

had not been presented at a previous meeting or their best acquisition of the year. These afternoons are interesting, entertaining and never disappoint with such a varied selection that appear at each session.

Hong Kong

It is fair to say that Hong Kong was 'late to the party' compared to many countries when it came to the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. The start of the reporting period saw those restrictions still in place until they were lifted in early 2023. However December 2022 saw a good turnout of branch members and guests enjoy our traditional Christmas dinner at the United Services Recreation Club (USRC) in Kowloon, which included the ever-popular lucky draw which boosts Branch funds!

Although we were required to follow such requirements as mask-wearing and social distancing as part of Covid legislation at least until the situation eased in April, we did not allow these restrictions to deter us from conducting branch activities. In January members enjoyed a visit to the newly re-opened Museum of Coastal Defence, located in a former British military fort overlooking the Lei Yue Mun channel on Hong Kong Island. The museum was originally opened in June 2000, but in 2018 was closed for extensive renovation before reopening in November 2022.

We opted for an indoor event in February, hosted by the USRC, when Patricia O'Sullivan, who has written extensively on various aspects of Hong Kong's history, delivered an interesting talk titled 'Life, Death and Gallantry in the Trenches of WWI'. Patricia recounted the story of a sizeable community of British men, many of whom came from the Hong Kong Police, who rushed 'home' to enlist on the outbreak of the conflict in the summer of 1914.

Our event in June was outdoors – despite the scorching heat! A large number of members and friends braved the hot weather to visit the Jewish Cemetery in Happy Valley and were privileged to secure the services of cemetery custodian Howard Elias as our guide. The cemetery opened as a burial ground in 1855 and many prominent members of Hong Kong's Jewish community have been laid to rest there.

A social gathering in a local hostelry was held in July, and in September we again opted for an outdoor event with a guided visit to the Hong Kong Jockey Club University of Chicago Heritage Courtyard and Interpretation Centre. This location was originally part of the Jubilee Gun Battery at Mount Davis, which in turn formed part of Hong Kong's western coastal defence system during WW2.

The final event of the year, prior to the Christmas Dinner scheduled for December, was a visit in November to the Royal Hong Kong Regiment Association Clubhouse in the Happy Valley Racecourse. We were privileged to have a branch stalwart, Major (ret'd) Ron Taylor of the regiment, show us around the facility and talk about some of the exhibits.

The branch noted with sadness the passing in November of former Branch President Mr Dennis Shackleton MBE, QPM, CPM in Australia. Dennis achieved senior rank in the Royal Hong Kong Police and at one stage served

as ADC to HE the Governor. Dennis was very much a pioneer in arranging overseas branch visits and long-serving members will recall trips to such locations as the Bogue Forts in China and Corregidor in the Philippines. Our condolences go to Dennis' family.

Finally, full details of all the events described above can be found on the Branch website at www.omrs-hk.org.

London branch

It has been an excellent year with record attendance, numbers averaging over 20 at each meeting. Branch membership at 40+ remains strong and covers a wide range of medallic interests – there is always something new to learn at each of our meetings from a membership keen to share their knowledge as well as their friendship.

As usual the year commenced with our AGM with the formal business conducted swiftly leaving plenty of time for our first speaker Jon Toohey. Jon has roots in South Africa and was the ideal person to enlighten us on 'The Boer medal and comparisons to the Anglo medals', certainly we will now look on the Anglo-Boer Oorlog Medal more carefully in future.

Our March meeting gave James Carver his first opportunity to speak to us. His subject 'Dawkitia, the West African Roike's Drift' left us all enthralled with this little-known action in 1897 by the Gold Coast Constabulary. For April our focus moved forward to the First World War when Alan Seldon spoke on Belgian and French Agents and the medals awarded to them by the British. Many of us were unaware of the records concerning these agents held by The National Archives and in particular the citations for their Medals of the Order of the British Empire.

Members' Own will appear on the programme for most, if not all, branches – certainly we can always be sure of a good attendance and May did not disappoint. We were delighted to be joined by Paul Mackenzie from Kenya who brought with him a magnificent African DCM group acquired locally 'medal by medal' over an extended period of negotiating. Africa again was the centre of our attention in July and there was nobody more knowledgeable to speak than Christopher Mellor-Hill.

After a short summer break, we met again at the end of September when Marcus Budgen took us to the Second World War and in particular the actions in Crete and Greece. From the images Marcus was able to share with us we really felt as though we had been in the Crete mountains alongside the partisans. This would be an appropriate point to thank Marcus and his dedicated team at Spink for their much-appreciated continued support to our London Branch in facilitating the use of their premises for our branch meetings.

The title of the October talk 'Afloat with a Walrus' left several members wondering if they were coming to the correct meeting! Brian Cleary walked into 'medallic heaven' when he entered his local auction rooms to be shown a medal group and accompanying album of photographs and ephemera to a RNAS pilot from the Second World War who flew a Walrus in December 1941 from HMS *Repulse* and witnessed from the air her being sunk by the Japanese in the South China Sea. A talk we will all long remember.