

With Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year

2019-2020

Well, another year has passed, and I am now 93 and still in the pink of health, and I hope you too are keeping well.

I usually like to begin my letter with some notable events, and this year it was easily done. On April 30th Emperor Akihito abdicated at the age of 85, and was succeeded by his son Naruhito. A change of Emperor means the institution of a new era name, and we are now in the Reiwa era. I feel a certain affinity with the new Emperor, as he was in my class in his second year at Gakushuin University. (I suspect I was specially given this class so that he could have some experience of British English, as it was not in my usual run of classes.)



Later in the year the new Emperor was formally enthroned. On this occasion, ceremonially attired and accompanied by the Empress, similarly attired, he formally announced his accession; this ceremony was attended by leading figures from other countries, including Prince Charles. Following on from this, the assembled company then proceeded from the Imperial Palace to the magnificent Akasaka Imperial Residence, built in a style reminiscent of the Louvre or Versailles.

The date originally intended for this ceremony was October 22nd, but this event was postponed in consideration of the victims of a massive typhoon, the severest one in several decades. The new date chosen for the Enthronement Ceremony was November 10th, and this occasion was closely followed by the Daijosai on November 14th-15th, at which the Emperor offered newly-harvested rice and sake to the gods and prayed for the welfare of his people.

Coming closer to home, Mike Garnett, son of my cousin Helen who lives in Victoria, Canada, paid me a quick in-and-out visit on February 4th. He was on his way to go skiing, and I imagine Helen had told him to be sure and visit me. I suppose it's only a short hop from Victoria to Tokyo; if you look at a globe, the distance doesn't seem so formidable. I can remember dandling him on my knee as a tot in London and reading him a story - he always wanted the same story!

Then in July we had a rather sad event; our beloved pastor at Tokyo Union Church, Johann Symington, returned to his native South Africa, together with his dear wife Hennie. He had such a warm personality and was a good friend to us all, and we miss him greatly. I'm pretty sure he was already retired, and the pastoral search committee unanimously chose him because he was clearly the best candidate. He can now enjoy his second retirement!

I keep in regular touch with my sister Joan in England; she is now in a home like me, and has settled in very comfortably. This home is near her own home, so her friends and old neighbours can easily come and visit her.

At Christmas time I shall go to church for the morning worship service on Christmas Day, and I shall probably be asked to read the lesson.

With warmest greetings,



Hugh E. Wilkinson