

# MORANT WRIGHT

## MANAGEMENT LIMITED

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### WS Morant Wright Japan Fund December 2023 Newsletter

£ Returns	Month	2023	Since Inception (23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2003)
B Accumulation	+3.4%	+21.4%	+454.6%
TOPIX Net Total Return	+3.3%	+12.3%	+332.5%

Sources: Bloomberg and Waystone Management (UK) Limited

TOPIX finished the year with a gain of 27.8% in local terms. A major reason for the strong performance of the market and the fund was the announcement by the Tokyo Stock Exchange in January about companies trading below their book value. Partly as a result, investor flow data showed that companies buying back shares were the biggest purchasers of Japanese equities during the year. The yen strengthened during the month as confidence grew that US interest rates may be peaking, although the yen has still fallen significantly over the year. The Bank of Japan left monetary policy unchanged at its December meeting.

Core CPI (excluding fresh food) dropped from 2.9% to 2.5% in November, partly due to a sharp drop in energy prices which are benefiting from both government subsidies and the lower oil price. The rate excluding fresh food and energy fell from 4.0% to 3.8%. The consensus now seems to anticipate that the BoJ may end its policy of negative interest rates in April provided that early signs on wage increases are supportive.

There were further encouraging developments on corporate governance. The TSE announced that it will ask companies with listed subsidiaries and affiliates to explain the rationale for keeping them listed. It is seeking to ensure the independent governance of subsidiaries and the protection of minority investors. According to CLSA, 247 companies in Topix are more than 40% owned by another company (11% of the index). Shares in listed subsidiaries generally rose on the news including our holding in Canon Marketing Japan, which is 58% owned by Canon. Toho Movie announced a bid for its listed affiliate Tokyo Rakutenchi at a 52% premium.

Companies in the Toyota group announced more sales of cross-shareholdings. Denso sold its entire stakes in three group companies while Toyota Motor announced the sale of its 4.6% stake in Harmonic Drive. Toyota was also in the news after its subsidiary Daihatsu Motor admitted falsifying data for safety and emissions tests. Daihatsu, which makes up less than 5% of Toyota's total profit, has suspended global production at least until the end of January.

An activist investor announced that it has taken a 5% stake in Fuji Media, a TV advertising and property group which we hold in the fund. The investor has stated that it may make proposals to management. Given that the shares trade at just above 40% of book value and investment securities are worth 120% of the market capitalisation, there is considerable scope for improvement.

The value of domestic M&A reached ¥7.7trn in 2023, its highest level since 2005. In December there were competing takeover bids for Benefit One, an employee benefit outsourcing company. Dai-Ichi Life has made an offer of ¥1,800 per share to buy the company, exceeding an existing bid of ¥1,600 from M3. It then improved the bid to ¥2,123 by combining it with a tax efficient buyback by Benefit One. The proposed deal looks quite expensive to us, but the \$2bn cost is small relative to the size of Dai-Ichi Life and management has assured us that the company will continue to buy back shares despite this acquisition.

Despite the strong rise in share prices over the last year, the prospective PE ratio of 9.7x is similar to a year ago as higher profits have matched share price gains. Given the continued acceleration of shareholder returns and the substantial net cash of our stocks, we remain optimistic about the outlook.

**Stephen Morant, Ian Wright, Richard Phillips, Tom Mermagen, Andrew Millward,  
Denis Clough and Nick Sinclair**

Fund	
Fund size	£477m
Number of holdings	55

Valuations	
Average PBR	0.79
Median EV/OP* (3/24e)	6.4
Weighted Average P/E (3/24e)	9.7
Net cash as % of market cap*	61%

\*Net cash (including investment securities) and EV/OP figures exclude financials

Top Ten Holdings	% Fund
Tokyo Broadcasting System	3.7
Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group	3.4
Toyota Industries	3.2
Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group	3.2
Canon Marketing	3.0
Honda Motor	3.0
Toppan Inc	3.0
Sumitomo Mitsui Trust	2.9
Kinden	2.9
Inpex	2.8

Market Cap Breakdown	% Fund
Large cap (>\$5bn)	38.2
Mid cap (\$1-5bn)	52.5
Small cap (<\$1bn)	6.6
Cash	2.7

NAV at 29 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	
B Accumulation	554.63p
B Income	469.24p

**Dealing**  
If you would like to deal in the fund, please contact Waystone Management (UK) Limited. Their telephone number is **0345 922 0044**

**Please refer to the further fund details and important regulatory information on the reverse of this document**

Fund Information		Dealing Information	
Fund type	UK authorised OEIC	Minimum investment	£5,000
Fund currency	Sterling	Dealing frequency	Daily
Launch date	May 2003	Deal cut-off point	12pm
Geographic exposure	100% Japanese equities	Valuation point	12pm
AMF	1.0%	Settlement	T+4 (subscriptions/redemptions)
OCF	1.17%	ACD	Waystone Management (UK) Limited
Share types	Accumulation and Income	Fund administrator	Link Fund Administrators Limited (A Waystone Group Company) Central Square 29 Wellington Square Leeds, LS1 4DL Tel: 0345 922 0044 Fax: 0113 224 6001

Share Identifiers	Bloomberg code	SEDOL	ISIN
B Accumulation	CFMWJBA LN	3301012	GB0033010124
B Income	CFMWJBI LN	3359806	GB0033598060

Performance	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	Since inception (May 2003)
B Accumulation Shares	+4.3%	+6.3%	-6.3%	+10.8%	-12.3%	+16.9%	+454.6%
TOPIX Net Total Return	-5.0%	+1.9%	+9.1%	+15.2%	-9.3%	+15.3%	+332.5%

TOPIX Net Total Return is used for the purpose of performance comparison only as it is a widely used benchmark which includes reinvestment of dividends (net of withholding tax) and which most closely reflects the type of companies in which the fund invests. All performance information is calculated by Morant Wright Management Limited using share price data provided by Waystone Management (UK) Limited. Index data are taken from Bloomberg. Performance is given in sterling terms based on the Fund NAV. Data are as at 29<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and accurate as at that date.

*This document is issued and approved by Morant Wright Management Limited which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.*

#### **Disclaimer**

Please remember that past performance is not a guide to future performance. The value of the Fund and any income from it can fall as well as rise as a result of both market and currency fluctuations and investors may not get back the amount originally invested. Investors must be willing to accept some risk to their capital. Consequently, the fund may be suitable for investors who are looking to set aside their capital for the longer term (i.e. at least 5 years).

Before making an investment in the Fund you must read the KIID which can be obtained from Waystone Management (UK) Limited (<https://www.fundsolutions.net/uk/morant-wright-management-limited/ws-morant-wright-japan-fund/ws-morant-wright-japan-fund/>) or ourselves, along with the Fund Prospectus and the latest report and accounts.

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