

## **RASHK 62<sup>nd</sup> AGM – Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022 (via Zoom)**

### **President's Report**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of RASHK, including our overseas members who have logged in from elsewhere. Good evening to you all and a warm welcome to this 62<sup>nd</sup> AGM of RASHK. On delivering this report I speak to you not only as President, but also as Chair of the Activities Committee.

This is the third year that our AGM has been held via Zoom and I thank you all for attending. For last year's AGM, David McKellar (our Honorary Secretary), Ieuan Harding (our Administrator) and I all met up in one place for the 61<sup>st</sup> AGM, but this year we are even more spread out with David, Jace Au (our Administrator) and I all talking to you from different venues. I have to thank Jace Au and Council member Davina Lee (i/c our RASHK website) for all the organization and technical support in setting up our meeting for this evening, with thanks also to David for chairing this meeting.

Covid-19 infection concerns continue to have a significant impact on our lives and lifestyles. A year ago at our 61<sup>st</sup> RASHK AGM we were all hoping that its impact would by now be mitigated, but this was not to be. We watched the various global and local responses to continuing Covid-19 infection risks, not least the arrival here of the Omicron variant which swept through Hong Kong as a 5<sup>th</sup> wave of infection in the first few months of this year, seriously stressing our health care services and civil society. The arrival last year of effective vaccination and then effective antiviral drug treatment therapy have reduced the risks of infection for many of us - but sadly not for our elderly population here in Hong Kong who largely stubbornly refused vaccination resulting in high mortality rates in this group. Constraints imposed by the 5<sup>th</sup> wave of infection and others have proved the last straw for some of our Hong Kong community, who have chosen to leave Hong Kong. Travel and quarantine challenges particularly have been problematic for many. Just for the record, up until now, we in Hong Kong have sustained > 750,000 Covid-19 related infections and > 9000 Covid-19 related deaths. We are all now very familiar with self testing --perhaps even if not all of those positive cases have been officially reported. The consensus view from our health care experts now is that a high proportion of our population is now effectively vaccinated or has been infected. This is now resulting in a long awaited gradual and very welcome easing of restrictions. Public venues are beginning to open up but as yet group visits not encouraged. Inevitably there has been an impact on our usual calendar of RASHK events in 2021/22. Full details are available in the Report from the Activities Committee. Up until the end of 2021 some local visits and in-person talks resumed. We experimented with hybrid events (Zoom + face to face) events in our usual venues, Café 8 and the Visual Arts Centre on Kennedy Road, but even these have not been possible over the past 3-4 months. Regrettably also there has been no opportunity for overseas RASHK trips over the past couple of years, and these have been sadly missed. We have relied heavily on Zoom for most of our activities in the past year, but we have welcomed the chance to invite internationally based speakers and discussants. Our overseas members have also benefitted significantly, despite time zone challenges. Reciprocal links and access to events hosted by FRASHK, RASBeijing and RASShanghai have been warmly welcomed and opened the door to a whole new range of other speakers and Zoom hosted events.

Activities remain a big and important part of RASHK's functions. Details of last year's events are available from the Activities Committee annual report and appendix accessible from the RASHK website, our bimonthly Newsletters and our next RASHK Journal Volume 62, to be released later this year. The programme has been rich and varied with increasingly high attendance rates, though

regretfully not all who register eventually log in. These Zoom events remain free. My sincere thanks to all those involved in sourcing, supporting and organizing these events.

Until October 2021 for the previous two years, Ieuan Harding was our P/T Administrator, but this role has now been taken up by two P/T staff - Jace Au, who supports Events Management and Committee work and Sally Lui, who is responsible for our Administrative workload. We have warmly welcomed them both for their joint considerable expertise and commitment. We also take this chance to thank Ieuan for his support and technical skills.

As for financial challenges, our revenue is reduced with less on-site activities, but this year we break even. With able support from Connie Carmichael, our Honorary Treasurer, our financial situation remains sound. We are fortunate that our membership remains > 500 despite some passings and resignations from members departing Hong Kong. There is a steady trickle of new members who have chosen to join our Society.

The work of the Ride Fund has continued, ably chaired by Colin Day with support from trustees Elizabeth Sinn, Chris Munn and ex-officio members, building on the former achievements of John Strickland and John Budge who stepped down as trustees at the end of 2020. Colin has kindly agreed to present to you a brief summary of the work of the Ride Fund at the end of this AGM meeting, so I hope you will stay logged on to listen to him. It is an eye-watering early hour for him based in USA and we really appreciate his contribution. I will not steal his thunder but suffice it to say that since its inception in 2003, > 36 books have been published under this Ride Fund Hong Kong Studies Series banner, with more in the pipeline.

Amongst those departing from Hong Kong is our Vice President Stephen Davies. We have to thank him sincerely for his contributions to RASHK in many roles – Council Member, Vice President, Journal Editor and rapid source of an amazing range of historical information relating to Hong Kong, South China and maritime history. I also take this opportunity to thank Tony Banham for his role as Honorary Editor for JRASHK, another of the significant activities undertaken by RASHK, serving as a publication platform for academic articles relating to our local history.

Our Society faces many challenges in future, as does Hong Kong itself as it deals with significant economic and political headwinds. The composition of our proposed Council remains largely unchanged, providing continuity in a changing world, but there is always scope for new blood and succession planning is important. So please let me know if any of you would like to contribute further to our Council and its committees in the future. In the meantime sincere thanks to all our Council members, Activities Committee members, Ride Fund trustees and Journal Editorial Board who have supported myself and the work of RASHK over the past year. This concludes my report.

Stay well and best wishes to you all. As always questions, advice and comments are most welcome.

Thank you

Helen Tinsley,

President RASHK, April 2022