



勳章及獎章研究學會香港分會

Orders and Medals Research Society

HONG KONG BRANCH

PATRON: H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES, K.G., K.T., G.C.B., O.M., A.K., Q.S.O.

[OMRS Hong Kong Branch](#)

[February 2020 Newsletter](#)

Introduction

Welcome to our February 2020 Newsletter.

It is probably premature to suggest that the social disorder which has afflicted Hong Kong for several months is now a thing of the past, but I think it fair to say that it has abated somewhat. We have enjoyed more days of comparative peace recently, with fewer street confrontations, so let us hope that calm and wise heads will prevail.

As all who live here in Hong Kong are well aware, we are now suffering from the effects of the novel coronavirus which emanated this month in Wuhan in Hubei Province. The danger of the spread of this virus has resulted in the cancellation, or postponement, of many social, sporting and cultural events in the city.

Notwithstanding this situation, however, the Branch committee has planned for a number of events to be held in the not-too-distant future, details of some of which can be found below. However we will be keeping a close eye on developments here and if changes have to be made to arrangements concerning planned events, we will not hesitate to do so.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of all to the minutes of the Branch AGM which was held on 23 December 2019 at the USRC in Jordan. These can be found on the Branch website at www.omrs-hk.org.

Kung Hei Fat Choy to all members and friends!

Future Activities

Presentation **Along the Southern Boundary**

Friday 28 February 2020

The Presentation

Former Marine Police commander Les Bird's photographic account of the tens of thousands of Vietnamese who arrived by boat at Hong Kong's southern sea boundary between 1979 and 1989 and how the Marine Police were tasked with bringing them in safely. This included providing emergency help for cholera cases, assessing often dehydrated children and processing everyone who came into the city.

For the purposes of this talk, Les will focus on two specific years: -

- (a) 1979, when more than 68,700 people arrived at Hong Kong's sea border, and
- (b) 1989, a time when all 13 Vietnamese boat people camps in Hong Kong were declared full and Les and his colleagues were directed to put all new arrivals on the remote island of Tai Ah Chau which, at the outset, was devoid of facilities. Within a week they had more than 3000 in their care.

The Speaker

Born in Staffordshire in the English Midlands, Les Bird joined the Hong Kong Marine Police in 1976. For more than 10 years he patrolled the waters to the south of Hong Kong, intercepting vessels which had crossed the South China Sea and the Vietnamese boat people on board – all of whom were hoping to start a new life. Throughout his maritime career Les carried a camera and, when circumstances permitted, he photographed the vessels and the people caught up in this exodus in the aftermath of the Vietnam war. Les served with the Marine Police until 1997.

In addition to his work involving the influx of Vietnamese, he also headed the Marine Police's fast pursuit unit, intercepting smugglers in speedboats who, in the early 1990's, attempted to take stolen cars and electronic goods, (inter alia), to the mainland.

His recently published memoir covers the lead-up to the Handover. "A Small Band Of

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Men, An Englishman's Adventures in Hong Kong's Marine Police," will be available for sale at the talk.

Programme

Speaker: Les Bird

Date: Friday 28 February 2020

Time : The Clubhouse will open at 18:00 hrs and the talk will begin at 19:00 hrs.

Venue : The Royal Hong Kong Regiment (Volunteers) Association Clubhouse, 9/F, Happy Valley Stand, Racecourse, Wong Nai Chong Road.

Admission: Branch members and others eligible, \$50; non-members / guests, \$100.

Booking: Please confirm your attendance with the undersigned at martin.heyes@gmail.com

Dress Code : Please note that there is a Dress Code in place at this venue. Dress is smart/casual.

Presentation

The Defences of Macau

**Thursday 26 March 2020
(Programme details to follow)**

The Presentation

The Macau forts built from the early seventeenth century onwards, the ships that defended Macau's waters, the weapons that armed the facilities and the soldiers and sailors who manned them will be detailed in Richard Garrett's talk entitled *The Defences of Macau*. These forts, cannon and small arms were a familiar part of society for hundreds of years, and a significant part of Macau's heritage. Macau is fortunate in having so many artefacts remaining and as such a follow up visit to Macau following Richard's talk is planned. (see below).

Richard Garrett was educated at Dulwich College and Trinity College, Cambridge University and has lived in Hong Kong for over 40 years.

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For much of the time he has lived in Hong Kong he has collected and studied antique pistols. His keen interest in this field has extended to the study of military architecture, ordnance and military history generally. With its long history of nearly five hundred years Macau, not unnaturally has proved a fruitful location for these studies.

Richard retired in 2003 and has had published numerous articles in journals in the UK, USA, Hong Kong and Macau. He has also written three books, the titles of which are, 'The Irish Gunmakers', 'The Defences of Macau' and the most recent work 'The Peak'. It is the second book on Macau's defences which will form the basis of his talk.

Proposed Visit to Macau 28th/29th March 2019

Following on from Richard Garrett's talk we propose an optional overnight visit to Macau on 28th/29th March 2019 – current travel issues permitting. Included in the itinerary would be lunch at the Club Militar as well as visits to fortifications and other locations of historical interest on Day 1 and a relaxed visit to various cemeteries on Day 2 (optional). Attendees would make their own travel and hotel arrangements while and cost of transport in Macau and meals would be shared. We will endeavour to identify a preferred hotel.

At this point we are asking for expressions of interest in the visit. If you are interested in attending, please email martin.heyes@gmail.com advising him so.

Annual Subscriptions

Please note that annual membership subscriptions are now due. If you have not yet done so, please arrange payment with the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Steve Verralls. Full details on how to effect payment can be found in the AGM minutes on the Branch website www.omrs-hk.org.

Martin Heyes
Hon. Secretary
OMRS HK Branch
www.omrs-hk.org

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