

RASHK AGM Tuesday 26 April 2022

RASHK Honorary Activities Coordinator's Report 2021/22

I am about to complete my sixth year in this role. I again include a record of events in the calendar year of 2021 as well as YTD in 2022, and enclose a full list of events in the Appendix of this report.

I take this opportunity to thank all relevant RAS Council members and Activities Committee members for their support in providing suggestions and ideas for events of interest to our members and then helping these proposals to become realised. Thanks to all those who contributed their networks, commitment and organizational skills to a long list of talks and the occasional local visit whenever possible, during this ongoing Covid-19 epidemic period, with rigid local community and unprecedented international constraints to control the risk of infection. These constraints have had a major impact on our lives and lifestyles over the past year, as well as the Society's capacity to organize events of interest for our members.

Fortunately our members have generally embraced the use of Zoom link ups for meetings along with the solid support/IT skills of our part time Administrators, Sally Lui and Jace Au, who succeeded Ieuan Harding in October 2021. Jace is now responsible for events organization. Some of our local speakers prefer a face to face experience and such deferred events will be rearranged once on site facilities become available again for group activities, but many of our speakers have relished this chance to talk to a wider audience. Familiarity with Zoom technology strengthened our contacts in FRASHK, RAS Beijing, RAS Shanghai and overseas based RASHK members have logged in to enjoy the wide range of presentations. We have also been able to capture details and access some zoom talks 'Of General Interest' organized by other Societies, both local and overseas which may be welcomed by our members.

Despite all the obvious challenges of arranging activities, our attendance numbers have increased and our audience broadened significantly. We were also able to invite expert speakers/ academics/authors based overseas in many different time zones to talk to our members. Reciprocal arrangements are in place for our members to enjoy Zoom events organized by other RAS communities elsewhere and these opportunities have been welcomed and taken up with appreciation by many. Up until now local and international Zoom link ups have come at no cost for our members and guests. We continue to provide reports with photographs as a record of our local on-site visits in our bimonthly RASHK Newsletter, and I thank all those who have contributed in this way. For Zoom talks we retain a digital audio record.

You will note in the enclosed appendix that some of the face to face talks and visits, though well planned in advance, were regretfully deferred or cancelled, in compliance with local regulations – some to be rescheduled using Zoom, or reorganized so that we can look forward to them later when conditions allow. We have also experimented with hosting hybrid zoom / on site events. Local Covid-19 risks receded somewhat in 2021 following energetic local public health measures, tough travel limitations and the easy availability of population-wide vaccination. However the impact of the Omicron variant locally in the first 3 months of this year has had a significant effect on our planned face to face talks and visit events over this period.

In 2021 we arranged the following:

- 24 Lectures (+ 8 YTD 2022) – with 1 deferred as a result of local Covid-19 constraints
- 16 Local visits (+ 3 YTD 2022) –with 5 deferred as a result of Covid-19 constraints

- 0 Trips to PRC/ SE Asia
- 1 Social/ Other event

We will look forward to rescheduling deferred events and reactivating planned trips when conditions allow.

Talks and lectures

Our lectures and talks in the past year have drawn on many local and international experts over a wide range of topics. Many lectures were linked to book publications both recent and in the past. It is a pleasure to note that many of the books which formed the basis for our recent talks have been kindly donated to the RASHK Library. Some were local speakers such as Mark O'Neill's histories of Chinese soldiers in WW1 and Alan Loynd's remarkable story of retrieving a Boeing 747 from Hong Kong harbour. Prof CF Lee and his team briefed us on the mammoth historical project 'The Hong Kong Chronicles'. Larry Feign delighted us with his story of the 'Flower Boat Girl' and Tony Miller intrigued us with his story of 'The Missing Buddhas'. Kevin MacKeown shared his history of Governor John Pope Hennessy.

We also took the opportunity to link up with academics and story tellers based overseas who were writing about Asian/ Chinese and locally related history –Chinese Mexicans, Tibetan Heritage Architecture, Sinophobia, Chinatowns in North America, famous and glamorous past residents of Beijing, Chinese coolie ships and animal hunting in Asia.

Some of our talks were linked to photographs such as a remarkable review of Fan Ho's work at the Blue Lotus Gallery generously hosted by Sarah Greene, and Ed Stokes' expert guidance around the photographic exhibition featuring the work of Marjorie Doggett's Singapore and Lee Fook Chee's Hong Kong. Who can forget CM Kwong's interactive map of 'WW2 Battle for Hong Kong', with these narratives brought in to sharp focus when we later visited Stanley Military Cemetery with the expert guidance of Martin Heyes. Fascinating stories relating to Chinese soldiers links with WW1 continue to emerge- the Meridian Society's film documentary of the Chinese Labour Corps' and we also heard how a group of Czech soldiers came through Hong Kong as they took the long route home at end of the war.

There was visual delight when experts shared their expertise on Chinese Gardens, exquisite export fans, wonderful jade carvings of celestial beings, 'Tiger Tails ' to celebrate the New Year, farming in Tangkou, the local importance of trees and those long hidden Meridian markers. Stories of Hong Kongers' experience and resilience in managing life with Covid -19 as recounted in 'Face under Masks' was shared by Chloe Lai when we visited the little 'Nose in the Books' Library.

Following our Council member Roy Delbyck's earlier and highly enjoyable conversation with USA based expert Don Cohn on his love of collecting, the tables were turned when we listened to Don interviewing Roy on his own love of collecting and sharing with us some of his treasures. We hope that this welcome new format can be used for more shared discussions in the future.

Visits – both face to face and virtual

Our New Year treat in 2021 was a virtual visit with curator tour of Museum of Vancouver's exhibition 'A Seat at the Table' -a history of Chinese migration into western Canada. The virtual curator tour of HKU's UMAG exhibition of Eileen Chang and her time there was also of particular interest, knowing that one of our members has been recently involved in the translation from Chinese to English of her book 'Little Reunions'

Despite all the challenges, we were able to arrange real time visits to several great exhibitions, some already mentioned, and others to well known venues such as HKU's UMAG and to new venues such as City University's Art Gallery where we were generously hosted. There were several other memorable onsite visits in wonderful weather- Island House and Gardens hosted by tree expert Sally Bunker, Homi Villa / CAS camp ably planned by Kate and John Budge, as well as Har Paw Museum and Garden and the Yuet Tung China Works in Kowloon Bay – all reminding us of past life in Hong Kong.

Guided walks with David Bellis – this time in Kowloon- are always popular and he very generously agreed to repeat the experience for those who missed their first chance to register attendance.

I close this report of our activities in another challenging year, with thanks to members of the Council and particularly Activities Committee members for their support over the past year, namely Peter Stuckey, Bob Bunker, Roy Delbyck, Vicky Lee, Anna Kwong, Don Gasper, Kate Budge, Pamela Ball and Chris Bailey. Also thanks to Ieuan Harding and successors Jace Au and Sally Lui, our part time Administrators, whose IT expertise and role in helping to arrange and publicise our activities and events has been ably managed.

As always, fellow RAS members' ideas, suggestions and commitment to support activities in future programmes are most welcome. Succession planning is important, so if any of our members are keen to get involved in RASHK activities planning please let me know- we'd be delighted to welcome you to support the work of our Activities Committee.

Prepared by Helen Tinsley, RASHK Honorary Activities Coordinator

April 2022

