

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

### **Chairman's Annual report 2023**

Fraternal greetings to the Society in Hong Kong.

The Friends in the UK have maintained a membership of around 70. Our activities in the past year have been in person but we have not ruled out further Zoom talks and enjoy joining those from Hong Kong.

We have begun having some talks at St Anne's Church, Soho, which gives us a vast choice of Chinese restaurants nearby for the customary lunch beforehand, as well as at the RAS.

We had our lunch to mark the Year of the Rabbit a little late this year, at New Loon Fung in Soho on 11 February.

We are due to have our AGM on 29 April.

After a break due to Covid, we have resumed running an excursion of several days for the members, this year to Edinburgh and Glasgow from 14-18 May. Planned highlights include a private curatorial tour of the National Museums Collection Centre, giving an overview of the formation of the Chinese collection and the role of Scots in this process, and a talk on the plant hunter George Forrest at Edinburgh Botanic Gardens.

At our last AGM in May, the speaker was James Lin from the Fitzwilliam Museum with a lively talk on jade.

Journalist Michael Sheridan gave us a talk in June on his book "The Gate to China", the fruit of much original and illuminating research which gripped the audience.

In September, Les Bird, former commander of Hong Kong marine police, made a return to give us another talk, this time on dealing with Vietnamese refugees, which ended with a description of a moving reunion in California with one of those he had helped.

We had good attendance in October for a talk by our member Sir Malcolm Jack on his latest book "My Hong Kong", looking at how Hong Kong was described by writers in the late colonial period.

In March 2023, Colin Sheaf, deputy chairman of Bonhams auction house, is due to talk on the Percival David collection of ceramics, now housed at the Sir Joseph Hotung Centre for Ceramic Studies at the British Museum. The talk has had to be postponed from last November because a rail strike meant many members would have had trouble attending.

We hope there will be more such meetings in person and look forward to another FRASHK lecture year full of interest.

In our organisation, I am ably assisted by Florence Cattle, treasurer, Mary Painter, who produces our newsletter, and Eric Coskry, secretary. Kirsty Norman, David Gilkes and Jill Trew complete the committee.

As ever, Hong Kong members are welcome at our events.

Paul Bolding, February 2023