bring as big a car as you can afford".

AW: And were there many official visits from London?

HC: No, practically none in those days because air travel was very expensive and it took time. You had to fly the southern route. The polar route didn't start until 1962, which meant you had to fly via Cairo, Karachi, Bangkok, Hong Kong. British Airways was the only airline. JAL started in the early '50s but communications were not that good. I think that '51-'54 Japan was re-emerging. There was a certain amount of resentment against the Occupation. I remember an incident when I had to pay a cheque for two properties we were buying from the administration that dealt with enemy properties. One was for the Naval Attaché and one was for the Military Attaché. I remember going to the Japanese with the cheque and found a man with his feet on the chair who said very contemptuously "Oh, sterling, pooh". There was resentment and Japanese bureaucracy made one feel rather uncomfortable.

I think I found my attitude to Japan was more favourable during the Occupation. I think it became less favourable during this period, but there's always a case of a kind of love hate relationship.

### **Foreign Office, 1954-58**

AW: Shall we talk about the next period at the Foreign Office in London?

HC: I came back and was appointed to Far Eastern Department. Tim Martin was the Assistant and Colin Crowe was the Head of Department and I was the Third Room Secretary, dealing with Japan.

The most interesting thing in that period was the visit by Mr Yoshida, the Japanese Prime Minister; I think it was in October. We had to prepare a programme for him and included a visit to the House of Commons where he had rather a difficult time over Japanese copying of designs and cheap Japanese textiles. Although he'd been Ambassador in London, his English wasn't that good. He was being given dinner by Winston Churchill. We hadn't catered for an interpreter because we assumed that he wouldn't need one but at five o'clock on the evening we received a summons from Number Ten, the Prime Minister had heard that Yoshida had had difficulty in the House and would we please provide an interpreter for dinner. I went home, put on my black tie and had a scrambled egg. It was an interesting occasion. Winston had had a stroke, he was deaf and Yoshida was deaf. But Winston was making sense. Anthony Eden was there, Clement Attlee, I can't remember all of them, and I remember doing my best and fortunately it wasn't difficult Japanese but you didn't know how much they could hear. I got through it and Winston thanked me at the end and I thought that was something.

The following day I had to go with Yoshida to Southampton where he was going to get the boat. He'd arrived by air and I'd had a row with the customs officer who wanted to check over his baggage! We went to see him off on the Queen Mary. I remember going down on the train with him and he said "I hope you didn't find too much difficulty with my cockney Japanese". It was an interesting visit. These are the gossipy aspects of the situation, I've dealt with the content in one of my biographical portraits in one of the books I edited.

I stayed with the Far Eastern Department until the end of '54 and at the beginning of 1955 I was posted to the Information Research Department. I stayed there until we were posted to Germany in 1958, so I was there for three and a bit years.

It wasn't the happiest period of my career. The first Head of Department was Jack Rennie, who was a nice guy. The Assistant was Norman Reddaway with whom I didn't altogether hit it off. The real problem I found was I wasn't really sure about the value of the work that I was doing. I think that IRD did some useful things but some of the work that I was dealing with ...

I had Western Europe to deal with and I had to supervise something called 'The Interpreter' with a strange woman called Zena Korentsheski who was the editor. There was a lot of editorial work putting out propaganda, but some of it was so useless. And there was something called 'The Digest' which didn't actually get very far. There were some very interesting people there, one of them was Bob Conquest, although he had his women problems, I remember his Bulgarian wife. Bob was by far the most intelligent person there.

It was a strange organisation because the Foreign Office people, like myself, were the temporaries. There were these people who had established themselves. There was a mafia and I wasn't by any means convinced that we were spending all the money efficiently. I'm not saying it was misused, but not efficient and not working. I think IRD was a necessary organisation at one point but it should have been tighter controlled. It should never have been this 'we and they'. The IRD people resented the Foreign Office people in a way. They accepted the Head of Department but even there ... And they had their own relationships with MI6. It's all history now but it wasn't a happy period as far as I was concerned except that I did meet my wife there!

They originally wanted me to deal with the Far Eastern side. I said "Look, am I ever going to escape from the area?" So that was why I was put on something else, but in a way I might have done better if I'd been on the Far Eastern side.

You didn't really feel you were essential in IRD. It was peripheral to the work of the Foreign Office and I remember being particularly unhappy in '56 at the time of Suez and the Hungarian Uprising. The suppression in Hungary was so tragic and yet it was overlaid by our own stupidity over Suez. I had no influence over the situation whatsoever. I felt very strongly that we were wrong in going into Suez and if I'd known how it had been done, I'd have been even more against it. I regretted bitterly that we were unable to exploit, exploit is the wrong word, but to use the suppression of freedom in Hungary as a weapon against the Soviets in the Cold War. That was the most important issue in relation to my time in IRD.

I said that while a lot of good things were done by IRD, I think an awful lot of pushing out propaganda was not effective. They were constantly saying “Oh we’ve had so many publications in such and such”. I said “What the hell does it matter if you have a publication in the San Jose Times? A snippet, meaningless.”

AW: Counting clippings?

HC: Yes. That was what I found so unacceptable. Our Offices at that point were in Carlton House Terrace.

AW: How much longer did the IRD survive after that?

HC: Oh I think it went into the seventies.

AW: And your Foreign Secretary was Eden? Did you see anything of him?

HC: It was Eden yes and then Selwyn Lloyd but I never saw them.

AW: They were remote figures?

HC: Totally remote, in fact I don’t recall in my period in IRD meeting a single Minister. Indeed I don’t think I ever met anyone above the rank of Head of Department. It was Jack Rennie, who was a nice man and of course he became Head of MI6. He was not an MI6 man. And there was Ralph Murray the AUS, he was Rennie’s predecessor but I hardly met him. There was Rosemary Allott, who was Elizabeth’s boss and Rosemary, on my recommendation, became the Secretary of the Diplomatic Service Association in the old days when I was Chairman of the Association, later on, but that’s for later.

AW: So we shall pause here, to start again another day.

### **First Secretary, Bonn, 1958-60**

AW: This is the 25<sup>th</sup> March and Hugh Cortazzi is resuming his recollections of his diplomatic service. Hugh, when we left off last time, you were leaving the IRD and you were headed for Bonn. How did you feel about that?

HC: I had studied German and so in a way it was a good opportunity to revise and rework my German and of course it was different from Japan, so it gave me European experience.

It was my wife's first post overseas and it wasn't an easy place to go to. The Embassy in Bonn was in the "Bundesdorf" and it was a very large embassy and to me, after Tokyo, it seemed to lack the friendliness, the informality of Tokyo where people looked after each other more. In Bonn it wasn't easy at first to settle in particularly as both of us had medical problems at that point. I had a slipped disc. The doctor, a Doctor Hollenhorst, was not very effective, not very good and the administration was a bit remote.

Looking back, it was a very snobbish embassy. Our Head of Chancery was Peter Wilkinson who later became Chief Clerk and Ambassador in Austria. His deputy was Tim Martin and I remember at Chancery meetings they would say things like "Oh, he lives on the wrong side of the Park", that sort of thing which I didn't care for much. The other problem, as far as I was concerned, was that my job was to work with a fellow called Lance Pope who had been ex Control Commission and had very good German and was very much in with the German politicians, he drank with them. He was germanified in a way! In a sense he wanted me to be his dogsbody but he resented my doing anything else, so it was difficult to discover exactly what my role was.

We made good friends there, Roy Denman was one, Dick Stratton, who'd been our best man was there, but in a way there was something similar to the staff make-up of IRD. As far as the people who lived in Bonn, the ex Control Commission people, were concerned, we were temporaries and they were the permanents. In fact it was the other way round.

Kit Steel was the Ambassador, but I hardly saw him. The two Ministers were first of all Michael Williams, who was rather a remote person too, he eventually became Ambassador to the Vatican, and his successor was Michael Rose, a nice guy, who I think was probably found out to be gay. The Economics Minister was a man called Marjoribanks. Ken Scott was there and Roger Hervey was the Private Secretary to the Ambassador.

We enjoyed Bonn eventually because it was a lovely country, particularly in the Rhineland. I found the German officials a bit ... There were too many ex Nazis, particularly in the Home Ministry. I wasn't sure how much influence the Foreign Ministry really had at that point. Those were the days of Adenauer. Von Brentano was the Foreign Minister but again, people I never saw ...

AW: They were the background ...

HC: Yes. I managed to get round all of the Laender because I had an internal reporting job to do. I remember doing a detailed study of anti-Jewish feeling that was still rife in Germany and I reported on the different governments of the Laender. It had its interests.

We got to know as many people as we could but it wasn't easy to get close to Germans. To be invited to a German house was quite rare. It was true of almost all countries. I think one of the things that worries me a bit is that in the modern Diplomatic Service, from what I understand, very little entertaining is done at home. And it seems to me that the best way to get to know people is to entertain them at home informally. In some senses it isn't so much that you have to be entertaining somebody who is of official importance, but that you've got to understand the feeling of the country. For instance when we got to know a young lawyer who lived in Cologne, and got to know him well, I felt that was myself getting into the German spirit. But then there is this whole question of guests having to be the right people. I don't know what happens now but I don't suppose anyone gets any entertainment allowance! I see it with the Japanese Embassy here. Most of them are coming here without their wives, they don't do much entertaining and I wonder what they do.

AW: Whether they get to know anything about us at all?

HC: Yes, that's right. I felt when we had a senior Japanese to dinner the other day here, he probably had never been in a British household before.

AW: Yes, and quite interestingly, you were in two countries after World War II that had been beaten by us. Did you think that was an element of why they were difficult to get to know?

HC: No, I suspect that even in the friendly relationships of the United States we had later on ... Although Washington was a "false capital", even Americans don't have you into their houses so often.

I'm not sure that there is much else I particularly want to say about Germany.

AW: Were there any big issues while you were there in our relations?

HC: We did go up to Berlin and it was interesting going through into the Eastern Zone. The East German problem was the issue. It was before we joined the Common Market, so there were also economic issues. Remember, Germany was occupied, well not occupied, but there were still large numbers of British Forces, so a major part of the Embassy's job was actually

liaising with the forces in Germany and with the Commandant in Berlin. In a sense our biggest worry was Nazism. Was it really eradicated? There were, as I've said, a number of ex Nazis both in the Ministries and I think in the Bundestag.

It was a good experience and we would have been happy to go back again to Germany for a second posting but then I was posted to Japan again in 1960.

AW: So after Bonn, you returned to the UK ...

HC: I came on leave but then on to Japan.

### **First Secretary, later Head of Chancery, Tokyo, 1961-65**

HC: Elizabeth was pregnant with our first child and we travelled out in the beginning of 1961 where I was First Secretary in the Chancery.

AW: Were you very excited to be returning?

HC: I was quite pleased to return. I would have been happy to have remained in Germany but I was glad to go back to Japan. It gave me the chance to renew friendships. Japan, at that stage, was just emerging from the period of poverty and gearing up for the 1964 Olympics. Japan was also reasserting its national identity and there was a certain amount of shuffling off the chip on their shoulder and getting an element of pride back that no doubt was desirable.

Oscar Morland was the Ambassador. Oddly enough he was a shy man. He'd been in the former Japan Consular Service. He was married to Alice Morland who was quite a formidable lady, a daughter of a former Ambassador, and of course the whole Morland family were in the Service. Martin Morland ... John Whitehead did a biographical portrait of Oscar Morland for one of the books I've edited and put together which is "British Envoys in Japan, 1859-1972". I wrote a number of those portraits.

I suppose the first two years I was number two in the Chancery, the Head of Chancery was Lees Mayall. Leesy knew Maclean and Burgess, he joined pre-war. The Honourable Mary Mayall's brother had been Ambassador to Washington. Then Nigel Trench came and then when they went, Lees Mayall was only there with me for six months, and when Nigel Trench was moved on, I was appointed Head of Chancery but not promoted. Typical at that time. I was lucky to be a Counsellor, but I didn't get appointed to Counsellor until I was 41.

I found the job as Head of Chancery fascinating. I think I was not bad at administration and looking after things and making sure that the Embassy worked properly. Oscar Morland was succeeded by Tony Rundall, Sir Francis Rundall. Tony Rundall had been an inspector and then Chief Clerk. He knew nothing about the Far East.

AW: He didn't speak Japanese?

HC: No he didn't. He made supreme efforts, he was extremely conscientious, a very serious man, perhaps rather lacking in humour, but the Rundalls were extremely keen on staff morale, I think rightly, which, although I've had some criticisms of Tony, he was a good administrator and he saw well what was needed. He didn't understand Japan, but he didn't pretend to. I owe it to him that when we left in '65 he asked for me to come back as Commercial Counsellor and I came back in '66. He saw, at that point, the vital importance of commercial work and he saw that while I had not had commercial experience, he saw that this was a field which I could do. And I think that of all my posts, I enjoyed that of Commercial and Economic Counsellor most of all, in '66-'70.

AW: And of course this was the period of great growth?

HC: Yes that's right. The Embassy was fairly large, we were still coping with some of the past, even in the 1960s we were still dealing with claims issues. It was a good and friendly Embassy, we had our problems of course, what one doesn't?

I had enjoyed my job as Head of Chancery and I did quite a lot of political reporting of course. And trying to get to know Japanese politicians. I didn't get as much travel as I would have liked. I did do a couple of tours, but not enough and I think this is a point generally, how important it is for people to travel within the country. The problem with limited staff is how you get time to travel. The cost of travel in Japan in those days was not high and in the sixties it was pretty uncomfortable because there were very few good hotels.

I suppose the highlight of those first First Secretary tours was the Olympic Games of 1964. Dick Ellingworth was appointed as the Olympic Attaché because they needed someone to deal with a country that nobody knew

AW: It was he that you had previously shared a house with?

HC: Yes, as a bachelor, he and David Symon. Dick was actually working on the information side. There were interesting people. We had people who were almost permanent. There was

Vere Redman, about whom I've written a biographical portrait. He was the Information Counsellor. He was a strange guy, a newspaper man and teacher of English in Japan before the war. He suffered greatly from very bad diabetes, sometimes he'd be found in a coma yet he was a chain smoker and his consumption of gin was phenomenal! He was a man of great character. He was succeeded by a man called John Figgess. John Figgess became British Commissioner for Expo '70 in Osaka later on. John Figgess is another interesting character. He was a businessman before the war, he'd got good Japanese, which was quite rare, and he was very interested in art and ceramics. Eventually, on his retirement, he went to Christies. When I first went to Japan he was Assistant Military Attaché. He was Military Attaché I think in the early sixties, and when he finished being Military Attaché he was appointed to succeed Vere Redman as Information Counsellor. So these Information Counsellors were not permanent members of the Diplomatic Service. Both of them were knighted in the end, Vere was made a Knight Bachelor and John Figgess was made KBE on his appointment as Commissioner to Expo. I've written about both of them.

I've probably done more work on books relating to Japan since I retired. At the moment I am editing the ninth volume of the series called "Britain and Japan Biographical Portraits". I've got about fifty contributions for Volume 14. And the two books about Envoys. Much of this work had been done with Professor Ian Nish from LSE. Ian is a year or so younger than me but stalwart in support of this project. In these volumes we have covered quite a lot of aspects of people who were involved and a lot of non-Embassy people as well. At the moment we are working on a book of despatches written by the Embassy between 1967 and 1972 to be called "The Growing Power of Japan" and it will cover the period when Sir John Pilcher was Ambassador. I worked for him as Commercial and Economic Counsellor from 1967-70. I don't think that anybody now would produce this sort of in depth coverage of Japan. It's going to be getting on for 200,000 words. I've got all of the despatches from the Office that were printed and one or two that weren't printed and I've just edited them slightly, in the sense of removing all the "Sir I have the honour to be". I have added a full introduction, explaining the background. I think it will be interesting in showing what the Foreign Office actually could do. I'm sorry this is getting away from the chronological order of the story, but Pilcher did have (and again I've written about Pilcher so I don't want to repeat all of that) some limitations, as we all do, but I liked John and he let me do my job as Commercial Counsellor. He wrote wittily, and in 1971 the Emperor of Japan came to London and John Pilcher wrote some very good despatches in 1971 about the historical role of the

Emperor. He understood better than many. He'd been in Japan before the war and he had sensitivity. He was more interested in culture than in commerce.

AW: To return to where we were in chronological order. You were talking about the Embassy, and the size of it, and the various people working in it. Were you finding it easier to meet Japanese people generally than you had on your earlier posting? Had it relaxed a bit?

HC: Yes it had. I think the Japanese were still very conscious that their homes were small and so the entertainment, on the Japanese side, was almost invariably in restaurants, and it was understandable.

One of my post tasks was to deal with language tuition. We continued to have two full-time language students a year and during my time as First Secretary and Head of Chancery we arranged to have a language school at Kamakura and I insisted that students should try and stay with Japanese families for a certain period of time, immersion, and I was responsible for the examinations. One of our problems with the language examinations was that the Civil Service Commission simply didn't understand the nature of the Japanese language and they wanted to impose conditions. So that took one lot of struggle on my part to deal with Training Department. But the good thing was that we did continue, two a year, sometimes three. The selection of students was difficult. In my view the selection of students coming to Japan, the younger you got them the better. The ones who had the greatest difficulty were the ones who began doing Japanese in their late twenties or even later. Also it was difficult for them if they hadn't had what I would call a good tertiary education. We did have one or two Branch B officers who did very well but some not. Some hadn't got the right motivation or background; I don't mean snobbery, but educational background. It did require a great deal of visual memory, audio memory and application. No way could you learn Japanese without jolly hard work. It was sad because we did get some people who simply couldn't make it. I was not sure that the Foreign Office always chose the students wisely. What I also find depressing is that a lot of these students, and I'm talking about Branch A, did their studies, came to Japan and then they went. Not all of them came back and very few actually maintained a relationship with Japan which considering they'd spent two years on the language you would have thought that they would have maintained a link or relationship. It is very difficult from the point of view of the Foreign Office. How often do you send somebody back. You do need to send them back from time to time in order to keep the language alive, particularly with a difficult language, but you also need to give them other

experience. It was more difficult earlier because of distance. Today it's a non-stop flight to Tokyo. In the old days you had to go via the southern route. The polar route wasn't established until the early sixties. The direct flight makes quite a difference to coming back home during a posting. We didn't think of coming back to the UK.

I think I told you that early in the early fifties when I was there, you didn't even have direct dialling within Japan. Even when I was Commercial Counsellor, and I'm talking about 1969/70, it was quite difficult to telephone London and we didn't on the whole. Once or twice one got a telephone call from London but that was very rare. We were still tied to the bag system. In the 1960s the bag day was important, you had to get things ready for the bag and make sure everything was done, particularly as Head of Chancery. Then you had to look after the Queen's Messenger, we had a roster of people who would look after the Queen's Messenger, and those were the days of cipher telegrams. In my early days we had book cypher and one would have to help with the book cypher. By the time I was Head of Chancery it was Rockex, these were machine cyphers, not one time pads. Another element was the diplomatic wireless service which must be incomprehensible to modern people! We had cypher officers, diplomatic wireless staff, I'm not sure if there were two or three and we also had security officers. I don't know what they do about security officers today, perhaps ex-policeman. The security of the compound would be regarded by people today as very lax. We had Japanese on the gate, but you could get over the walls. The Embassy in Tokyo was never attacked but there were a number of protests in the sixties, particularly about the H bomb. That was not when I was there. But we did have a protest I remember of students over 'confrontasi' when we had to shut the Embassy.

One of the issues which I remember was equality. The Japanese have always been touchy about that and one difficulty we had was over doctors. There was a medical clinic in Tokyo which was staffed by doctors who had qualified during the occupation. The Japanese insisted that after the end of the occupation any doctors who practised in Japan had to pass medical examinations in the Japanese language. This raised all sorts of problems. I remember discussing this at length with my Japanese opposite numbers and eventually we found that the Japanese wanted doctors operating in London, so they got a doctor and we got one. I noticed that the other day Jeremy Hunt was in Japan and they had an agreement on doctors, so it still goes on.

AW: And did the Olympics cause a lot of work, excitement and visitors?

HC: It meant huge development in Tokyo and the so-called high speed road system and of course this was the beginning of the bullet train, and that disturbed the Embassy because the high speed road went under the road in front of the Embassy and the noise of the pile driving.

And those were the days when we had no air conditioning. I remember buying an individual air conditioner for the bedroom. We had problems over air conditioning in the Embassy.

Tokyo didn't qualify for air conditioning as far as the Treasury was concerned because there were only three summer months. I regard it as one of my victories as Head of Chancery that I managed to get agreement to air conditioners being installed in all the offices. We got leave every two years which was better than it had been in the past, it had been three years. And it was very cold in the winter too. The late sixties was the period when Japan was getting very smoggy, particularly from motor cars. China seems to be going through the same thing now.

AW: Did you have a lot of VIPs and Ministers coming in for the Olympics?

HC: We had a number but nothing like later. The real period for visitors was from 1970 onwards.

AW: So this was early days for that ...

HC: Yes, still early days because it was a long way and ministers didn't travel quite as much as they do now.

AW: And did we send a person to represent Britain at the opening?

HC: I can't remember! I have a feel it can't have been major.

AW: No, so it wasn't a Royal?

HC: No. The first Royal Visit was in 1962 when Princess Alexandra came and I was responsible for her programme. She's a nice person. The Japanese were very interested in her. She was a pretty girl, couldn't have been more than 21 then, and she was a sweet person and she went down very well. It was a good idea. Oscar Morland was the Ambassador. It took us quite a number of hours to get her down to Kyoto. Princess Alexandra came out again in 1966 during the brief period I was back in London and then we had Princess Margaret for 1969 British Week in Tokyo which again I've written on at some length. And then we had the Prince of Wales for Expo 70.

AW: And that was later when you were Commercial Counsellor?

HC: Yes. One of the things we had to deal with was keeping in touch with the Imperial Household, royal affairs and so on, because after all Japan was one of the remaining monarchies in the world.

AW: Were they very present in the ordinary Japanese person's ...

HC: No I don't think so, it was a bit remote. Royalty mattered more in practice in Britain.

AW: And your domestic life? Were the domestic arrangements and facilities good?

HC: We lived in number 6 house in the compound, the one I had shared as a bachelor. We were fortunate in being able to get maids. Our son was born in 1961 and the second one, our elder daughter was born in '64 and our second daughter was in '67 when I was Commercial Counsellor.

AW: So they were all born in Japan!

HC: Yes, all born in Japan. One was born in the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital, and the others in a Catholic Hospital and the medical care was OK. We were fortunate, the Embassy compound buildings were well built and we referred to them as "earthquake proof Queen Anne". There were First Secretary houses and also Counsellor houses which were bigger and we had a Counsellor house later when I was Commercial Counsellor. They were quite good for entertaining, the mod cons were somewhat out of date and the heating was difficult at that stage. They had brass plates on the doors which had to be cleaned, they were not easy to run but we were fortunate. Nowadays of course there are no domestic staff in Tokyo, like everywhere else. The only place you can get staff now is India. We were fortunate in that sense.

AW: And the major issues of the day ...

HC: I suppose in those first four years the biggest foreign policy issue was 'Confrontasi' and that involved a great deal of work particularly as the Japanese were inclined to support the Indonesians. So that caused a problem. We were obviously concerned about what was happening in Korea. Japan recognised Taiwan at that period and it was not until 1972 that changed and there was still the question of Japanese Aid and of course Japanese compensation. I can't recall any major issues, other than 'Confrontasi'.

We were trying to develop exchanges with the Foreign Ministry, with the Research Department particularly and we got permission to give papers and the Japanese gave a certain amount back. Those were the first signs of what you would call political cooperation.

From time to time we did get Members of Parliament coming out. In this context I remember one visit by Denis Healey who is one of the wittiest men. And we had the Anglo Japanese Parliamentary Group, but it really didn't develop until much later, but it was all beginning.

The biggest issues were of course coming up on the commercial side.

### **Foreign Office 1965-66**

I suppose I ought to make some comment on my brief period in London in 1965. I'd had my four years in Japan and I'd been First Secretary and then I came back to London and found myself appointed as Assistant in Western Central Africa Department.

That was a year I did not enjoy. First of all I was still a First Secretary and I was 41. I was appointed to notional Counsellor, whatever that meant ...

AW: So you got the promotion ...

HC: But I didn't get any pay rise! That was one thing. The job was difficult and I had a difficult boss, Martin Le Quesne, whose basic problem was that he never told you what he was doing. I shall never forget he'd gone off without telling me he was away and I was summoned to see the Secretary of State, Michael Stewart, and I had no idea, I was absolutely embarrassed. Martin Le Quesne was not a nice man. I'm sorry, I don't like having to say that.

I took over from the Hon John Wilson, Lord Moran to be, the Hon John as we called him. There were two assistants in Central Western Africa and the other one was Mervyn Brown and I found myself dealing with Rhodesia. This was the period when Harold Wilson was Prime Minister and there was the whole question of the illegal independence of Rhodesia, not UDI but IDI, and the question of sanctions. I spent a lot of time at weekends and late at night following up on ships and sending telegrams. George Brown was Deputy Prime Minister and he had some sort of super economic title. Someone from his department, a Deputy Secretary was a Chairman of a committee that I was on as the Foreign Office representative. He didn't like it, and I had complaints about me because I stood up to him. I can't remember his name but I don't care. George Brown was difficult. Then we had a committee, and I was the

Foreign Office representative, about oil sanctions. We said quite categorically that oil sanctions could only work if they applied to the whole of South Africa. But Harold Wilson decided, without reading the paper, that he was going to apply oil sanctions. We were left to carry out what was an impossible task. That is what is rightly termed “instant misgovernment”, which I think is as bad as instant coffee!

We hadn't got proper heating in the office and I can remember going in on a Sunday and having to get the coal up, or sitting in your overcoat.

AW: So it was rather a grim year?

HC: It wasn't a good year. But we found a house, we were lucky in that sense.

I don't know that I want to say any more about that period.

### **Commercial Counsellor, Tokyo, 1966-70**

AW: So, in Japan, your Ambassador asked for you back?

HC: Yes and I had to do a certain amount of training, training is the wrong word, but I did a number of visits around. It was commercial and economic work combined and I think as far as I was concerned it was the greatest opportunity and I fell into it with interest. There was trade promotion and the whole issue of economic relations with Japan. We revised the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in 1964, but it wasn't the actual treaty but the annexes which enabled the Japanese to apply restrictions to us. A lot of my time was spent arguing over individual restrictions, whether it was on cotton textiles or we wanted them to stop sending cutlery, pottery and so on. I've been working on some of the papers of that period and we are going to include this in the next volume I'm producing. The biggest issues I was concerned with was that, but there was also building up a trade promotion section. We had to persuade people about the importance of Japan as a market and then help them to understand the market. We wrote papers, huge amount of research, and with the cooperation of the Department of Trade we built up to holding a British Week in Tokyo. I won't go into that because I have done a whole piece on the British Week, but in 1969 it was an important part of our work. It was a fascinating period, but very, very busy. I think we made quite a lot of progress against quite a number of odds. Princess Margaret visited the British Week.

I also had a slight problem, namely that I had to have Prince William of Gloucester attached to my staff. John Pilcher, who I think had an element of snobbery in him, had the difficulty

of how to deal with Prince William, who wasn't a trained diplomat. I remember the only time I've ever ticked off a royal prince was when he was invited to dinner and he just didn't turn up. He'd accepted, but he'd forgotten about it. I said "You just do not do that". William was, I suppose like all royal princes, a bit spoilt.

AW: Did he want to be there?

HC: Yes, well I suppose he wanted a job. He had a difficult task. It was difficult for us but it was also difficult for him.

AW: Did he speak any Japanese?

HC: No and of course he had his young lady who lived with him. That complicated things.

AW: Was he expected to conduct any relations with the Imperial Palace?

HC: No not really but one of the things I did in employing him was to get him to prepare the programme for his cousin. Enough said, as you know he died in an aircraft accident and the present Duke of Gloucester is Patron of the Japan Society.

Not only did we work hard on developing the economic relations but also on trade and promotion and in reporting on the growing power of Japan.

AW: And were more businessmen coming out to visit?

HC: Oh yes, in the run up to British Week, almost every week we had trade missions coming out, some were very good, some were not. We were not only concentrating on consumer goods but we also had scientific instruments, capital goods, it was a very busy time. I was giving events for every mission and we had to think in terms of invisibles too. I remember John Pilcher presented his credentials on 30 October 1967. Elizabeth had to rush off to hospital that day and I'd gone to the Palace with John, came back, rushed off to hospital, rushed back to give a reception in our house for Twiggy. I shall never forget the day of our daughter's birth, 47 years ago. Nowadays I don't know whether our embassies are in the position to give receptions for these people, they have to pay for them!

That period ended in 1970 with Expo 70 about which John Pilcher wrote a first class despatch which I've included in the next volume. There was not much that we could do commercially for Expo, but it was a highlight.

AW: And this is the one that the Prince of Wales attended?

HC: Yes, that's right.

### **Royal College of Defence Studies, 1971**

I was due for leave in 1970 and John Pilcher thought I should have a sabbatical and the Office suggested I go to St Antony's College and do something on Japan. I said "Look, I've had the best part of ten years on Japan. If I'm to go anywhere else I need to do something different". So they agreed instead to send me to the IDC which was then called the Royal College of Defence Studies. So it was the whole of 1971.

AW: And did you enjoy that?

HC: Yes, I enjoyed it greatly in many ways. I didn't think it was particularly well run. I thought Alastair Buchan, who was Denis Healey's choice, was a bad choice to be Commandant. He was far too theoretical and not practical enough. I did a report on how the British Council could help commercial exports, and that didn't go down terribly well.

### **Minister (Commercial), Washington 1972-75**

AW: We've reached 1972 and you are Washington bound. How did you find that on arrival?

HC: It was a very big Embassy. Lord Cromer was the Ambassador and Donald Tebbit was the Minister, having been the Minister Commercial.

AW: So he'd done the job you were moving into ...

HC: Yes, which was slightly awkward, although I got on alright with Donald. It was an interesting, but not an easy job. What was the relationship with the rest of the Common Market countries? I was not responsible for trade promotion, that was done from New York, and there were little fiefdoms within the Embassy. Derek Mitchell was the Financial Minister and he resented anybody coming into that. In Japan finance had been mine as well. So I had to try to find the right niche for my work. There were also civil aviation people and they didn't like me! And there was a Board of Trade man. They all wanted to run their own little shops. What was the Minister Commercial? To some extent the Minister Commercial was a bit of a nuisance for them. But I was determined to have my own department. I concentrated on trade relations. There was a Special Trade Representative, which was an almost Cabinet level job, a man called Bill Eberle, and I did my best there. We also had

things like the Concorde. There were questions involving the Ministry of Justice and the Fair Trade Commission on anything to do with civil aviation. These were the topics but fundamentally it was trade relations and was the United States really going to be pro free trade or not.

I found one of the ways to work was to take the officials out to lunch because they had more time. It was a funny world there. Nixon was President. My view of Nixon was better not spoken. How to get on with some of these Republicans who were Nixon supporters without revealing you were not a supporter. I found the only way to do this was to ask them questions! I made some good friends, particularly amongst the lawyers and the trade representative people. Once I'd worked out how to do it, I was able to do a reasonable job. But it wasn't easy to work out exactly what your role was, but in taking people out to lunch I was able to come back with a good memory of the thing and send my telegrams. I was referred to as "the luncher". If you go and call on somebody, they give you a half an hour, maximum, or twenty minutes for a busy official. But invite them out for lunch and you have at least an hour and in an informal way.

We were fortunate because we were able to travel around. On leave we visited many parts of the United States, we even visited Puerto Rico. Our two girls went to a school in Washington whilst William went to the Dragon School at Oxford. When we were on leave Nixon's resignation came through. Cromer was succeeded by Peter Ramsbotham who I thought was abominably treated by David Owen but that's another issue.

I think there isn't much more to say about the Washington period other than what has already been put in my book.

AW: We were talking earlier about the difficulties of getting to know the Germans and the Japanese, being invited into their homes ... Was this easier in the US?

HC: No, not least because Washington is a false capital. People are coming in to Washington, especially bearing in mind the way in which people are appointed in the United States. Permanent civil servants were never very senior. Even in the State Department, there were a lot of temporaries.

AW: So let us close today and at our next session we can talk about your return to the UK and then your post as Ambassador to Japan?

HC: Yes, although I think that on the Ambassadorial post there is really very little more to be said as I have covered much of it in detail in my memoir “Japan and Back”.

### **Deputy Under-Secretary, FCO, 1975-80**

AW: This is April 23<sup>rd</sup> and Sir Hugh Cortazzi is resuming his recollections with Abbey Wright. When we broke off last time Hugh, you were leaving Washington to come back to be DUS in the Foreign Office for nearly five years from 1975?

HC: Yes. I'm afraid that looking back on what I've said on previous occasions, I feel it's been pretty desultory and mixed and not very well thought through but I suppose that's inevitable when you're doing a recollection ...

AW: Yes, and we are also following it chronologically ...

HW: The other thing I feel one doesn't always remember is that it is never “you”, you are part of a team and I think that is particularly true when you get into a leading position that you must remember that it's not just an ego trip. You depend so much on getting the right mixture from the people who work with you. I think this is a point which I would very much like to stress that when I went round visiting posts I felt that you could tell a happy post, and the happy post was always an efficient post. One where the leadership wasn't right, for some reason or another, and sometimes it wasn't the fault of the Head of Mission, it might have been other people there, were not so happy. On the whole one was very lucky in the Diplomatic Service that basically most people were reasonable and understanding and knew how to deal with other people. That was part, after all, of their job, and when you think back at the unhappiness that can be caused by bullying ... I hope that the Service is keeping that ethos and of course with its employment of many more women, we do have to maintain equality. That's a general point I wanted to make.

I've covered my five years as DUS in London in fairly full terms in my memoir but I have certain thoughts that I want to emphasise.

The first one is the importance of dealing with Ministers. My problem was that most of my work was dealing with Ministers of State. I had three Ministers of State that I had relationships with, and I had good relationships with all of them. One was Lord Goronwy Roberts, another was Ted Rowlands and the third, when the Government changed and we had a Tory Administration, was Peter Blaker. I don't know whether Ted Rowlands is alive, the

other two have certainly passed on. I think the basic issue, as far as I was concerned, was that David Owen, as Secretary of State, didn't seem to trust his Ministers of State, and although submissions were copied to the Secretary of State's office, there were occasions on which he simply didn't absorb them and then would countermand what the Minister of State had done. I'm afraid he was, in that sense and in my view, a bad Secretary of State, apart from the fact that he would also go off at tangents.

He let me down once very badly in front of the Australian Foreign Minister. We'd agreed, after a great deal of difficulty, and this was over the Banaban Islands, compensation terms with the Australians and the New Zealanders. It had been a difficult negotiation, particularly with the Australians. Andrew Peacock, the Australian Foreign Minister was coming to London. We briefed the Secretary of State to say a word of thanks that we'd been able to settle this problem. I had nothing back from him and it was approved by Lord Goronwy Roberts. I went in the car to Carlton House Terrace with the Secretary of State and when I got into the car I said "Secretary of State, I'd be grateful if I might remind you of this case, and if you would just say a word to Andrew Peacock". "Certainly not! I disagree, I disagree entirely with this, why's it been done?" he said. And then, not content with that, he then said in front of Peacock "My staff have let me down on this, this is absurd, we shouldn't agree". Of course Peacock was delighted.

But that wasn't the only occasion where I had a problem with a Secretary of State who runs his own staff down. Another case was Anthony Crosland. I went with Anthony Crosland to China. Before we left, we went to dinner at the Chinese Embassy. There he pooh poohed his staff. So I had bad experiences with two Labour Secretaries of State but of course it entirely changed when Peter Carrington, who I have the greatest of respect for, took over. He knew how to behave.

It was one of the problems one encountered. I remember in Tokyo on two occasions I had Ministers who ran their staff down in front of the Japanese. One of them, Rhodes Boyson, I actually ticked off afterwards. I told him "You do not do that". Actually he ran Britain down, which is even worse. So that's a passing remark about Ministers.

My experience with Peter Carrington was totally different. With Peter Carrington one of the biggest issues, as far as I was concerned that worried me on moral terms, was the Vietnamese Boat refugees. A large number were being picked up by British ships at sea, but they weren't being able to land them at Hong Kong or elsewhere and as a result there was the threat that

British ships would not pick people up. This, of course, would be contrary to the Safety of Life at Sea Convention. We had difficulty there with Margaret Thatcher because she didn't want any more refugees. I remember going to a meeting at Number 10 where there was Willie Whitelaw, Douglas Hurd was a Minister of State, and Robert Armstrong. It was very very difficult. But Peter said to me "Hugh, I've seen what you've written, I understand, leave it to me". Which he did. He managed to deal with Margaret Thatcher. He organised for a Conference in Geneva to deal with the issue and we agreed to take 10,000 refugees which was a significant step in the right direction. I went with him to Hong Kong and Thailand on that occasion and he was very good.

While we are on it, the best story I have of Margaret Thatcher (and I will come on to her again on Japan) – but when the Chinese leadership was changing Hua Kuo Feng who was one of the Gang of Four came to London as an official guest and we went to a meeting at Number 10. The Chinese were sitting po-faced on one side of the table and us on the other. Next to Margaret Thatcher was Peter Carrington and I was sitting next to Peter. Mrs Thatcher made an unlikely error for her. She asked Hua Kuo Feng if he would like to give his view of the world situation! He started, of course through interpreters, and the whole thing went on and on and on. I could see Mrs Thatcher was getting more and more fed up and angry and I thought "Oh God, what's going to happen now?" And Peter, marvellously, defused the situation. He scribbled a little note to Margaret Thatcher that said "Margaret, you're talking too much!" She saw the joke and it lightened the atmosphere. He had that ability.

AW: And so the other main issues during this period?

HC: I've talked a bit about China, and of course China was always a major issue and how we should deal with the end of Mao. The first thing I did when I came back from Washington was to go to Peking with Lord Keith. He was selling Rolls Royce engines and we had problems there with COCOM. I said "If you want to deal with this you'll have to ring up and speak to Peter Shore". Peter Shore was then Secretary of State for the Board of Trade. I then had to go on another occasion to China with the Chief of the Defence Staff who was a bit of a loose cannon. I couldn't control him, it's not possible to tell CDS what he should say, you can advise him but ... This was, of course, the height of the Cold War, and he said "We British and Chinese have a common enemy in Moscow". Well it might have been true but it wasn't exactly the best thing to say. That's the sort of problem that you can't do anything about.

With Japan the problem was always trade and dealing with both the Japanese and the Department of Trade, so in a sense you had two people to deal with. The Department of Trade varied and I had good relations with the Department of Trade.

On the other big issues for me in the Far East, there was of course Hong Kong. There I found myself somewhat at difference with Murray Maclehoose, the Governor, because I felt strongly that we should move faster toward democracy and democratic institutions in Hong Kong than Murray felt. Murray was, I thought, too much influenced by conservative minded business tycoons who saw no merit in democratic institutions and feared that they might threaten the profitability of their enterprises. The China specialists in the office supported Murray largely because they feared that moves towards more democracy in Hong Kong would complicate relations with Beijing. Lord Goronwy Roberts was in principle in favour of faster progress on democratization, but David Owen was not really interested in the issue and Murray held off pressure for more democracy by introducing more safeguards for workers. I think that we made a mistake by not moving faster on democratization. Chris Patten when he eventually took over as Governor, I think, agreed with this view.

AW: It made it harder later?

HC: Yes, it made it harder later, you're right. Murray had other problems on his hands. One was the Police Mutiny. When we heard about the Police Mutiny I said "Whether we agree with the Governor's handling of this issue, we must support the Governor". And David Owen had to be brought round to that. Sometimes Governors cause problems. The Colonial Territories as a whole was one of my bigger problems. I remember when Peter Ramsbotham was appointed Governor of Bermuda and incidentally I think that appointment was extremely badly handled by David Owen and Callaghan, it was most unfair the way he was run down. He'd been a good Ambassador in Washington and to make out he was a fuddy duddy was totally unfair. And I'm afraid I do not have a high view of Peter Jay, not least I remember his coming into my office in London smoking a cigar. That's an aside, but there was a problem over Bermuda because the Bermudan Courts passed a death sentence and Peter Ramsbotham had to decide whether he endorsed that decision. I'm anti the death penalty but the question was what the Governor should do in view of public opinion in Bermuda that was all in favour of it. I can't remember the outcome.

Other colonial issues that came up were the independence movement in the Caribbean. One Caribbean issue that caused particular problems was that of Belize. I remember going out

with Ted Rowlands, we ended up going to Panama but I've said something about this in my book.

AW: And the biggest issue during this period ...

HC: Yes, the biggest issue was, of course, The Falklands. On the Falklands I think I have said my piece in my memoir and later, of course, it came up in the context of Japan. The British Government was hamstrung by the Falklands Islands lobby in the House of Commons. I'm talking about the Labour Government; they really couldn't make up their minds. It was clear from the first that they either had to do a deal with the Argentines or we had to create what I would call "Fortress Falklands" which meant building a proper airfield. But Judith Hart at the ODA, as then was, said "They do not qualify for aid". So that was one problem.

AW: So no money for an airfield ...

HC: No, no money for an airfield and reluctance of the Ministry of Defence to spend enough money to provide anything else. So with that situation we had to try to negotiate. I remember having to lead a delegation to a meeting in Rome with the Argentines where my brief was simply to stall. I'm not surprised they were not pleased. Ted Rowlands was followed by Nicholas Ridley but I wasn't involved with the Nicholas Ridley negotiations, I was only involved under the Labour Government.

Perhaps I should deal with it in relationship to Japan here?

AW: Right, let's fast forward to Japan for the Falklands issue ...

HC: When I was Ambassador in Japan it was the major political issue. Most of my issues were economic but the most important political issue was the Falklands. I felt at the time that Margaret Thatcher had no alternative, she had to do it. I'm not going to talk about the other political fallout and how it benefited her but the decision was right. If we'd given up, as I tried to point out to the Japanese, it would have had great implications for the Japanese situation over the problems of the Northern Islands. The Japanese were simply not in favour, partly because the Americans were not giving us the full support we should have had, in my view, at the beginning, they were later on. The Japanese were simply mercantilists. They were looking at their own trade. We weren't helped here; I have to say, by our own side. There were people who were what I would call appeasers.

I got very angry with the Japanese over this. I was particularly angry with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs because I'd had the Duke of Edinburgh in Japan, we were waiting for a reply to a request, and I knew they weren't going to give us the support but I was rung up at 11pm at night to come down to the Foreign Ministry to receive their reply but I was told to wait because they didn't have a translation ready. I waited until 2am and said "Look, I'm coming. I'm perfectly capable of dealing with this in Japanese, I don't need a translation". Very reluctantly they accepted that I came. I sent a flash telegram to London to say that as expected ... The following day I spoke to someone on one of the Japanese newspapers and said "You do not do this unless you are declaring war, you don't summon an ambassador down to give him a Note of this description". That didn't make my name very popular with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but I think it was necessary. I don't think John Whitehead who was my deputy quite approved, but think there are moments when you have to be quite clear.

AW: So coming back to London are there any other issues you'd like to recollect?

HC: I've talked about Bermuda, briefly about Belize, and about the Banaban Islands which eventually were solved with the help of the change of government. Another interesting one was the New Hebrides, now Vanuatu. I visited Vanuatu to find this Anglo-French condominium. The late Andrew Stuart was our High Commissioner at the time. We had very difficult negotiations with the French. The French at that time were quite keen to have their own sphere of influence. French colonial policies were not, of course, the same as our own. They didn't believe in independence, they believed in so called overseas territories. It was another one of those difficult negotiations.

I think the other issue that I should mention is India. There was the question of aid to India. There was a disagreement between the Foreign Office and Judith Hart and the ODA. I must say that I felt that a lot of our aid to India was almost harming our own interests. I suppose my attitude to overseas aid, particularly at that time, was that it should be used to support British economic policy. That was quite a time consuming issue and of course we were dealing with Mrs Gandhi. Mrs Gandhi was not a democrat and that caused problems. She had a number of non-official representatives, some of whom are now in the House of Lords. She had good friends in the Labour Party. It was politically fraught, dealing with India. The High Commissioner in Delhi was one of the old-fashioned Commonwealth Relations officers. It was easier, I think, when we had someone of a broader experience. I don't want to

denigrate in any way the Commonwealth Relations people because some of them were very good indeed but there were some who perhaps still had the belief that the Commonwealth was more important than it actually is.

I think one is always looking back up against two major issues. There were those people who over-emphasised the Commonwealth, they thought the Commonwealth was the way we should go forward, in a sense it goes back to the Queen. There were a lot of romantic people both in the Tory Party and in the Labour Party with this view of the Commonwealth. The other was our relationship with the United States. I don't want in any way to downgrade that relationship, it is vital, but we should not ever look at it in sentimental terms and, let's face it, we attach far more importance to it than any American did. There is a very interesting piece in the Sunday Times about a book that is reviewed by Max Hastings which went into this. The more I think about it, the more I think that Acheson was right, we lost an empire but had still to find a role. I was in the Diplomatic Service when we were not merely losing the Empire, but trying to dispose of it, and we simply hadn't found a role, particularly in the Far East or Asia. Nor were we prepared, nor are we even yet prepared, to accept that we are no longer a great power.

Two further points. I did strongly feel that we should give our support to the newly formed group of ASEAN countries. We got the backing of Peter Blaker. We in the Office felt this. I went with him to Thailand and we went up to the north, with the King dealing once again with the drug problem and Burma.

The other issue was Pakistan and Afghanistan. I did go to Kabul during the last years of relatively stable, I think stable is the wrong word, government. We still had that huge embassy which we gave up. But I was also Deputy Secretary when the Russians moved in. I remember having to summon the Soviet Ambassador, the Ambassador wouldn't come but the Minister did, to protest. That was just before I left. The India Pakistan problems, Kashmir, God help us, and the Pakistani Military ... When I visited Pakistan as Deputy Secretary I had an interview with General Zia. In fact he gave me a rug which I had to bring back having paid the duty etc, I couldn't refuse it, but in the end I had paid for it! Sometimes these things happen. And the other person I met as Deputy Secretary was Marcos, President of the Philippines. I went with Bill Bentley, who was our Ambassador at the time. He arranged an "audience", I suspect is the right term. We were kept waiting in a heated, very hot room

absolutely full of mosquitoes. And I said to Bill “Why on earth don’t they do something to get rid of them?” and he said “Well, they don’t feel it because they are so painted”.

AW: Well, that was a very busy period ...

HC: I had to cover not only Asia but Latin America, only for part of the time, and the colonies, such as were left. Except Gibraltar ...

AW: You didn’t have to deal with Gibraltar? Very lucky ...

HC: Yes, very lucky. Yes, it was Pacific/Caribbean. One tiny little other thing, St Helena. I always felt that we didn’t do enough about St Helena. The big issue was whether they should have the rights of a UK citizen. It seemed to me that if they weren’t going to be independent they should be given the same rights as any citizen of the UK. I just pass that on as a side issue.

I suppose the other point I should make was the question of governance within the Foreign Office. Almost for the whole of my time as Deputy Secretary the Permanent Under-Secretary was Michael Palliser for whom I have very great respect and I think he was badly treated. I think he was a good manager of the Office, it was difficult dealing with the different Secretaries of State, and I think he had a very difficult position over the appointment of Peter Jay. I wrote a piece, additional to the obituary of him in the *Times*.

I was a member of the Number One Board and it was on that occasion that I protested strongly over the way that Peter Ramsbotham was treated. I made it clear that I disagreed, not that there was anything we could do about it. The whole system has changed now with people applying for posts and having fixed terms, four years. One of my problems was that I was clearly destined for Tokyo. The original idea had been that Michael Wilford, who was my predecessor, would get Hong Kong. At least that was the view of some people who wanted him to go to Hong Kong. He wouldn’t move and he was only two years older than me. In the end I didn’t have a full four years in Tokyo. I don’t want to run down anybody because I have great respect for Michael although he did irritate me by telling me I would never be a successful ambassador in Tokyo unless I learned to play golf!

AW: You don’t play golf do you?

HC: No! And it was enough to make me sure not to play golf!

AW: So, they managed to get the dates right in the end, Michael Wilford did leave ...

HC: Yes, he retired a year early. And I got three and a half years.

AW: Were you terribly excited to be returned to Tokyo as Ambassador?

HC: I was pleased. I had applied for various other posts, I suggested myself for Australia and for Rome, both of which I would have loved to do. But Michael Palliser very rightly said “Hugh it’s absurd you going anywhere else, everything has pointed to you going to Tokyo”.

### **Ambassador to Japan, 1980-84**

HC: Coming to Tokyo, I think I’ve said almost everything I want to say in my memoir which is a fairly full ...

AW: Yes, it’s a very thorough memoir, but are there some points we might highlight?

HC: First of all the most important issue was trade and investment. In particular the highlight of my time was the working to get Nissan into the UK. I have to say that Mrs Thatcher was absolutely right. She did her stuff very well over that and I can if you like send you a piece that I wrote about Mrs Thatcher and Japan, I’ve prepared it for the next volume that I am currently editing.

AW: Yes, thank you.

HC: Although the piece covers beyond my own period and runs into John Whitehead’s period too, it encapsulates, if you use Sellar and Yeatman’s terms, that as far as Japan was concerned Mrs Thatcher “was a good thing”. First of all she was tough and prepared to be tough with the Japanese on trade issues, but she also recognised the achievements that Japan had made in economy and technology and she realised, above all, that we needed Japanese investment. It was the best way of defusing trade friction but it was also very important to reinvigorate British industry. Inward investment was the number one theme, combined with trade promotion.

On the political side we needed to cooperate more with Japan but I don’t need to go into that.

AW: And you have covered the Falklands ...

HC: Yes. I would just like to talk briefly about some other things that I attached importance to. One was the maintenance of the language studies, that we should still have regular

appointments of language students coming out to really learn the language properly. That was one issue. I always said to the language students that whilst they must learn and take every opportunity to speak, they should get to know the Japanese, not necessarily officials, but the more they inserted themselves with the normal Japanese, the better. The second point was that I told them they needed to know something about the history and the culture. How can you understand Japan if you don't understand the nature of, for example, Japanese attitudes towards Buddhism? Or you don't know something of the history of Japan? It wasn't just because I was personally interested in Japanese history and culture but because I do actually think that it is true of any country but it is particularly true of a country which has a strong individual culture as Japan. I'm not sure that fact was always registered by language students who came. It is fundamental and if we lose that we lose our ability.

The British Embassy in Tokyo always had more Japanese language speakers than any other Embassy in Tokyo, even the Americans. When I was Ambassador, the only other ambassador who spoke Japanese efficiently was the Korean. Most of our European colleagues had none. None. So in that sense we were unique and it's a uniqueness which we should do everything possible to maintain.

The other thing I should mention is the importance of cultural work in Japan, of the British Council. The British Council was very closely integrated with the Embassy because the Head of the Council was also Cultural Attaché in the Embassy. There was English language teaching which was very important.

When I was there one of the most valuable things was the British Council Scholarship Scheme. Wherever you went around Japan, you would run into British Council Scholars. This scheme, alas, has been ended but it was very good. We were there at a time when you needed to encourage visits by British orchestras etc. Now there is no problem, Japanese culture comes to Britain and so on. It's different now. It was an important issue and I just wanted to emphasise that.

AW: And did you manage to travel within Japan?

HC: Yes, I attached great importance to getting around the country. I managed to visit officially all the 47 prefectures at least once. We had so many visitors that I had to travel at the worst possible times of the year! Before I visited a prefecture I used to always try and do research on British history with that area and that gave material for the speeches.

An Ambassador has to do a lot of speeches and it impresses people and gets across to people when you do it in Japanese. One of my problems was that I was a bit of a workaholic and I tended to not only write my own speeches but draft a lot myself. I was impatient and the best way to do something is to do it yourself!

AW: And so you weren't having to write your speech in English and then have a translator put it into Japanese?

HC: Well sometimes. But I'd always check very carefully that the Japanese was correct and go through it with the translator and say "I'm not sure that is quite what I want to say". Japanese is not something you can ...

AW: Wing?

HC: Yes! I'm not saying that it's easy to do it Spanish or French or German but it's much easier. I think I could have given a speech in German more easily, in a different way. I couldn't today, and I couldn't in Japanese any longer today.

The other point I want to make is that I think politicians rather look down on the representational duties. Frankly, boring though they are, you do have to be seen, you do have to go to these events and that brings me to entertaining. I've always regarded entertaining as an essential part of the job. I think I told you that I was known in Washington as the "luncher". It's not so much the big entertaining that you have to do when there are visitors but smaller lunches too. I gather it's much more difficult now, even for Ambassadors to do this. I think the system has changed. The danger, I also understand, is that the junior staff don't entertain and therefore they don't know how to entertain when they become ambassadors. I think we are making a mistake. The amount of money that was spent on entertaining was relatively small and on the whole if it was properly done it had great value in making personal friends. If you go back to Japan, people you knew as a junior, were then ...

AW: At a top level? So did you find the people you had met as a First Secretary were running the country when you returned as Ambassador?

HC: Yes, well one knew ... People ask me about Japanese Prime Ministers and I've known most of them since the war, until recent times of course.

The other point, and I think there have been changes, is that the whole way we ran our accountancy system was bad. The Ambassador was personally responsible for checking the accounts and it used to worry me every time. There was practically nothing you could do and in my view a mistake. Obviously you had to do everything possible to ensure that money was not defrauded and that money was properly spent, but I'm not sure that was the way to do it. I certainly think that in those days some of the Ambassadors got away with spending money on residences which they should not have spent. I won't mention any names but some of the ones who have been in Tokyo before us had spent a lot of money. One of them, Fred Warner had spent a huge amount of money on the residence and been allowed to paint over the wood panelling. We had to get it removed. In that sense, maybe things have improved. Ambassadors shouldn't be allowed to get away with that sort of thing.

And that I think is all I wanted to say on that. When I returned I was very angry that I was not able to say goodbye or say anything to the Secretary of State, Geoffrey Howe.

AW: He'd stopped that tradition had he?

HC: Well, I reckon that he was going to go to Japan. I was a senior Ambassador. I saw the Minister of State, I saw the Secretary of State for Trade, Tebbit, but my Secretary of State was not prepared to spend a minute ... I'm sorry but Geoffrey Howe is not on my list of Foreign Secretaries who will be missed. It might have been his Private Secretary. Private Secretaries to the Secretary of State very often get ideas above their station. I raised it with the PUS.

AW: But you did submit your valedictories? As we've talked about off the tape, the subject of valedictories, or rather stopping them, is something of a current issue ...

HC: That, in my mind, is an absolutely stupid decision of the Foreign Office to stop them. It's a good opportunity for you to summarise and give a good picture of the country and also to give you an opportunity to give views ... What does it matter if they are critical? If the government can't take a little bit of criticism from their own staff ... Anyway they should remain classified, after all we do have a thirty year rule. I put my views in the memoir but it was vetted. I was tempted to have it published without being vetted but I decided no, that was wrong. I didn't want to have a row.

After we left, the Foreign Office didn't care a damn and had nothing to do with us. All posts are important but there are some posts in the Middle East and in the Far East that have special

problems and issues and cultural backgrounds and you would have thought that there would be more contact afterwards. Not a bit of it and I think that is a mistake.

AW: Falling off the edge of a cliff was the way we described it!

HC: Well that's right!

AW: I wanted to ask you about all your publications etc post retirement?

HC: I think that for someone like myself who spent a long time in a particular post inevitably there are going to be things that he can do in an advisory capacity. I will leave aside the question of what I did in the City and advising Japanese companies and so on, that was a useful money-earner. I think it was also useful to the companies that I was able to advise and help. One of the problems of retiring at sixty is that you can never really get an executive post. If you're a hands-on man like myself you find it a bit frustrating as I did working with the Hill Samuel Bank. But leaving that aside, I was fortunate to having long experience in relationship with Japan. I think I was of help to others but it was also valuable to me which if I'd gone off to Australia or Rome, it might not have been. That's my good fortune.

I've spent quite a long time being an active member of the Japan Society, indeed I was Chairman of the Japan Society from 1985 to 1995. I then began writing in relation to Japan actually while I was then Ambassador. The first thing I ever did was to translate some Japanese short stories when I came back from being Commercial Counsellor in the early seventies and did a couple of volumes. I did a few reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement*.

When I was Ambassador I was President of the Asiatic Society of Japan and I felt that as President I must do something. One of our hobbies had been collecting maps of Japan so I said I would give a talk on Old European Maps of Japan, which I did. I began getting into the research and finding it more and more interesting and it eventually led to a book in which I looked at not only European maps of Japan but also Japanese maps and Japanese maps of Europe, so it was multi-cultural. That eventually led to a book which was published in 1983 called "Islands of Gold, Antique Maps of Japan" which was published by Weatherhill. I suppose like all these things that led to other things. One of the places I visited in Japan was Kagoshima in the Southern Island and it was there that a British doctor had been the first person to establish the Kagoshima Medical University, a Doctor Willis. I found people who had copies of his letters and that led to another book about Dr Willis which was published

after I retired. There was another book, “A Diplomat’s Wife in Japan”. Our Minister in the early 1890s was Hugh Fraser and his wife wrote about her experiences. He died in Japan. She was an American. I published some of her letters and put that together and that was published before my book on antique maps.

Then I became interested in the settlements and the whole question of the background and that led to other books including “Victorians in Japan” which I did. They were looking for a book on Japan for the Great Civilisation Series and I was asked if I would write on the Civilisation of Japan which I did and which was published by Macmillans, I called it “The Japanese Achievement”. I then followed it up with another book on modern Japan which was soon out of date. Then I’ve done a series of other books. I spent a lot of time editing and compiling biographical portraits and I’m now on volume nine. One of the things I did was called “British Envoys in Japan”, which I edited and compiled, and another, which I contributed to, was “Japanese Envoys in Britain”. I put together a book on a large number of people with Japan experiences.

AW: Who published the books about the Envoys?

HC: That is Global Oriental, and/or Japan Library. The publisher is a man called Paul Norbury. I still keep in touch with him, indeed he’s involved with the current work although he is probably coming to the end of his work, as I am.

The other thing I’ve done has been to write on aspects of Japanese art for Arts of Asia, and I’ve done a number of articles for them and I have for some years now been contributing political and economic articles to the Japan Times. I do about two articles a month. The Japan Times has only limited circulation but it’s a good opportunity for me to outline my prejudices! And also of course it’s a very good mental exercise to do an article in a maximum of a thousand words which is political and relevant. Sometimes I’m quite critical of Japan and of the British Government too. I’m careful, obviously, one doesn’t want to do something that will embarrass your successor nor do you want to be disloyal to your own country but I think it’s quite good that a certain amount of frankness is aired. I’ve been doing that for about fifteen years, two a month, twenty plus articles a year. It keeps you going.

AW: And then of course there is your memoir “Japan and Back” which we must add to the list ...

HC: I should say here that all of these books and so on are listed in “Who’s Who”. But I suppose that my particular interests in historical writing have been Anglo Japanese relations and in particular in the settlements and the Meiji period from 1868-1912. But I am also very interested in Japanese Art and I’ve just done a miscellany of some books that I’ve collected.

I would add here that since I’ve been concerned with various Japanese organisations here like The Japan Society and the Daiwa Foundation but in particular we have developed a relationship with the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, namely SISJAC at Norwich, and was founded by Sir Robert and Lady Sainsbury, both dead now. It has premises at the moment in the Close at Norwich and it is affiliated with the University of East Anglia of which I happen to be an Honorary Doctor. We have given a lot of books and all our maps and a lot of Japanese pottery and prints to SISJAC and they will receive all our other Japanese related artefacts when we pass on. We help the Sainsbury Institute and the Japan Society as far as we can. We are embedded in the Japan field.

Is there anything I haven’t covered?

AW: It’s a wonderful story, and all you’ve seen from the Occupation through to ...

HC: All I would wish to say is that I really do not want to stress my own role. I’m interested and I do these things because they interest me. The danger with these things, and I thought this when I was writing my memoir, is that there is too much of the “I”.

I suppose if I had to describe myself, what I would like to go down as, is as a Scholar Diplomat. Having said that I do sometimes ask myself how much of a scholar am I, and how diplomatic have I been!

Scholar? Well, I try. A diplomat? I try but sometimes I’m too frank and I’m certainly not Japanese in my style, I say what I think! Sometimes that isn’t diplomatic but sometimes I think it’s important that you should be honest. You can’t actually change yourself.

If I look back on my career I say to myself “You’ve been jolly lucky”. Let’s face it, you have to fall the way the cookie crumbles. Do you take advantage of what it offers? I’ve been very lucky and the timing has been ... It’s so important to get the timing right. But some people don’t fall where the cookie crumbles, they’re kicking against it. A lot of people said “Why do you want to go to Japan? You should do something different”. It went that way. You can’t always choose. Life chooses for you.

And I've also been very personally lucky. We've been married 58 years and a happy marriage and that doesn't always happen. In another sense we've also been very lucky. We've had our health problems but one of us might have got cancer early or something ...

### **The Order of St Michael and St George**

AW: Hugh, you mentioned that you would like to say something about the Order of St Michael and St George?

HC: Yes, I would just like to say one more thing on that. I deplore the way in which the Order of St Michael and St George seems to be being run down. Fewer and fewer members of the Service are being appointed and very few people outside also. If we don't do something more the Order will simply eventually cease to exist. I do think that those members of our Service who serve in difficult posts but are not necessarily distinguished, should have some sort of recognition. They don't after all get all that much in the way of money, they get adequately paid and pensions but they don't necessarily get the recognition and I would like to see our senior Ambassadors continuing to receive the Ks and certainly people who have difficult posts, whether it's in the Middle East or Asia or Africa or Latin America, being recognised at least with Cs. I think the present system based on jealousy by both the politicians and the Home Civil Service is just ludicrous and I really do think that we should look at it properly again.

AW: Thank you Hugh.

### **Two further topics**

Sir Hugh wished to add further comments after the interviews. The first is on his relationship with the Japanese Imperials.

HC: I met the late Emperor Hirohito (Showa) on various formal occasions including on his state visit to Britain in 1971 when I had to act as the British interpreter when the official Japanese interpreter was not available. I do not think that I can usefully add about him to the despatches, which the then British Ambassador to Japan Sir John Pilcher sent in 1971. These will, I hope, be published in our planned book 'The Growing Power of Japan', which brings together reports from the British Embassy in Tokyo in the period 1967-1972.

I first met the present Emperor Akihito at a dinner in the Embassy residence before he went to London for the coronation. For an account of this visit and other visits please see my essay

‘Crown Prince Akihito in Britain’ in *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits* Volume 5 which I edited and which was published by Global Oriental in 2004. As related in this chapter I accompanied them on their official visit to Britain in 1976. I met him and his wife Michiko on a number of other occasions as Crown Prince and Princess and have met them again since he became Emperor. He and the Empress gave us a private lunch in Tokyo after I had been awarded the Grand Cordon of the Sacred Treasure for my services to Anglo-Japanese relations after my retirement. I also met them on their State visit to Britain.

I have met the present Crown Prince on various occasions including on his visit in 1991 when, with the Prince of Wales, he was patron of the Japan Festival in Britain marking the centenary of the Japan Society of which I was then chairman. (I had been instrumental in launching plans for the festival and was vice-chairman of the organizing committee of which my old friend Sir Peter Parker was chairman). As Ambassador in Tokyo I was closely involved with arrangements for the then Prince Hiro to study at Oxford for two years. I was in touch with Sir Rex Richards, then vice-chancellor of the University. We agreed that Merton College was an appropriate choice for him. We met Prince Hiro on a few occasions when he was in England. When his memoir of his time at Oxford *Temusu to tomo ni* was published for graduates of the Gakushuin, the university he attended in Japan, I was given a copy. I immediately thought that it should be translated into English and offered to do the translation. It took me the best part of a decade to persuade the Imperial Household of the desirability of publishing an English translation. I recall an official in the Japanese Embassy in London expressing concern that if it were a commercial publication and displayed in a bookshop it might be knocked on the floor and trodden on. I pointed out that the book was not the Koran! Eventually I got permission, did the translation and it was published by Global Oriental in 2006 under the title *The Thames and I* with a foreword by the Prince of Wales.

The second topic I should have mentioned is that of Japanese studies in the UK. This is a subject, with which I have been associated ever since I studied after the war at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). When I was DUS in the FCO I worked with Lord Dainton who was head of the University Grants Committee trying to strengthen university studies of the language and culture of Japan and employment opportunities for graduates in Japanese. One result of these efforts, in which I played a small part, was the establishment of the Nissan Institute at St Antony’s in Oxford. When I was Ambassador in Tokyo I learnt from my old friend Carmen Blacker that Japanese studies at Cambridge were under threat. I

took the initiative in Tokyo and eventually Keidanren (the federation of Japanese economic organizations) founded a chair of modern Japanese studies at Cambridge. After my retirement I supported the report of Sir Peter Parker and worked with Sir Martin Harris in working out how best to use the funds, which became available for Japanese studies. I have continued to do what I can to support these studies e.g. in trying to stop Durham University giving up Japanese studies after the Japanese company NSK had been persuaded to fund a chair in Japanese for an initial term. (There are too many 'I's in the above, I fear, but all I want to do is emphasize that this is a subject to which I personally attach importance).

## Appendix

### Biographical Portraits by Hugh Cortazzi to 2014

Sir Rutherford Alcock, Minister to Japan, 1859-62 B.Env and II

Lt.Colonel St John Neale, Chargé d'Affaires 1862-4

Alcock returns to Japan, 1864

Sir Harry Parkes, Minister to Japan, 1865-83 and I

Sir Francis Plunkett, Minister to Japan, 1884-87 and IV

Hugh Fraser, Minister to Japan, 1889-94

Power Henry le Poer Trench, Minister to Japan

Sir Daniel Lascelles, Ambassador to Japan, 1957-9

Sir Francis Rundall, Ambassador to Japan, 1963-7

Sir John Pilcher, Ambassador to Japan, 1967-72 and III

The British Bombardment of Kagoshima, 1863

The Naval and Military Action at Shimonoseki, [1864]

Japanese Envoys in Britain, 1862-72 J.Env

Japan Society, A Hundred Year History T&P

The Mingei Movement and Bernard Leach I

Royal Visits to Japan in the Meiji Period, 1868-1912 II

John Batchelor, Missionary and Friend of the Ainu II

Sir Vere Redman, 1901-1975 II

Thomas Wright Blakiston, 1832-91 III

Sir John Figgess, KBE, CMG 1909-97 III

Ariyoshi Yoshiya, KBE (hon) 1901-82 III

Crown Prince Akihito in Britain V

The Loss of HMS Rattler in 1868 and Henry Stephenson V

Prime Minister Yoshida in London 1954 VI

Edward Heath and Japan (First PM Visit to Japan) VI

The Showa Emperor's State Visit to Britain, October 1971 VI

Honda Soichiro (1906-91) and Honda Motors in Britain VI

Morita Akio (1921-99), Sony and Britain VI

Sir Peter Parker (1924-2002) and Japan VI

Sir Edward Reed (1830-1906): Naval Architect VII  
Sir Francis Ottiwell Adams, KCMG, CB, (1826-89) VII  
Hara Busho (1866-1912), painter VIII  
Tomimoto Kenkichi, (1886-1963), potter VIII  
Douglas Sladen (1856-1947), writer VIII  
The Death of James Melville Cox of Reuter in Tokyo 1940 VIII  
Charles Dunn (1915-1995), scholar VIII  
The Times and Japan in the Nineteenth Century VIII  
Ye Sette of Odd Volumes and The Thirteen Club in the 1890s IX  
Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013) and Japan IX