

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

HONG KONG BRANCH

皇家亞洲學會香港分會
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NEWSLETTER

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20th April, 2001

Council members

Dr. Patrick Hase, President	Mr. Robert Nield, Hon. Treasurer & Vice President
Dr. Elizabeth Sinn, Vice President	Rev. Carl Smith, Hon. Vice President
Dr. Peter Barker, Hon. Secretary	Ms. Julia Chan, Hon. Librarian
Mrs. Valery Garrett, Hon. Activities Co-ordinator	Dr. Peter Halliday, Hon. Editor of Journals
Mrs. May Holdsworth, Member	Mr. Timothy Ko, Member
Dr. Janet Lee Scott, Member	Mr. Peter Stuckey, Member
Dr. Joseph Ting, Member	Mr. Jason Wordie, Member
Mr. Robert Horsnell, Co-opted Member	Dr. Michael Lau, Co-opted Member
Dr. Dan Waters, Immediate Past President	Mrs. Mary Painter, Assistant Secretary

Above you will see a list of our new Council members who were voted in at our AGM which took place on Friday 16th March, 2001 at the Hong Kong Club. It was very well attended, with over 70 members present, many of whom were willing to raise questions and make comments and generally contribute valuable input to the proceedings. An EGM was also held to approve proposed changes to our Constitution in support of our application to become a charitable institution. A vote of thanks was given to our retiring President, Dr. Dan Waters, for his untiring hard work and support of the RASHKB over the past five years. We hope very much he will continue his good work for the society. A copy of Dr. Waters' President's Report is enclosed with this newsletter. Dr. Patrick Hase was warmly welcomed as our new President. Following the meetings an excellent buffet dinner was enjoyed by everyone present.

On Friday 9th February, Dr. Patrick Hase gave a talk to the Society on "Salt-making in Hong Kong" to a capacity audience at City Hall. After noting that salt-making is the oldest known industry in the Hong Kong area, dating back to Nanyueh times (about 200 BC), he gave a thumbnail sketch of the history of salt-making in the Hong Kong area, from that date down to the closure of the industry in 1969. He explained the two different salt-making techniques used in Hong Kong – the leaching method and the solar evaporation method. He also showed a series of maps, plans and photographs of the Hong Kong salt-fields as they were in the early twentieth century.

On Saturday 10th February, Dr. Patrick Hase led a party of 58 members of the Society and their guests to Tai O on Lantau, to visit the remains of Salt-field No. 4 and to look at what could still be seen of this solar-evaporation salt-field. On site, Dr. Hase explained how the salt-field worked, and the various stages of the solar-evaporation salt-working process. Dr. Hase also

Links with the past

Dr Waters recently received a letter from RASHKB Life Member R. E. Lawry, OBE. Dan remembers him as a Founder Member of our Branch and as Honorary Secretary in the early and mid 1960s. Those were the days when we met in the British Council accommodation (they had a fine library then) in the old Gloucester Building on Pedder Street. For his devotion to the RAS, Mr Lawry was made an Honorary Member of our Branch.

But before being posted to Hong Kong with the British Council, Mr Lawry served in Shanghai, where he was a Fellow of the RAS North China Branch from 1948 to 1950. The Society was then closed down by the People's Republic. The North China Branch had its own high-rise accommodation which was visited by a party of RASHKB members at Easter 1997 (see RASHKB Journal vol. 37). The old RAS Shanghai Branch Library books are still in crates. Mr Lawry now lives in Cambridge (UK).

RASHKB Library

Our library is in the process of being moved to the new Central Library building in Causeway Bay. It should be available to members there in mid-May.

Volume 38 of our Journal

Unfortunately, only 13 members managed to send written comments as requested in our February Newsletter. In addition, however, Dan Waters sought the views of over 20 RAS members orally. A very brief summary of comments is as follows.

Although a small number of members feel the new cover is rather gaudy and prefer the old red cover, by far the majority prefer the new style 'cover' as we move on into the New Millennium. The odd one or two would prefer this, however, to be the actual cover rather than the 'jacket'. Generally the contents, photographs and quality of presentation were well received and the feeling was the Honorary Editor had 'gone the extra mile'.

One member described Volume 38 as a 'startling good effort and a huge investment in time'. Another said, 'Excellent, the best Journal ever!' There were many other bouquets. There were also a number of individual comments and suggestions. These included: guidelines for authors should be extended; a panel of referees should be established to vet submissions; and the order of contents of the Journal should be rearranged and grouped, with RAS business coming last.

To close, let us repeat Founder Branch Member Geoffrey Bonsell's words. '... considering the amount of voluntary time and effort required, and the limited budget available, our Journal has always been a living miracle'. Thank you Dr Peter Halliday and all past Honorary Editors!

Information required

Dr Renee Kovacs of California has asked us if we have ever heard of an English or American lady named **Martha Crouse**. The provenance of a number of antiques in a particular Near Eastern collection is given as originally belonging to Martha Crouse, Hong Kong, 1895 to 1915. If you have any information regarding this lady please contact Dr Dan Waters at benefit@netvigator.com or on (T) 2858 1858.

Lighthouses

The Government is making a film on Hong Kong's Lighthouses and the help of RASHKB was sought. Dan Waters was interviewed at both the Green Island Lighthouse and the Cape D'Aguiar Lighthouse in March. The RTHK programme is due to be televised in May.

Tai Fu Tai

The RASHKB Volunteers are due to continue excavations in the garden at Tai Fu Tai Mansion at San Tin, NT, in early May. If you would like to help or you have any information such as relevant maps, photographs, oral history or whatever, please contact RAS Volunteers Leader Bill Greaves on 9802 8240 or greaves@asiaonline.net

News from afar

Overseas Member Ms E O Michaeliones, who served with the British Council in Hong Kong in the 1960s, has written from Stratford-upon-Avon (UK). She says, among other things, '... imagine how pleased JR (Dr J R Jones -- originally a member of the Shanghai Branch) would have been to know that the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society he restarted in 1960, would still be flourishing more than 40 years later.'

New Overseas Member

Recently joined RASHKB (Overseas) member Beatrice Chan has returned to Canada after a visit to Hong Kong. Her grandfather lived in the old detached house at 99 Caine Road (at the junction with Aberdeen Street) where the supermarket now stands (see page 33 of RASHKB *Hong Kong Going and Gone* (1980)). Her father was born there and she lived there for the first 13 years of her life after which she moved to England for 10 years. The front door and other relics of the family home are now displayed in the Sha Tin Heritage Museum. In addition, one of her uncles lived in the house shown on page 31 of our bestseller and a friend lived in the house on page 32. Unfortunately, all these three buildings are no more. Have you bought your copy of this book yet?

Film about the Yacht Club

Dan Waters has been interviewed by 'Proteus', a locally based company, for a film concerning the Hong Kong Yacht Club and the history of the Territory as a mercantile centre. Due acknowledgement will be given to the RAS when the film is shown on Star TV.

RAS Journal

Volume 39 of the Journal has been assembled and should be published in the near future. Our Hon. Editor is now looking for material for Volume 40, to be published in the autumn. Members' contributions are always welcome. These may be full length articles, shorter pieces for the "Notes and Queries" section or book reviews.

The RASHKB Group of Friends in UK now on our web site

A piece about the Friends is included on our RASHKB web site, the address of which is www.royalasiaticsociety.org.hk. Please make sure you view our site regularly for updated information. For instance, our latest Newsletter appears on our web page. Comments are welcome.

The Chairman of the Friends in UK, David Gilkes, wrote in his annual report recently that one of the features of the past year has been the positive interaction between the RAS in Hong Kong and the Friends in the U.K. Apart from regular contact administratively, three of our Hong Kong Council members gave talks or guided visits to the UK branch and three of their members gave talks to us here at City Hall.

Our 70 or so "Friends" in the UK meet regularly, usually in London, and their next gathering will be their AGM on 26th May followed by a talk entitled "Forty Years in Hong Kong : A Correspondent Looks Back" by veteran Hong Kong correspondent Anthony Lawrence. On 4th August our new Hong Kong President Dr. Patrick Hase will lead a visit to the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum to learn about traditional South China agriculture. If any Hong Kong members are in the UK on these dates, you are more than welcome to attend these events. For information please contact Paul Bolding by e-mail on pbolding@bigfoot.com or look on our web site. Our Assistant Secretary Mary Painter has application forms available for any members about to return to the U.K. who are interested in joining the "Friends" in U.K. Please call her on 2813 7500. Alternatively, there is an application form on our web site.

One of our ex members, Carol Tan, who is now at the University of Newcastle Law School in the U.K., has sent us her paper which was published last year entitled "Going to Court in Weihaiwei : Some Support for Civil Litigation in the Qing". Those members who went on the RAS visit to Qingdao, Yantai and Weihaiwei in October 1999 will remember Carol gave a very interesting talk about the early British magistrates in Weihaiwei. She has sent us a copy of her paper which will be added to the RAS library.

A new book edited by one of our own Life members

Hong Kong Invaded! A '97 Nightmare by Life Member of the Society, Gillian Bickley, is published by the Hong Kong University Press this month (April). The publisher writes, "No. It is not what you think. The year is 1897, not 1997. This is a fictional account of Hong Kong invaded by the combined forces of France and Russia".

"This visionary tale by an anonymous author has been forgotten for a hundred years. Yet when published as *The Back Door* during the negotiations between Imperial China and Great Britain over the lease of the New Territories, the story aroused serious British fears about the possibility of defending Hong Kong against attack. Copies were then to be found on the desks of British officials in London. Matthew Nathan, who became Governor in 1904, was advised to read the book. But it was not only in 1897 that the book was accurate in its observations on military tactics. There are many intriguing parallels with the Christmas 1941 invasion by the Japanese and the role of the Hong Kong Volunteers at that time. Three strategically vulnerable locations identified in *The Back Door* were considered for attack in 1941. Had the Japanese read this fictional battle when plotting their manoeuvres? If so, *The Back Door* not only taught one way to defend Hong Kong, but also another to attack it."

To help her, Gillian enlisted the enthusiastic assistance of several members of the Society, who are acknowledged in the book.

The book is available through bookshops and also (with a discount) through the publisher's web page. The links are:

<<http://www.hkupress.org/book/9622095267.htm>>

<<http://www.hkupress.org>>

If you bring your copy to Gillian and Verner's talk to the Society on 1 June, perhaps she will sign it for you!

Subscription Renewals

Thank you to all members who returned our renewal/confirmation forms and paid their 2001 subscriptions. For those members who pay by banker's order, we would still like you to return the form to us, so that we can update our new database with your correct details. In particular, we would like to have your e-mail address, for those members who are happy to receive newsletters by e-mail, as this will save us considerable cost. If you received this newsletter by mail but are happy to receive future ones by e-mail, please send us a message with your e-mail address to membership@royalasiaticsociety.org.hk. Many thanks. For those members who have not yet renewed, please do so as soon as possible so we can update your membership record. We now have a very efficient database system for our members' information and we need to keep it up-to-date, so if you haven't yet renewed your membership for this year, please do so without delay. If you have mislaid the renewal form please telephone our assistant secretary Mary Painter on 2813 7500 and she will send you a replacement form. If you do not wish to renew your membership, please would you advise us so we can remove your name from our database. If you do not renew your subscription by the end of June, your name will be removed from our list and you will receive no further information from us.

New members

As a form of community service our lectures, most of which are held at the City Hall, are open to the general public free of charge. With a total membership of over 500 and non-members attending too, we are sorry we are not always able to recognise all new members. They are therefore requested when they attend functions to please make themselves known to Council members who now wear name badges. As new members of our Branch may we extend a specially warm welcome to every one of you! We hope you find our activities interesting and that you become involved.

Introduce a Friend

If any of our members have friends who may be interested in joining our society, please call our Assistant Secretary Mary Painter on 2813 7500 and she will send you copies of our brochure to pass on to your friends.

Of Interest to Members

Ancients in Profile : Ming and Qing Figure Paintings

In a joint presentation with the Shanghai Museum, the University Museum and Art Gallery of The University of Hong Kong will be exhibiting fifty figure paintings, dating to the Ming and Qing dynasties, from 24th March to 10th June, 2001.

The Hong Kong Natural History Society

Membership of the Hong Kong Natural History Society is open to anyone with an interest in the Hong Kong countryside. The Society organises monthly outings which consist of hikes in the winter months and boat trips to the remoter islands during the summer months. In March members enjoyed an outing to Tai Lam Country Park and on 22nd April they will be walking on the Chi Ma Wan peninsula on Lantau Island. Most outings take place on a Sunday and have leaders who will guide the party and point out items of interest. Memoirs are published from time to time which are available to members and there is a small library of natural history books that members can access. Membership is only \$100 for a year for an individual or \$150 for a couple. Further details may be obtained by e-mail from dingle@hkstar.com or by phone at 2993-3330 or fax at 2993-7709.

The Asia Society presents an Indian Music Performance and Talk

Internationally acclaimed performer and award-winner composer Rajeev Taranath will give a one-night only performance and talk for the Asia Society on Friday, May 11, 2001. Taranath is one of the world's finest exponents of the sarod, the richly textured relative of the lute, and has toured extensively in India, the U.S., Europe, and Australia, where he was the first Indian classical music performer at the Sydney Opera House. This is his first performance in Hong Kong.

The musical interaction between the sarod and the tabla is often one of the highlights of a classical Indian musical performance; in Hong Kong, Mr. Taranath will be accompanied by the much sought after tabla player Uday Raj Karpur.

For reservations please contact the Asia Society on 2103 9507 or fax 2877 5343.

Friends of the Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

The friends of the Art Museum have invited RAS members to join their forthcoming visit to Mai Po Marshes which will take place on Saturday 12th May. Mai Po, bordering Deep Bay in the NWNT, is a wetland of international importance supporting a wide range of habitats and wildlife managed by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Endangered species such as the black-faced spoonbill and the Saunders' Gull can be seen there. Mangroves and gei wais (shrimp ponds) are also a feature of Mai Po. For further information please contact Cindy Herbert on 2104 7411 or email friendscuhk@yahoo.com or ctherb@netvigator.com

The Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong

Dr. Rosemary Scott, Senior Academic Consultant to the Asian Departments of Christie's, will be visiting Hong Kong and will talk about "The influence of Tibetan Buddhism on the arts of China in the 14th and 15th centuries" at the Hong Kong Club, at 6:30 pm on Wednesday 25th April. Dinner will follow the lecture. For details please call Sabina Tong on 2523 2630.

The English-Speaking Members' Department of the YWCA has just released its Summer 2001 programme. Courses are offered on a great variety of subjects from arts, cookery, health, fitness, walking groups, computers, to mahjong etc. For details call 2524 8424 or go to www.esmdywca.com. If you know any ladies who are newly arrived in Hong Kong, their long running "At Home in Hong Kong" course is a life saver.

The Women's Corona Society also welcomes ladies who are new to Hong Kong as well as those who are not. They meet each Monday morning in the Mariners' Club in TST and enjoy coffee and a chat as well as interesting speakers; they also arrange local visits and social activities. For more information call Karen Ellis on 2779 3476.

Advertising in the RAS Newsletter

In an effort to defray newsletter costs, we are accepting ads that would be of interest to RAS members. Would you like to advertise a business or a service you can provide, or do you know someone who might be interested? Our rates are very reasonable: Full Page HK\$1,150.00; 2/3 Page HK\$850.00; 1/2 Page HK\$725.00, 1/3 Page HK\$450.00. If you have a short ad and would like to pay according to the number of words in the ad, you may do so at the following rates: first 10 words: \$70.00; each additional word: \$2.50.

RAS Publications

In the Heart of the Metropolis: Yaumatei and Its People

We have received the following testimonial regarding our newest publication: 'It's another magnificent production. It's a super little subject, both for the text and for the visuals. The photographs are very strong. All human life is there.' Have you bought your copy yet? RASHKB Members are being offered a substantial discount off the published price (HK\$ 275 instead of HK\$ 380), but only while our present stock lasts. Note: there is a further discount if you order both this and the "Villages" book as a set.

Beyond the Metropolis: Villages in Hong Kong

Due to the high demand, this lovely publication, a companion book for In the Heart of the Metropolis: Yaumatei and Its People, has been republished. Note: there is a discount if you order both this and the "Yaumatei" book as a set.

Hong Kong Going and Gone (published in 1980)

A nostalgic collection of photographs of the old Hong Kong which is fast disappearing today.

Some Traditional Chinese Ideas and Conceptions in Hong Kong Social Life Today

We are offering this reprinted publication from a symposium held in October 1966 at a very special price of just \$70.00, while stocks last.