



勳章及獎章研究學會香港分會

Orders and Medals Research Society

HONG KONG BRANCH

PATRON: His Majesty the King

OMRS HK Branch Newsletter
December 2022

Committee Emails

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Current Situation

It is customary at this time of the year to look back over the last 12 months and review activities held during that period. Unfortunately, for obvious reasons on which I'm sure I do not need to dwell, 2022 was a year during which very few Branch activities could be conducted. This, I hasten to add, is no reflection on the committee! Hopefully, however, there is light at the end of the tunnel with the easing of Covid restrictions, and 2023 will see the resumption of both outdoor events and indoor presentations. Please scroll down for details.

Although we were able to hold our Christmas Dinner in December 2021, a planned talk scheduled for early 2022 by local writer Les Bird on his experiences with Vietnamese refugees whilst serving with the Royal Hong Kong Marine Police during the 1970s to the 1990s, had to be cancelled due to Covid restrictions. A similar fate fell to a planned visit to view local lawyer Roy Delbyck's collection of HK and Chinese ephemera. Hopefully these events will be rescheduled in 2023.

We were able to host a very interesting in-person presentation by military historian Craig Mitchell in July on Project Avenger. Craig detailed his discovery, and the subsequent recovery, of the wreckage of downed United States military aircraft which crashed during the Japanese Occupation of HK from 1941 to 1945.

The Branch has remained on the radar of the OMRS in the U.K., with the imminent

publication in the December 2022 Society Journal of the story of Colonel Evan Stewart, of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. As a Major this officer commanded No. 3 Company of the Corps with great distinction and courage during the battle and was subsequently awarded the D.S.O. In 1953 he published, anonymously, the account of the Volunteers during the fighting and this history has been published many times since. For a number of years editions of the book have had his name properly ascribed as the author, and the latest edition appeared in 2020.

Finally, we have just successfully held our 2022 Christmas Dinner at the popular United Services Recreation Club in Jordan.

Future Events

(a) Visit to the Museum of Coastal Defence

Host: Dr. Kwong Chi Man
Date: Saturday 14 January 2023
Time: 10:00 to 12:30 hrs
Venue: Museum of Coastal Defence, 175 Tung Hei Road, Shau Kei Wan,
Admission: \$100-HK per person
Booking: martin.heyes@gmail.com

Details

The Museum of Coastal Defence (MCD) is Hong Kong's only museum dedicated to military history. Located in a former British Army fort overlooking the Lei Yue Mun channel in the north-east of HK island, the site now occupied by the museum was chosen by the British military authorities in 1887 for the construction of defences to the eastern approaches to Victoria harbour.

The fort was the scene of bitter fighting during the battle for Hong Kong and was practically in the middle of the Japanese invasion point of the island on the night of 18 December 1941.

Following the departure of the British military from the facility in 1987, it was decided (in 1993) that the fort would be converted to a museum and it opened as such to the public in July 2000. In 2018 the MCD was closed for renovation and after a hiatus of over four years, reopened late last month. We are honoured to have one of the driving forces behind this renovation, Dr. Kwong Chi Man, as our guide for this visit.

The Host

Dr. Kwong Chi Man was born and educated in Hong Kong and he completed his doctorate degree at Cambridge University in the U.K. His interest lies in military history in East Asia. Dr. Kwong is the author of many publications, including his recent book titled “Hong Kongers in the British Armed Forces 1860 – 1997.” His other publications include “Old Soldiers Never Die,” “Road to Liberation” and he co-authored “Eastern Fortress.”

Dr. Kwong is the Associate Professor of History at the Baptist University of Hong Kong.

(b) Hong Kong’s 500 : Life, Death and Gallantry in the Trenches of World War 1.

Speaker: Patricia O’Sullivan
Date: Wednesday 1 February 2023
Time: 19:30 hrs
Venue: USRC, Gascoigne Road, Jordan, Kowloon
Admission: \$100-HK per person
Registration: martin.heyes@gmail.com

Details

The rush of enthusiasm to enlist in the Armed Forces by many young men in Britain during the summer of 1914 had its counterpart in Hong Kong, but the demands of business and administration had first to be met. Yet over the course of the conflict, some 10% of the British male population of the Colony did enlist. Of these 500 men, 140 were in Government service; the Police Force sending the largest contingent. In total, about 14% (70 men) lost their lives in the conflict.

During her talk, Patricia O’Sullivan will tell the stories of some of these men, a few of whom were born either in Hong Kong or Macau. At least two of the erstwhile Police officers, Charles Wilson and Alfred Hutchins, were awarded gallantry medals; the M.M. and M.C. respectively. One man had been a journalist with the Hong Kong Daily Press and put his reporting skills to good use by providing readers in the Colony with tales of life at the front.

One aspect of Patricia’s talk which may be of interest to former members of the RHKP / HKP, concerns those Police officers who were forced to petition their superiors to be

allowed to enlist, but who had to wait until 1917 to be allowed to do so.

The Speaker

Patricia O’Sullivan has been writing about the history of Hong Kong since 2010 and her first book, “Policing Hong Kong – An Irish History,” tells the story of Irishmen who served in the Hong Kong Police from 1864 to 1950. She has written many books and publications over the years, including items for the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, the RHKP Association and the South China Morning Post.

Patricia is currently working on the topic on which she will talk in February, focussing on the Police officers who volunteered for military service. Her book on the subject is scheduled for publication at the end of 2023.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Branch committee, many thanks to all those who attended the annual Christmas Dinner recently, highlighted above, and who helped make the evening such a success. We had an excellent turnout and enjoyed a sumptuous repast in very convivial surroundings.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish all members and friends very best wishes for the festive season, and we look forward to an event-filled 2023!

Best regards,

Martin Heyes

Hon. Secretary

OMRS Hong Kong Branch