

REPORTS FOR 2017

PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the 58th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong. I would like to start by welcoming our guests this evening, who are Mr. Ian Hasell, our auditor and Mr. Marc Guyon, President of the Union des Francais de l'Etranger (Overseas French Association of Hong Kong). Gentlemen, we are delighted to have you with us. My special thanks go to those members of Council and others who have made this evening possible, namely the Hon Secretary Mr David McKellar, for the preparation of the agenda and meeting papers, the Hon Treasurer, Ms. Connie Carmichael, for preparing the Society's accounts and to Ian Hasell & Co, for expediting the audit. I would also like to thank Mr. Robert Nield for liaising with the Hong Kong Club concerning the arrangements for the post-AGM cocktail party, Ms Davina Lee for providing website support and Mr Peter Stuckey for preparing the video display of photographs from the recent visit to Shaoguan and Northern Guangdong Province, which will be shown later. I would also like to thank the manager and staff of the Hong Kong Club for their efficient service this evening. Finally I would like to thank all of you for taking the time to attend this evening's meeting and showing your support for our Society. The attendance this evening is something of a record with over sixty members registered for the AGM. I hope as many of you as possible will stay for the cocktail reception after the formal proceedings have concluded.

Obituaries.

I regret to report that during the year the Society lost the following long-standing and valued members:

- Baron Emmanuel Guillaume 29 August 2017
- Mr. Edward de Renzi Brown*2017
- Ms J.M. Ingles*2017
- Mdm Ophelia Cheung MacPherson 25 November 2017

NB: An asterisk indicates the exact date is not known.

Our thoughts also continue to be with Mrs. Valerie Garrett, who has been seriously ill since 2009 and to her husband Richard who continues to care for her with such devotion.

Overall Situation.

When I accepted the office of president in 2011 I did not imagine I would be sitting here almost seven years later. I must say the task does not get any easier and 2017 was another challenging year for the Society. Like many of my distinguished predecessors, I feel that being President of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong has been both an honour and a burden, and I thank you all for the support, confidence and encouragement you have given me during this time. When I took up the role of president the Society was going through a difficult time. I would like to think it is in much better shape now and that as we approach our diamond jubilee year its future is assured. Seeking some inspiration for this year's report I looked backed on the reports of some of our past presidents. One that caught my eye was that written by Dr James Hayes in 1990. I was struck by the many similarities that faced the Society then as now. The big issue then, of course, was 1997 and the future of Hong Kong after the handover of sovereignty to the People's Republic of China. More than twenty years have now passed since that date and our Society is still in existence and I think, doing very well.

I believe this is a testimony to the Society's resilience and steadfastness in pursuit of its objectives which are,

“To encourage an active interest in Hong Kong, China and East Asia, through lectures, discussions, overseas visits and by publishing an annual journal”

Last year I mentioned three important areas which Council considered were of urgent concern, namely

- Council succession
- Membership
- Office accommodation

With regard to the matter of Council succession I regret to say that no one has been identified as a successor for the post of president. Notwithstanding it is still my intention to step down and the Council will need to consider interim measures for the management of the Society. Other changes in Council include the stepping down of Ms. Anna McCormick as Hon Archivist and Ms. Moody Tang as Council Member. I would like to thank both for their efforts and contribution to the Society while in office.

Current membership of the Society is now as follows:

- Resident members 314
- Overseas members 195

In 2017 there was a welcome upward trend in membership. I attribute this partly to the efforts of the Hon Treasurer in overhauling the membership list but also the efforts of the membership in recruiting new members to the Society. I am particularly pleased to note that a small but keen number of Chinese tertiary level students are now taking an interest in the Society's activities. We welcome these younger members and I hope their numbers will continue to grow. We still need to increase our membership base and consider the need for a membership secretary.

Many of you will be aware that for the past year the Society has been based in an industrial building in Quarry Bay. This relocation took place in June 2017 following five years in Wong Chuk Hang. Our present home has been made possible by the generosity and support of China Orchid Ltd to whom I wish to express our appreciation. One particular advantage that our new location offers is that we are able to consolidate our stock of publications, mostly journals, in the office. This represents a major saving in the cost of storage. The original agreement was for one year but I am pleased to inform the meeting this evening that this has now been extended until August 2019. The question of future accommodation will no doubt be a matter of some priority for the incoming Council to consider.

Activities

2017 was a very good year for the Society with a total of thirty-one events taking place.

- 15 Talks
- 11 Local Visits
- 3 Overseas Visits
- 2 Social Events

I would like to thank the Activities Committee, chaired by Dr. Helen Tinsley, for their time and effort in planning and organizing the programme. I note with interest that in the past year the Society has continued to exploit opportunities in using new venues. More recently, events have been mounted at Café 8 in the Hong Kong Maritime Museum and the Hong Kong Club. In furtherance of its aims the Society has continued to organize overseas trips, especially to Mainland China. In 2017 three visits were organized, these were to Kaiping (Guangdong Province) in January, to Guizhou Province in April and finally to Vietnam in November. I realize that the time and expense in participating in these trips is not always easy to come by and for this reason the Society is encouraging shorter (that is cross-boundary) visits destinations in Guangdong Province. We hope that more members will be able to participate in such trips and see more of Mainland China. Planning these overseas trips takes an enormous amount of time and skill, as I am sure those of you who have participated realize. The Society is very fortunate in having two members who have willingly taken on the role of planning and leading the overseas visits, and we are very fortunate indeed to have Mr. Rocky Dang and Mr. Peter Stuckey as members. I would like to thank both for their enthusiasm and efforts in organizing the external visits.

Publications.

Our principal publication for 2017 was Vol 57 of the RAS Journal. I would like to thank the Hon Editor, Dr Stephen Davies and the Editorial Board comprising Drs Colin Day, Christopher Munn, Cecilia Chu, Kwong Chi-man, Robert Peckham and Mr Eric S.K. Mok for their time and effort in bringing out another very interesting volume. I would also like to thank the members of our International Editorial Advisory Committee, which was established in 2016, for their support and contributions to this volume.

Sir Lindsay and Lady Ride Memorial Fund.

The Ride Memorial Fund met on four occasions during 2017 and continued to consider applications for micro grants from authors wishing to publish works with a Hong Kong theme or connection. The Fund is chaired by Mr John Strickland, GBS, JP and comprises the following members: Dr Gillian Bickley, Ms. Connie Carmichael, Dr Elizabeth Sinn, Mr John Budge, SBS and Mr Michael Broom. Once again I would like to thank all of them for their time and effort on behalf of the Fund. RAS members will recall that the Fund has been planning to support an award called the Hong Kong History Book Prize. I am delighted to report that the selection of a work was finally made and the prize was presented on Monday 12 March 2018 at a ceremony at the Asia Society in Central. The winner of the prize was Nigel Collet for his book entitled '*A Death in Hong Kong*'.

Ladies and gentlemen that concludes my report and now I shall be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Michael B. Broom.

President.

Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong.

