



Remembering Dr Eric Albone

A lasting legacy in science education and UK–Japan relations

It is with great sadness that we remember Dr Eric Albone MBE, founding Director of the Clifton Scientific Trust and long-standing member of the Parliamentary & Scientific Committee, who died in August 2026.

Eric devoted his life to education, science and, above all, to creating opportunities for young people. His particular contribution was to enable pupils to encounter science beyond the classroom: to work with practising scientists, engage with genuine research, ask questions and discover for themselves the excitement of scientific enquiry.

This philosophy became the foundation of the Clifton Scientific Trust, established by Eric alongside Andrew Thornhill in 2001 and nowhere has it been more clearly expressed than through the UK–Japan Young Scientists Workshop Programme. The programme brings together 16–18-year-old students from the UK and Japan to work in small international teams, hosted by leading universities and working alongside scientists and engineers. Students are presented with genuine scientific challenges and encouraged to investigate, collaborate and present their findings. Since its inception, well over a thousand young people have participated.

For Eric, however, the programme was about more than scientific enrichment. He regarded science as a means of building international understanding: a common language through which young people could collaborate across cultures, form friendships and develop a broader perspective of their place in the world. The programme's objectives remain to encourage questioning and exploration, develop transferable skills and present science as a cultural bridge.

Eric was equally committed to ensuring that such opportunities were accessible to pupils from all backgrounds. The Trust raises funds to enable students who might otherwise be unable to participate

to take part in its programmes. His belief was that access to inspiring scientific experiences should not depend upon a pupil's circumstances or school.

A career dedicated to education

Eric brought considerable scientific experience to his work in education. Before entering teaching, he pursued a research career in the United Kingdom and United States, with a particular interest in mammalian chemical communication. He subsequently taught science at Clifton College for 17 years, where he pioneered the first school-based Scientist in Residence scheme, enabling pupils to engage directly with scientific research.

He went on to establish the Clifton Scientific Trust to promote science through innovative educational projects. Alongside the UK–Japan programme, the Trust developed its Meet-a-Medic programme with Bristol primary schools, providing another means of encouraging scientific curiosity and aspiration.

Eric's contribution was formally recognised with an MBE for services to education in 2013. In 2017, the Government of Japan awarded him the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, recognising his contribution to the development of human resources for science and technology and to mutual understanding through student exchange between Japan and the United Kingdom.

The award was particularly significant because Eric was always clear that the achievements of the programme were collective. He regularly acknowledged the contribution of the many scientists, teachers, schools, universities, volunteers and supporters in both countries whose

commitment made the workshops possible.

A legacy through generations

Eric's influence can also be understood through the experiences of those who participated in his programmes.

I first encountered the Clifton Scientific Trust as a 17-year-old pupil in 2013, when I travelled to Kyoto with Eric and Mary-Grace Browning. At the time I was studying Chemistry, Biology, History and Politics and was uncertain whether my future lay principally in the sciences or humanities.

The experience in Japan changed that. Working in a university research environment and alongside Japanese students gave me a new understanding of what scientific research could be. I returned to the UK determined to remain on a scientific pathway, subsequently studying Biology at university.

Although I became increasingly responsible for the organisation of the workshops in the past few years, Eric remained closely involved.

Two qualities particularly characterised Eric's approach.

The first was his determination that young people from all backgrounds should have the opportunity to experience both Japan and science at the highest level.

The second was his insistence on asking questions.

Eric encouraged pupils to question the scientists they worked with, but he was equally willing to question the scientists himself. Even in his eighties, when attending the 2024 and 2025

workshops, he remained intensely curious and eager to learn.

This continued until very recently. When I sent him photographs from Japan this summer, he immediately noticed some Rutherford scattering equipment in the background and wanted to know more about it.

That small exchange seemed to encapsulate Eric perfectly. He never regarded himself as having finished learning.

Eric was always particularly pleased to hear from former participants and to learn where their lives had taken them. I believe he understood that the true measure of his work was not simply the number of workshops held or students who attended, but the opportunities those experiences subsequently created.

Eric's work demonstrated that science education can be much more than the transmission of knowledge. It can foster curiosity, confidence, collaboration and international understanding.

Continuing the work

There is therefore a particular sense of continuity in the fact that the Trust's work continues.

It is fitting that a former participant in Eric's programme has now taken on the role of Director of the Clifton Scientific Trust, supported by an exceptional Board of Trustees and by the many scientists, teachers, schools, universities, volunteers and supporters who have contributed to the Trust over the years.

This summer, the UK–Japan Young Scientists Workshop returned to Japan, with the 2026 programme hosted in Tokyo. Students from Britain and Japan once again worked collaboratively on university-level scientific projects, continuing the model Eric established a quarter of a century ago. Planning is already underway for the next Cambridge programme.

The Trust remains deeply grateful to all those who have supported Eric's work.

Their generosity and commitment have enabled successive generations of young people to encounter science in new ways and to develop friendships and international connections that extend far beyond the workshops themselves.

The Clifton Scientific Trust will continue to build on the foundations that Eric laid, maintaining his central principles of questioning, exploration, opportunity and international collaboration.

In doing so, we hope to honour his memory in the way he would have wished: not simply by remembering what he achieved, but by ensuring that future generations have the opportunity to experience what he believed in so strongly.

Dr Eric Albane MBE may no longer be with us, but the opportunities he created, the questions he encouraged and the young people he inspired will continue to carry his work forward.

*Sam Lebbon,
Director, Clifton Scientific Trust*