

A Report to the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch from its friends in the United Kingdom

This is the third report that I have had the privilege of presenting at the annual general meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch held in Hong Kong.

One of the features in the last year has been the positive interaction between the R.A.S. in Hong Kong and the Friends in the U.K. This manifests itself very clearly not only by those who visit both countries and give a talk or arrange a visit, but also by those who keep close touch on the administrative aspects. Although there might be those who say “deliver us from e-mail”, there is absolutely no doubt that for such a far –flung society as we are, e-mail does help enormously to keep us on the road here in the U. K. and bond us closer. Over the last year our committee has been able to meet up with Dr. Elizabeth Sinn, Dr. Patrick Hase who attended one of our meetings, and also Valerie Garrett, who kindly spared time to show us her own bequeathed collection of Chinese Costumes at the Victoria and Albert museum.

On the other side, it is also a pleasure to note that you have been visited by Mr. Keith Stevens, Mr. David Mahoney, and Dr. Cyril Cannon, all of whom have given a talk over the last year. Our one regret was that it was not possible for any of us to participate in the 40th anniversary of the re-foundation of the society in Hong Kong which clearly was a very successful occasion, and which augurs well for the future, in spite of the political changes that are gradually happening in Hong Kong (and in the U. K. for that matter).

The Friends' Annual meeting normally takes place at the end of May each year and since I last reported, there have been the following activities:

- 27th May 2000. Annual General meeting and lecture by Prof. Hugh Baker entitled, “Pork for some or pork for all; sexist clans and scheming clanpersons”. A very scholarly and interesting lecture, which gave us great insight into clan politics in Hong Kong.
- 23rd June 2000. Visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum to hear Mrs. Valerie Garrett on her collection of Chinese costumes. A real life - times work in Hong Kong went into this collection and members were treated to a masterly exposition by Valerie on how she succeeded in acquiring the costumes and their origins.
- 17th July 2000. Visit to Oxford. This was a fascinating day to see many aspects of Oxford which one does not normally visit. We started at the Pitt Rivers museum to look at the Sir Aurel Stein collection and the conservation laboratory housing the textiles brought back by him. In the afternoon a visit to

the Ashmolean Museum was made featuring the Shaw collection (not Sir Run Run) but a collection of mid- nineteenth century Yarkand and Kashgaria costumes once belonging to Robert Shaw, British in Ladakh, who was an intelligence gatherer within the machinations of the Great Game. In the late afternoon, we then invaded David Pasketts' house to view his own paintings focusing on "Glimpses of everyday Chinese life". David has made frequent visits to China and is well-known for the reproductions appearing on the cards of the Chinese University of Hong Kong Art museum. The day ended with a congenial Chinese dinner. For this very successful day we need to thank Mrs. Rosemary Lee, whose organisational ability was up to its usual high standards.

- 28th October 2000. Lecture by Mrs. Janice Thorpe. "Hong Kong Revisited". Janice had recently returned from Hong Kong where she was one of the R.A. S. volunteers who worked with the Antiquities and Monuments' Office, surveying heritage sites. This was a wonderfully all-embracing lecture which brought home not only the places which many of us had not seen but should have seen, and were still there, but also the very rapid changes and in some cases demolition of many well-known heritage sites.
- 27th January 2001. Chinese New Year Lunch at the China City Restaurant, Soho, London. This was attended by 51 members and friends including one who travelled up from Cornwall and one from Belgium.

The above activities need arranging and it is good to report that the well-known discerning committee members whose addresses, telephone numbers and e-mails are attached, play a vital part in bringing us all together. There have been two changes in the committee since last year. Mrs. Julie Barry has decided that she can no longer continue as treasurer and membership secretary. Julie was very instrumental in helping to set up the Friends three years ago and for this we are very grateful. Mr. Roger Chandler has bravely taken on this mantle. The Friends have not in the past had an official secretary and it is a pleasure that Mr. Paul Boulding has been persuaded to do this. No report, however, can be complete without recording the Friends' sincere thanks to Mrs. Rosemary Lee and Mrs. Anita Wilson for the way they help to arrange activities and prepare the newsletter.

The future of the Friends looks promising. Financially we are in the black and we number at present around 70 members. We would number more if all paid their annual subscription! In the more immediate future, there is still the possibility of visiting Chinese war graves in Northern France; we also look forward to our own annual general meeting on the 26th of May at SOAS when we will have the opportunity of having a talk by Mr. Anthony Lawrence, who needs little introduction to all members and friends. In the summer we will be fortunate to have Dr. Patrick Hase to lead us on an expedition to the South Coast area based around Salisbury where there is reported to be considerable number of

Chinese agricultural implements in the museum. If any Hong Kong members are in the U. K. for any of these events do please get in touch with any member of the committee and join us.

I cannot close this report without a note of sincere regret on the standing down of our President Dr. Dan Waters. The society has flourished to greater heights and influence and from the U. K. we can only admire what he has been able to achieve through his own expertise. We wish him all the best in his "retirement". At the same time we welcome his successor, Dr. Patrick Hase, and are confident that the society will continue to be in good hands.

28th February 2001

David Gilkes (Chairman)