NOTES TO CHARLES HOLME’S DIARY

1. Yaami’s hotel above Maruyama Park in eastern Kyoto, now defunct, was patronized by both Christopher Dresser and Rudyard Kipling. Dresser noted that ‘it is often called the European Hotel, yet it is a thoroughly Japanese building’ (Dresser, 1882, p. 119). Alfred East described it as ‘beautifully situated on one of the range of hills close to the temples’ – on the slopes of Higashiyama (East, 1991, pp. 28–9).

2. Chionin remains the principal temple of the Jodo sect, founded in the early thirteenth century, whose buildings, dating mostly from 1630, have elaborately decorated ceilings. The temple has the largest bell in Japan; seventeen monks are needed to ring it.

3. The ‘scent game’ (ko-awase) was an ancient game or competition, described in Murasaki’s Tale of Genji, where the qualities of different scents were described in verse. Genji-ko is a ceremony based on memorizing or recognizing different kinds of incense.

4. The rickshaw is the European name for jinrikisha, or ‘man-powered-vehicle’, which originated in Japan in the 1860s. Other man-powered forms of transport were the kago, a form of palanquin, and chairs carried by coolies, described by Dresser as a ‘horrible contrivance’ (Dresser, 1882, p. 193). Native carriages or basha, ‘a springless, very uncomfortable one-horse shay’, were to be avoided, ‘if you have either nerves to shatter or bones to shake’ (Murray’s, 1899, p. 10); see n. 9.

5. Lake Biwa, or the Lake of Omi, 235 km in circumference, is the largest lake in Japan. Mountains descend to it from the west; a plain lies to the east.

6. Tokaido, the old ‘eastern sea road’ running eastwards from Kyoto and partly lined with a great avenue of pine trees, was the route by which the Daimyo travelled twice a year from the old imperial capital, Kyoto, where the emperor lived, to pay their respects to the shogun at the effective capital, Edo (Tokyo). In mountain areas it was ‘a rough road indeed, paved with great stones which in steep ascents are simply rough stone steps impassable to vehicular traffic’ (East, 1991, p. 90). A famous series of prints of the Tokaido was published by Hiroshige. One section of the Tokaido still survives. For modern comparisons, see Carey, 2000.

7. Lake Biwa Canal, then under construction, created a navigable link with Osaka Bay and also supplied irrigation and water power to Kyoto. The Chief Engineer, Sakuro Tanabe, had studied under British engineers in Japan, but used US technology in the project which included hydroelectric power schemes. The canal opened to traffic in 1890; a dedicated museum was opened in Kyoto to celebrate its centenary.

8. Otsu is a town on the southern shore of Lake Biwa. It was briefly capital of Japan during the seventh century and is now a port for the lake.

9. The first edition of Murray’s Handbook for Travellers in Japan was published in 1881. The Handbook for Central and Northern Japan, by Ernest Satow and A. G. S. Hawes, became the standard guidebook to Japan. Basil Hall Chamberlain, Professor of Japanese and Philology at the University of Japan, who edited the third to ninth editions, described it in Things Japanese (1890, p. 140) as the best guide book to Japan, but by then it was out of print, with second-hand copies fetching high prices.

10. Miidera is a Buddhist temple near Otsu, one of the thirty-three shrines sacred to Kwannon (or Kannon, derived from the Chinese Kuan Yin), Bodhisattva or goddess of mercy, sometimes depicted with multiple arms symbolizing compassion.
11. Benkei, a retainer to Yoshitune (b. 1159), and half brother of the first Shogun, allegedly stole the bell and rang it all night. He had to be bribed with a huge cauldron of bean soup before he would return it.

12. The obelisk is a nineteenth-century memorial to soldiers who died fighting the Satsuma rebellions (Seinan Senso) in 1877. The Satsuma samurai considered that the government’s policy of modernization was destroying the traditional social structure of feudalism, which would undermine their position. The ensuing rebellion was led by Saigo Takamori. The unsettled atmosphere and unhappiness with foreign influences was noted by Dresser in his account of Japan (Dresser, 1882, pp. 171, 183).

13. Karasaki was a village or small town on the western shore of Lake Biwa.

14. At the time, this famous tree was over 90 feet (30 m) in height, 37 feet (10 m) in circumference and the length of its branches up to 288 feet (nearly 90 m); it is still supported by wooden scaffolding.

15. The Cha-no-yu, or tea ceremony, evolved from medieval Buddhist practice and was codified during the sixteenth century. Holme read a paper to the Japan Society on ‘The Pottery of the Cha-no-yu’, 11 November 1908, later published in the Society’s Transactions and Proceedings 8 (1910), pp. 163–86. He also presented the Warrington Museum with several items relating to the tea ceremony, which are still on display there. The Museum has some 400 Japanese objects, collected since the 1850s (Irvine, 2004, p. 149).

16. Raku is deliberately ‘rough’ looking pottery fired at a low temperature, and is used in the tea ceremony.

17. The Kyoto Exhibition, or Shinko Buppin Tenrankai, was an ‘Exhibition of Objects Old and New’, held 1 April – 10 May 1889.

18. This may have been Hayashi Tadamasa (1853–1906), an art dealer who played an important role in Japonisme. In 1878, he went to France to serve as an interpreter at the Paris Exposition, and became an art dealer. He did much to encourage interest in Japanese art in Europe but, in order to make Japanese works more saleable in the West, encouraged the separation of art and craft, traditionally considered one.

19. The Mikado’s garden or Kyoto Gyoen was situated in the centre of Kyoto. Many residential buildings of imperial relatives and court nobles were located around the palace; after the capital was moved to Tokyo, those residences were abandoned and the residential area was converted to an open space surrounding the Palace. It is now a national park of ninety-two hectares.

20. The Meiji government had issued (nonconvertible) bank notes from 1868, but the money system was uncoordinated and used elements of the old Edo system. By the time of Holme’s visit, the Bank of Japan had been established (1882), and was issuing convertible (yen) bank notes (from 1885), designed by Italian artist Chiossone. The Mexican silver dollar was also recognized currency until 1897; the new yen was its equivalent.

21. Shoji are sliding screens covered with paper, used to divide rooms in traditional Japanese buildings. Painted panels are called fusuma-e.

22. According to the OED, a quatern loaf is a four-pound loaf.

23. Kyoto-fu Gagakko, or Kyoto Municipal Painting School, was established in 1880 and was the first public painting school in Japan.

24. The ‘De Veers copybooks’ may be Vere Foster’s copybooks. Foster (1819–1900) was an Irish philanthropist who published a series of writing and drawing copybooks in the 1860s and 70s which became central to Irish education for the next half century and were also adopted by School Boards in England and Scotland.

25. The Kinkaku was converted into a Zen temple in the early fifteenth century. It was burnt down in 1950 and later rebuilt.