

## Friends of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch, London

### Chairman's Annual report 2017

Fraternal greetings to the society in Hong Kong.

As of early March, 58 people were paid up as members of the Friends for this year with a few more expected. Membership fluctuates and it is interesting to note that we are getting people joining who have left Hong Kong relatively recently, as well as those who were never members of the RAS in Hong Kong. Speakers like Mark O'Neill and David Bellis have their followers and friends in Britain who get to know us through them, and we are occasionally joined by interested students. We continue to enjoy lunches, lectures and outings with a good group of regulars. This is a review of our events over the past year.

In April, we were pleased to remember the life and work of our member Keith Stevens with a talk by his friend and collaborator Prof. Gary Tiedemann. Happily, members of Keith's family were also able to join us. My wife Kirsty and I attended the auction of much of Keith's collection of Chinese god figures, books and his archive later in the year. Belated attempts to find a museum or other institution interest in taking the archive were unsuccessful and it was acquired by Penang-based collector Ronni Pinsler.

We had our AGM in May 2016 with a talk by Canon Stephen Sidebotham, former Dean of Hong Kong, about the Anglican church there. Rev. Sidebotham also officiated at a wreath-laying at the Royal Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum later in May which Kirsty and I attended.

In June our speaker was Peggy Shih Brandmeyer who dealt with her research into the story of the Qian-Warburton sisters and a century of Eurasian reflections on China, using photographs taken from 1911 – 2011.

Recently published books inspired our next two meetings: in August Mark O'Neill spoke on *The Miraculous History of China's Two Palace Museums* and in October Prof. Kerry Brown of King's College, London gave a talk on *CEO China: The Rise of Xi Jinping*.

In January of this year Kirsty and I had the great pleasure of joining the RASHKB cross-border trip to the Kaiping area. It was a fascinating experience but was also a welcome chance to meet some of your members and spend time with your president. We had the pleasure of being invited to a fine RAS curry lunch at the Masonic Hall on Kennedy Road as well.

We marked the year of the rooster with our customary Chinese New Year lunch in Chinatown at the end of January, occupying three tables at the very busy Joy King Lau restaurant.

In February, we had a talk by journalist Jane Macartney, descendant of Lord George Macartney, reflecting on how he is seen in China today and drawing comparisons between the Qing rulers and subsequent rulers of China, up to the present day.

In March, David Bellis gave us a very well attended talk on some more of his research into old photos of Hong Kong that he has gathered for his website gwulo.com and the stories behind them.

Our AGM this year will be a little earlier than usual, on 1 April, when Dr Frances Wood will cover the topic of her latest book, co-written with Christopher Amander, *Betrayed Ally: China in the Great War*.

At this and any other of our very sociable events, Hong Kong members are most welcome.

I would like to thank Mary Painter for continuing to produce our newsletter, Bernadette Mackenzie-Ross who does our accounts, Eric Coskry's work as secretary, and Kirsty for organising excellent meals to accompany all of our events.

Paul Bolding, March 2017