Voices From the Past

Hong Kong 1842-1918

Selected and Annotated by

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Introduction

'News is the first rough draft of history'
Ben Bradlee

Much of this material was first published as a weekly column called *Past Perspectives* in the Hong Kong magazine *Window* between 1992 and 1996. The present publication assembles these columns together in a revised form with many added photographs. In this assemblage of historical snippets, or excerpts, taken from contemporary English-language newspapers, we look into Hong Kong's past from the beginning of its acquisition by Britain.

In the early 19th century, trade between China and the West was confined to Canton alone, where it flourished despite rigid restrictions imposed by the Chinese authorities. Among a large variety of merchandise traded, importation of opium into China, prohibited by the Imperial Edict of 1800, played a prominent role. Britain, determined to keep the trade channels open, and China, equally determined to stop the opium trade, came into armed conflict in 1839, in what is generally known as the First Opium War. In 1841, the two sides signed a convention at Chuenpi, near Canton, by which the island of Hong Kong was ceded to Britain. But before the treaty ending the war was signed (in 1842) and ratified (in 1843), a small British naval contingent landed on Hong Kong Island on the 26 January 1841, at a small promontory on the western shore of the Island, later to be named Possession Point, and claimed Hong Kong Island for the British Crown. Since this de facto possession of the island was probably the most important milestone in the history of Hong Kong as a British enclave, it is worth quoting the description of the landing by Captain Edward Belcher of HMS *Sulphur**

* From Captain Belcher's *Voyage Round the World*, Vol. II, 1843. Captain (later Sir Edward) Belcher commanded the survey ship HMS *Sulphur*. Belcher's Street and Belcher's Gardens on Hong Kong Island are called after him. The sea passage between Hong Kong's West Point and the Green Island is called Sulphur Channel after HMS *Sulphur*.

who landed at Possession Point the day before the formal ceremony: '... On the return of the Commodore [to Macao*] on the 24th [January 1841] we were directed to proceed to Hongkong and commence survey. We landed on Monday the 25th 1841 at Fifteen minutes past 8 a.m. and being the bona fide first possessors, Her Majesty's health was drunk with three cheers from Possession Mount. On the 26th the squadron arrived; the marines were landed, the union hoisted on out post, the formal possession taken of the island by Commodore Sir J.J.G.Bremer, accompanied by the other officers of the squadron, under a *feu-de-joie*** from the marines and a royal salute from the ships of war ... .'

There is little doubt that the spirit of commercial enterprise was the leading motive in the early British colonial policy, and it was the British pursuit of trade in the East which brought China and Britain into confrontation and heralded the birth of Hong Kong. It has been stated, with some truth, that when an expeditionary force was being organized early in 1840, Lord Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary, was still far from committed to the acquisition of any base on the China coast. The vital thing was trade security and he was not yet convinced that another addition to the British Empire was necessary. Whatever the motivation, Hong Kong became a Crown Colony and was administered as one.

The early years of Hong Kong had not been encouraging. Lack of level land, unhealthy climate, murders and piracy — all pointed to an unhappy outlook. Several people who were in the best position to judge could not visualise any future for Hong Kong. Yet Hong Kong confounded the gloomy forecasts and grew to become a major trading, financial, and cultural centre. It was the combination of the tenacity and resourcefulness of the Colonial Civil Service, the entrepreneurial ability of local traders, and the determination of its people that secured a prosperous future for Hong Kong.

Today, the world has largely discarded imperialism, colonialism and the right of strong nations to rule over weak ones, and has recognised the right of all peoples to self-determination. But in the 19th century imperialism was still the way of the strong. Nevertheless there were

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* Macao: English spelling for the Cantonese transliteration 'Ou Mun'. 'Macau' is the Portuguese spelling.

** *Feu-de-joie* (French): a firing of guns in token of joy.

colonial administrators with progressive visions who passionately believed in improving the welfare of the people they ruled. Were such visions to be dismissed as a mere facade for economic exploitation? Was all colonialism bad? And can it account for Hong Kong's success and a rapidly growing population? Anton Chekhov, the famous Russian playwright and humanist, who visited Hong Kong in 1890, was clearly impressed. 'Wherever you turn,' he wrote, 'you will note evidences of the most tender solicitude on the part of the English for men in their service; there is even a sailors' club.'* The answer, of course, is that colonial rule and economic success are fully compatible. Inevitably, the system creates two distinct classes — the more privileged expatriates, who rule the colony and occupy all the senior positions in the government and private sector, and the less privileged locals, in the lower ranks. A large social and economic gap which is formed between the expatriates and the locals is further aggravated by discriminatory regulations and restrictions. In Hong Kong, the vast majority of 'locals' would be the Chinese, but anyone domiciled in Hong Kong, for instance long-time Indian residents, Portuguese of Macao descent, Eurasians with roots in Hong Kong, and a sprinkling of other, often stateless, persons such as White Russians, would be regarded as locals. British economic policy in Hong Kong, characteristically *laissez faire*, gave much scope, however, for individual ambition and enterprise so that not a few 'locals' did achieve wealth, power, and distinction.**

Hong Kong had been fortunate in having a succession of capable governors in its early formative years. They worked hard to ensure law and order and to provide safe and stable living conditions for the people of Hong Kong. However, reared in the strict colonial mould and with a firm belief in the superiority of the system they represented, they were averse to any reforms or changes which would remove some of the existing inequalities; with one exception: Sir John Pope Hennessy, a governor with liberal, progressive views — a man ahead of his time.***

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* Hellman, L. (Ed.) *The Selected Letters of Anton Chekhov*. London: Pan Books, 1984, p.132.

** Example is usually given of Sir Robert Ho Tung, Eurasian long-time compradore of Jardine, Matheson & Co. who became a wealthy merchant, a philanthropist, and a baronet, and who established a wealthy and powerful dynasty.

*** Sir John Pope Hennessy, who governed Hong Kong from 1877 to 1882, appointed the first Chinese, Ng Choy, to the Legislative Council.

He may well have initiated a sequence of changes, slow at first, which signalled the decline of the colonial system, and which in the end proved unstoppable.

The book covers the period under British administration from 1842 to 1918. In compiling the items I attempted to select them from a wide range of subjects, in a contrasting way: instructive and entertaining, serious and amusing, important and trivial, agreeable and disagreeable. The text deals mainly with Hong Kong and to a lesser extent with Macao and China, but a few world items of outstanding interest are also included. Accompanying the text are many historical photographs from the excellent photographic library of the Hong Kong Museum of History. They are of considerable interest not only because they relate to the text but they also depict many items of Hong Kong heritage no longer extant — victims of the massive redevelopment.

The selected snippets reflect the gradual changes over the years in language, style of writing, even humour. It will be interesting to read about the public response to the many inventions which today we take for granted, such as electric lighting, the motor car, and the first attempts at flying. Most importantly, the items reflect the gradual changes in Hong Kong's colonial attitudes, as the people become aware of the new contemporary values and social and political changes. They show, contrary to the still commonly held view that the Hong Kong public remained complacent about elected government, that there were repeated calls for representation on both the governing councils.

Many snippets are followed by my comments or explanations which are in italics. I have chosen the Wade-Giles romanization of Chinese names in keeping with the period depicted. It is my ardent hope that the reader will find *Voices From the Past* informative and enjoyable.

1899

Hongkong Telegraph
5 January 1899

A SAD STORY: Many people will remember James Josiah Jones, who arrived in Hongkong some little time ago from England. The day after his arrival he wrote ... to his people at home:- 'I have just arrived in Hongkong; it is a wonderful and wicked place. What grieves the heart most is to see a vehicle, called a ricksha. It's downright horrible cruelty; they are nothing more than beasts of burden. ... When I landed, about twenty of these poor fellows crowded around me ... each one begging ... me to patronize him. ... I scorned the idea of being drawn through the streets by a fellow man. I told them all how sorry I was for the degradation they had to suffer.'
Two weeks after James Josiah Jones appeared at the Police Court to answer three charges:-
1. Battering six ricksha coolies, 2. Refusing to pay legal ricksha fare of ten cents, 3. Damaging two rickshas. The next letter James Josiah Jones wrote to his friends at home concerning ricksha coolies we dare not publish.

Hongkong Telegraph
9 January 1899

The question of the water supply of the Colony ... is daily becoming more serious and to which the earnest attention of the Government should be turned without delay. ... On the 1st January 1898, the storage at Tytam and Pokfulam amounted to 424,050,000 gallons, or roughly sufficient for 134 days of consumption with an estimated population of 198,000. ... According to these figures it is evident that a dry season may very easily bring us face to face with a water famine.

Owing to the scarcity of water, the supply in the public mains in Kowloon Peninsula will be turned off from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. until further notice.

❖ *Even after several more large reservoirs had been constructed (Shek Pik, Plover Cove), the water shortage persisted. At one period, in 1966/67, the water was turned on for 4 hours every 4 days! Only after the High Island Reservoir had been built, and water continuously piped from China, did the shortage stop.*

Pok Fu Lam Reservoir, Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong Island, c.1910
The earliest of the water reservoirs in Hong Kong, Pok Fu Lam Reservoir, with the capacity of 2 million gallons, was constructed in 1863 on the southern aspect of Hong Kong Island. It was extended in 1871 (66 million gallons). Across the channel, Lamma Island can be seen, with no obvious signs of habitation.

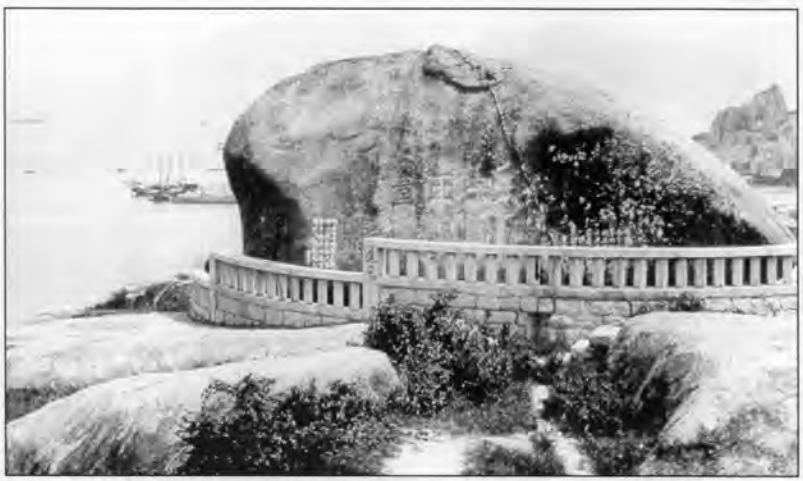
Hongkong Telegraph
14 January 1899

THE SMOKE NUISANCE: ... a letter to the *Times* ... that a society should be formed for obtaining the enforcement of the law against smoke nuisance. ... It is high time that something of the same sort was done in Hongkong. The City of Victoria is becoming dreadfully smoky. Factories are multiplying. Steamers and steam launches are vomiting the blackest smoke all day and all night and steps ought to be taken without delay to make them consume in some fashion their own smoke.

Hongkong Telegraph
26 January 1899

RESERVATION OF AN HISTORICAL SPOT. SUNG WONG T'OI. Last year the Legislative Council, on a motion of the Hon. Dr. Ho Kai, passed a resolution in favour of the reservation ... at British Kowloon known as Sung Wong T'oi or Sung Wong T'ong; and at the Council meeting yesterday ... first reading passed ... Dr. Eitel [writes] in the *History of Hongkong* ... 'As to the history of Hongkong previous to the

rise of the Tatsing Dynasty [AD 1644] very little is known. There is, however ... an ancient rock-inscription, on a large loose lying granite boulder ... close to the village of Matauchung, directly west of Kowloon city. This inscription consisting of three Chinese characters [宋王臺 Sung Wong Toi, *lit.* 'Hall of a King of the Sung'] arranged horizontally. ... The Chinese Government believe it to be a genuine inscription, about 600 years old.'



Sung Wong Toi Rock, c.1920

Among local traditions, one of the richest and most enduring relates to the end of the Sung (now spelled Song) dynasty (AD 960–1279) and the flight south of its last two boy emperors pursued by Mongol invaders. The princes are believed to have rested briefly on the site of the Sung Wong Toi Hill in Kowloon Bay.

The original boulder, shown in this photograph, was for many years an important historic relic much esteemed and protected by the local people. The boulder has three large characters engraved upon it which have been interpreted as 'Terrace of the Sung King', and stood prominently on top of a hill above Kowloon Bay. During the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, 1942–45, this boulder became dislodged while the hill was being levelled for an extension of Kai Tak Airport.

The part of the boulder displaying the three characters, about one-third its original size, survived the blasting operations, and after the war, was rescued and placed in a small park especially constructed for it close to the original site.

Local historians believe that the characters were cut during the Yuan dynasty, 1271–1368, long after the Sung dynasty had fallen and after the imperial visits.

Hongkong Telegraph
11 March 1899

TO SAVE THE ELEPHANT: A practical method of discouraging the trade in ivory would be efficacious if it were only adopted generally. It is simply that we should all forego the use of ivory, and have our knife handles, etc., made of xylonite, or one of the good forms of celluloid. The 40,000 elephants annually destroyed for manufacturing purposes have their long wise lives sacrificed mainly in the service of billiard players. This is quite unnecessary, as xylonite billiard balls are now made as truly and are as pleasant to play with as those of ivory.

❖ *It took fully a hundred years to stop the ivory trade; one can only hope it is not too late for the elephant.*

Hongkong Telegraph
10 April 1899

At last we have the long expected report of the Hon. J. H. STEWART LOCKHART upon the new territory ... the physical features of the country, its water supply, soil, products, industries, population, form of government, revenue, means of communication, etc., are all dealt with ... We are glad to see that the question of Chinese jurisdiction in Kowloon City is still under negotiation ...

❖ *It was a very thorough, substantive report on the newly leased 'hinterland', later to be referred to as the New Territories, accompanied by photographs. Stewart Lockhart, the Colonial Secretary at the time, was an extremely capable administrator who later served as the Commissioner of the Chinese port of Wei Hai Wei, leased to Britain (see p.160).*

Hongkong Telegraph
13 April 1899

DR. CLARK'S ANNUAL REPORT: ...The domestic buildings of the city of Victoria number 7,438 (excluding of barracks and Police Stations) of which 530 are European dwellings, while there are also some 120 houses in European occupation in the Hill district [the Peak]. The various villages over the Island contain 31 European dwellings and 1,600 Chinese dwellings, while in Kowloon there are 93 European dwellings and 1,850 Chinese dwellings, exclusive of the Barracks for the Hongkong Regiment and 72 small houses used by this Regiment as married quarters.

Hongkong Telegraph
17 April 1899

THE KOWLOON HINTERLAND. BRITISH TROOPS ATTACKED. As was anticipated, there has been trouble between the Chinese and British forces in the preliminary steps ... for the establishment of British jurisdiction in the Kowloon hinterland. Yesterday Captain Berger left

with a company of the Hongkong Regiment for Taipohu, in Mirs Bay, to pave the way for the ceremony of the hoisting of the British flag ... On arrival at Taipohu it was found that the Chinese had prepared a warm reception for the troops, and they were fired upon, but luckily without any disastrous result. ... On the news being received, three more companies of the Hongkong Regiment ... were dispatched ... to the scene of the disturbance. This morning it was decided that in view of the unforseen hostility ... to the hoisting of the flag, it would be as well to abandon Monday's ceremony ...

❖ *The flag* was *hoisted but without a ceremony. The takeover was not peaceful; there was fighting opposing the British takeover of the New Territories (the Kowloon Hinterland), though the British news tried to play down the scale of the fighting. Incidentally, the Hongkong Regiment mentioned here was* not *the Hong Kong Volunteers, but a local regiment composed of Indians recruited in India.*

Sir Henry Blake, Governor of Hong Kong, Addressing Chinese Functionaries and Leaders of the Chinese Communities in the New Territories, August 1899
The Governor, in formal ceremonial dress, is seen addressing his audience in a hastily constructed matshed. Although the lease of the New Territories to Britain was to run from July 1898, the effective takeover did not take place until April 1899, and this not without some armed resistance by the local militia. In August 1899, the Governor toured the New Territories where he met local leaders, no doubt with the object of reassuring them of the Government's good intentions — the event depicted in the photograph. Sir Henry Blake served as Governor of Hong Kong from 1898 to 1903.

Hongkong Telegraph
20 April 1899

THE KOWLOON SCHOOL. His Excellency the Governor ... has announced that schools would be established in all the villages of the new territory. ... It is pleasant thus to observe the fatherly care exercised by our Government for the welfare of its Chinese subjects, but it must not be forgotten that the Government owes an equal debt of duty to our own children. It is the children of British parents to whom it will be entrusted the task of carrying on the government and maintaining the integrity of the empire in the future. ... Why, then, should the children of European parents resident in Kowloon be denied the privileges which are extended to the poorest of the Chinese? Can it be, as some facetious writers have suggested, that Hongkong is indeed a dependency of China, run by Chinese for the Chinese, and that the British are merely regarded as alien interlopers whose claims to consideration are nil?

❖ *This amazing outburst shows firstly that the* Telegraph *has changed, in the last few years, from a thoughtful, progressive and liberal paper to a staunchly colonial and imperialistic one; perhaps a change in the editorial staff? Secondly, British children in Hong Kong have never been denied good primary and secondary education, while the parents often chose to send them to school in England.*

Hongkong Telegraph
26 May 1899

It is a peculiar fact that despite the flourishing condition of Hongkong and decayed state of Macao, the latter settlement far surpasses us in the matter of rickshas and ricksha coolies. True, the vehicles are somewhat dilapidated ... but they are roomy and comfortable. ... Here the coolie is insolent and moves at a snail's pace; there he is obliging. ... The Macao coolie takes an eight mile run as a matter of course, takes you up hill and down dale and at the finish accepts his fare without demanding four times the amount to which he is entitled.

Hongkong Telegraph
6 June 1899

AFFORESTATION: In the report of the Superintendent of the Botanical and Afforestation Department ... is given a table showing the statistics of trees planted during 1898. In all 33,923 trees of various species were planted and were distributed over the Colony. ... It will be noted that, despite the large amount of planting work undertaken by the Department during last year, not a single tree has been planted in Kowloon.

❖ *It should be noted that at the time of the British acquisition of Hong Kong, the hills of the island were very bare and largely devoid of trees.*

Hongkong Telegraph
7 June 1899

Cannot some sort of supervision be exercised by the police over the prostitutes who roam the streets at night? Take a walk down Queen's Road after dinner and the chances are you will be accosted by some of these women between the Clock Tower and the Central Fire Station. Take a walk eastwards as far as the Naval Hospital and matters are nearly as bad; loose women appear to swarm about the streets and are a source of annoyance to respectable male pedestrians.

Hongkong Telegraph
16 June 1899

Interesting experiments were carried out at Lyeemun Pass by ... the Royal Engineers. ... Military reasons prevent us from giving a detailed account ... but we don't think we shall be giving our enemies much information by stating that the experiments are in connection with the ... defence of the harbour by means of the Brennan torpedo.

❖ *This highly secret torpedo was invented by an Irishman (later turned Australian), Louis Brennan, and was installed in a number of British naval bases, including Hong Kong. The machinery for the torpedo was installed at Lyeemun (now Lei Yue Mun), but it is not clear whether the torpedo itself was ever installed, let alone fired.*

Hongkong Telegraph
17 July 1899

The scale of crown rents to be paid on land in the 'New Territories' is published in the *Gazette*. The rents range from 66 cents to $3.20 per acre per annum.

Hongkong Telegraph
8 August 1899

'Worried' suggests that as our legislators are anxious to increase the revenue of the Colony they might tax pianos, when situated in the business quarter ... and played all the afternoon. He assures us that ... he has been driven nearly frantic ... by the musical efforts of a neighbour.

❖ *The piano has been described as 'the most patient domestic animal'.*

Hongkong Telegraph
18 August 1899

THE TUNG WAH HOSPITAL: In view of the increased population of the Colony and the Hinterland, the Directors of the Tung Wah Hospital ... have decided to erect a new building as an extension on a site opposite the present hospital. ... In this building it is proposed to set aside a special apartment for midwifery, which is urgently needed. ... His Excellency the Governor has kindly subscribed $50 ...

Hongkong Telegraph
31 August 1899

The Tropical Diseases Expedition ... has discovered that malaria is spread by means of a particular variety of mosquito.

❖ *The discovery of the 'anopheles' type of mosquito as the carrier of malaria, was absolutely crucial in the control of the disease.*

Hongkong Telegraph
29 September 1899

Last evening on the Praya ... a water-pipe burst and for a considerable time a huge spout of water ascended even higher than the theatre building, which sparkled and scintillated in the light of the electric lamps like myriads of diamonds. Hundreds of spectators witnessed the spectacle with great interest and seemed to be much disappointed when the defect was remedied.

❖ *A burst pipe is still a common occurrence, but we seem to have lost the knack of enjoying such a spectacle.*

Hongkong Telegraph
9 October 1899

Messrs Lane Crawford & Co. have now in stock a large number of phonographs, which they are disposing of at very popular prices. The phonograph appears to have caught on in Hongkong so intending purchasers of these very amusing instruments should hurry to obtain them before the stock is exhausted.

❖ *For those born in the 20th century, a phonograph is a gramophone or a record player.*

Hongkong Telegraph
12 October 1899

A perusal of the reports of the Hongkong Legislative Council meetings cannot but serve to impress the reader with the great pains so frequently taken to draft a reply to a question in such a manner that while it cannot be said that the query remains unanswered yet the information required is skilfully withheld.

Hong Kong Waterfront (The Praya), Central District, Hong Kong Island, c.1890

Prominent in the foreground is the Pedder's Wharf, the principal jetty in the Central District for many years. It would move forward after the next major praya reclamation, of 1890–1904, and be renamed Blake Pier after the Governor, Sir Henry Blake. The corner building on the left is the premises of Jardine, Matheson & Co. Next to it, a 3-storey building with a flagpole housed a German trading firm of Stoltecroft & Hirst. The next, 4-storey building with a flag, is the Peninsular & Oriental shipping company, recently moved there from a site further west. The Lane, Crawford & Co.'s small, 2-storey building is standing beside it with the firm's name clearly seen on the signboard. The two buildings next are the Union Insurance Company and the Douglas Lapraik & Co., a shipping firm.

Hongkong Telegraph
31 October 1899

A Committee is just now at work on a report upon the most vital question of the disposal of the night-soil of Hongkong. At present the whole of it is carried away to Canton and used by the silk growers. ... Why ... should it not be made use of in the New Territories for fertilising the land upon which our Military Authorities hope to see our food stuffs produced?

❖ *An interesting revelation: the destination of our night-soil! One would have thought that Canton, with its much larger population than Hong Kong, would have enough of its own excreta to meet the demands of the silk growers.*

Hongkong Telegraph
17 November 1899

THE TRIAD SOCIETY: The trials of two members of the Triad Society this morning were chiefly interesting for the history that was disclosed of the original formation and reason of the formation of the society. ... It would seem that the aim of the society is to upset the Tsing Dynasty, which in 1644 upset the Ming Dynasty, and once more to restore the power of the latter.

Hongkong Telegraph
29 December 1899

In the present transitory stage of Hongkong, when the business portion of the town is being shifted bodily to the Reclamation, one cannot expect the new roads to be in first rate order, but still ... the Authorities might at least make an effort to render them as safe as possible. Take the portion of Pedder Street ... from the Hongkong Hotel to the sea front ... we have seen rickshas capsize there, to the discomfort and danger of the occupant.

❖ *The reclamation referred to here pushed the waterfront from the present Des Voeux Road to Connaught Road.*

FIN DE SIECLE*: Hongkong Telegraph makes no mention of this; there is no looking forward to the 20th century, just general gloom due to the Boer War.

❖ *The Boer War, 1899–1902, between the Dutch settlers in South Africa (the Boers) and the British; essentially fought for the gold and diamonds of Transvaal.*

1900

Hongkong Telegraph
8 January 1900

The utter unsuitability of the Supreme Court for its present purpose was well shown this morning when it was explained to his Lordship that one of the leading barristers engaged in the case was late, owing to being obliged to change into warmer clothing. His Lordship accepted this explanation and said they had no means of warming the building.

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* *Fin de siècle*: French, 'end of century'. The phrase at present also implies decadence, with especial reference to the end of the 19th century.

❖ *The Courthouse referred to here was roughly on the site of the present Queen's Theatre. The next Supreme Court, now housing the Legislative Council, would not be completed until 1912.*

Hongkong Telegraph
15 January 1900

His Excellency Li Hung-chang, who has been described as the Grand Old Man of China, arrived in Hongkong yesterday morning. ... This afternoon ... His Excellency landed at Murray Pier. ... The roadway between Murray Pier and Government House was lined with soldiers with fixed bayonets.

❖ *See also Minister Li Hung-Chang, p.135.*

Viceroy Li Hung-chang (1823–1901) Visiting Hong Kong, 1900
The Viceroy is seated with Sir Henry Blake, Governor of Hong Kong, probably in the grounds of the Government House. Standing behind and between them is Stewart Lockhart, the Colonial Secretary. The Viceroy's entourage is standing on his right. One of the greatest Chinese statesmen of the time, Li Hung-chang was, at various times, advisor and chief secretary to the Empress Dowager Tz'u Hsi, head of the Imperial Chancery, and finally the Viceroy, in 1900–1901, of the provinces of Chihli and Kwangtung. His interest in Hong Kong was reflected in his patronage of the Hong Kong College of Medicine — the forerunner of the University of Hong Kong.

Hongkong Telegraph
22 January 1900

We notice that Hongkong has at length become the proud possessor of a motor car. The machine in question is 'built for three' and was much in evidence on the Shau-ki-wan Road yesterday afternoon. It runs a good pace and splutters somewhat in doing so. This, however, is not a drawback, as it warns pedestrians ... to give it a wide berth.

Hongkong Telegraph
9 March 1900

It is reported ... that the Empress Dowager has decided to close the Peking University on the grounds that no progress has been made after a trial of one year. A decree is also said to have been issued closing all schools and colleges of Western learning ... on the grounds that there is no money in the Imperial Exchequer ... and further that these schools only turn out men hostile to the Conservative policy of the Government.

Hongkong Telegraph
10 March 1900

We do not wish to alarm our readers, but a tiger was seen in Queen's Road this morning. However, he was only a foot in length and so we do not suppose that homes will be desolated just at present. He was being carried round for sale by an enterprising Chinese who was asking the sum of a hundred dollars for him.

❖ *Probably either a tiger pup or a leopard cat; the latter resembles a tiger.*

Hongkong Telegraph
29 March 1900

Boxers Create Trouble: It is stated that the Boxers Secret Society is creating great trouble in the neighbourhood of Jinchow, a town situated sixty miles to the southwest of Tientsin. A collision has already taken place between the Boxers and the Chinese troops and many of the latter have been slaughtered.

❖ *Essentially anti-foreign, the Boxer Rebellion gained in strength and eventually besieged foreign legations in Peking. Foreign troops were sent to relieve the siege, and the rebellion was put down in 1902.*

Hongkong Telegraph
3 April 1900

Could Mr. Chater but see the road in Kowloon which bears his name he would weep. It more resembles a mud bath than anything else at the present and residents in the vicinity are thinking of applying for permission to raise a crop of paddy on it.

❖ *Readers who know Chater Road in the Central District of Hong Kong Island may be confused. For some strange reason, the early planners of Kowloon had duplicated a number of streets, among them Robinson, Macdonnell, and Chater Roads. In 1908 they were changed to their present names. Chater Road became Peking Road.*

Hongkong Telegraph
1 June 1900

To-day being the fifth day of the fifth moon is being observed with the customary ceremonies, and the Dragon Boat was seen this morning about 10 a.m. running through the Harbour ... accompanied by the usual musical howls emanating from the Chinese instruments and throats. It seemed heathenish, yet we cannot help saying that there was a vividly rhythmical effect produced by the consonance of the musical instruments and the timely rowing of the modern *triremes*.*

❖ *One might have expected a more enlightened or intelligent comment on the Dragon Boat Festival popular all over Southeast Asia. (Compare with* Hongkong Daily Press, *18 June 1915, p.331.)*

Dragon Boat Race, Hong Kong Harbour, c.1909
The long 'dragon' boat with men ready with their paddles is preparing for the race. These popular races are held annually during the Dragon Boat Festival, on the fifth day of the fifth moon, generally late May or early June. In this colourful and happy festival, dragon boat teams row vigorously to the beating of the drum to win the race.

The long and narrow boats are well-built and may be as long as 100 feet with 40–50 paddlers. So popular have the races become in recent times that many overseas teams, Asian and European, come to compete in this event. There are several popular versions of the origin of the festival, but the real origin is obscure and probably dates back to remote antiquity.

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* Trireme: ancient Greek warship using three banks of oars as well as sails.

Hongkong Telegraph
3 July 1900

In Hong Kong there appears to be a great deal too much faith put in what one might call good luck. Take, for instance, the landslip which occurred at West Point ... yesterday morning. Here was a row of houses directly under a cliff some eighty feet in height, without any retaining wall ... to prevent ... a landslip occurring and carrying the crowd of Chinese living in the houses to Eternity.

❖ *Landslides, as they are now called, have continued to affect Hong Kong to the present time. There have been some horrendous ones killing many people and rendering many more homeless.*

Hongkong Telegraph
19 July 1900

The following is an extract from a letter in the *Pall Mall*:- 'Touching the popularity of Russia in China over all other "foreign devils", the simple reasons would appear to be that she bribes better than anybody else, and that she has no missionaries. To the missionary-cum-gunboat system pursued by this country in the land of Confucius we may, if we please, attribute much of the disfavour we experience there.'

Hongkong Telegraph
11 September 1900

Mr. E.R. Belilios, C.M.G., the well-known Hongkong admirer of Lord Beaconsfield ... is over in London on a visit. ... Mr. Belilios is one of the most wealthy men in the Far East, where he is a leading figure in the Jewish community.

❖ *A noted philanthropist, Belilios's wealth was made through the opium trade. When Lord Beaconsfield had modestly declined a statue erected in his honour, Belilios built the Beaconsfield Arcade (p.179), later replaced by Beaconsfield House, no longer extant.*

Hongkong Telegraph
2 October 1900

The Director of Public Works appears to be labouring under the delusion that the public exists for the convenience of the water supply and not the water supply for the convenience of the public. What is wanted in Kowloon is water and the sooner Mr. Orsmby can patch up his pumps and allow the Kowloonites to take their daily bath in peace, the sooner will those bugbears of the Official, the Unofficial Members and the Press, cease from troubling him.

❖ *Like most Hong Kong personalities, major and minor, of the past times, a street, in Tai Hang, was named after Mr Ormsby.*

Beaconsfield Arcade, Queen's Road Central, Hong Kong Island, c.1880
This handsome arcade was built in 1878 by an eccentric Jewish merchant and philanthropist, Emanuel Rafael Belilios. It stood next to the City Hall (Dent Fountain, donated by the Dent & Co. to adorn the City Hall, is seen in the foreground), and opposite the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank. Belilios's profound admiration for the British Prime Minister Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield) was expressed in the naming the arcade the Beaconsfield Arcade. It should not be confused with the old Government Building on the hill above (red-brick building, still standing; see p.340) which Belilios leased from the Government in 1880, and named also simply 'Beaconsfield'. Belilios died in 1905 but the name he bestowed on the arcade persisted for many years. Beaconsfield Arcade was replaced, after the Second World War, by the architecturally inferior Beaconsfield House; the latter was finally demolished in the 1990s.

Hongkong Telegraph
6 November 1900

Ping-Pong. The euphonious name 'Ping-Pong' is not, as one might imagine at the first sound, a new form of Chinese tea; on the contrary, it is thoroughly English game, invented by a small body of well-known cricketers. ... The implements ... are of the simplest kind. In addition to your own dining table, all you need are a couple of small racquets and half a dozen small white xylonite balls.

❖ *True; it was invented in the 1880s as a diversion for wet weekends.*

1911

Hongkong Telegraph
13 January 1911

'Please don't spit on the pavement or any public places. The Society for the Suppression of Promiscuous Spitting in Public Places'. Such was the notice being distributed in the public streets today.

❖ *If this is not a joke, what happened to this society? We could still do with one today.*

Hongkong Telegraph
2 February 1911

The sad death occurred this morning of Mr. H.R. Cochrane, accountant of Mercantile Bank of India. He fell from the verandah of the bank mess into Queen's Road, opposite the Grand Hotel, at an early hour this morning. It is surmised that he must have fallen while walking in his sleep.

❖ *Cochrane Street, connecting Lyndhurst Terrace with Queen's Road Central, was not named after this unfortunate man, but after Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Cochrane, Naval Commander in the 1840s.*

Hongkong Telegraph
6 February 1911

TIGERS IN THE NEW TERRITORY: A great deal of ridicule was recently cast upon the story of a tiger having been killed in the New Territory. ... [It] was seen at Fanling ... on Saturday evening by three European railway officials who happened to be travelling on the train. When sighted it was only some fifteen yards off the line, and was so keenly engaged in making a meal off a goat that it never even lifted its head or shifted off the place when the train passed.

❖ *True story or not (European railway officials were quite likely to have had a few drinks), there is no doubt whatsoever that tigers appeared not infrequently in the New Territories at the time.*

Hongkong Telegraph
7 February 1911

The first case under the new regulations in which no opium smoking is allowed in eating houses was heard this morning. ... His Worship said the case would be met by binding [the offenders] over to come up for judgement in the sum of $50 each.

❖ *At last a step in the right direction.*

Aberdeen, c.1920
Located on the southern side of Hong Kong Island, Aberdeen was not named after the city in Scotland, but the Earl of Aberdeen, who succeeded Lord Palmerston, in September 1841, as the British foreign secretary; and who incidentally was opposed to the retention of Hong Kong as a British possession. The Chinese, however, called the harbour of Aberdeen, Shek Pai Wan and the village inland Heung Kong Tsai (Little Hongkong).

At the time of cession of Hong Kong to Britain, Aberdeen had a small farming village on shore, but a much larger boat population sheltering in its well-protected harbour. This photograph shows a mass of sails, and although taken much later, depicted a scene that had not changed for centuries. In the early times, the place had an unsavoury reputation. Reverend Eitel, writing in his book *Europe in China*, in 1895, described it as 'the haunt of pirates ... dreaded by peaceful traders'.

There is little doubt that the boat people of the local waters descend from the early sea-faring aborigines who had left ample archaeological evidence on the local seashores of their activities from as far back as 6,000 years.

A junk is a unique vessel. With its patched sails, high stern and a distinctive hull, it may seem almost bizarre to foreign eyes, but it is highly functional. The boat people were the first to build watertight compartments in their boats, thus safeguarding against rapid sinking, and perforated rudders, which are highly effective while offering less resistance to water.

Today, the sails are gone, replaced by motors; modern-day trawlers are moored alongside junks, while on shore the farming village is now a mini-metropolis.

Intimation:
Short-hand Typist Required. No other than Males need apply, must be competent. Apply to ... stating salary required.

Hongkong Telegraph
25 February 1911

❖ *Surprised? Equal pay for men and women was not achieved in Hong Kong (Government and University) until 1970s!*

Hongkong Telegraph
7 March 1911

It is usually the fate of festival days marking changes in the climate to present conditions the exact reverse of what was expected. To-day was no exception. It is the Festival of Excited Insects, excited because they were to awake to-day from their winter sleep. The gods have been unkind to them, however, and rain and lowering clouds damped their ardour.

❖ *A very interesting festival, also known as the Budding Moon, seldom observed today except in farming communities.*

Hongkong Telegraph
18 March 1911

LOCAL AVIATION: A large number of spectators gathered to-day at Shatin Village in the expectation of seeing Mr. Van den Born give the first aviation exhibition in Hongkong. Unfortunately the wind proved too high to allow of the aviator flying. It is hoped that the weather conditions tomorrow will be suitable.

Trial Flight at Sha Tin, 18 March 1911

This was a momentous day for Hong Kong. Only eight years after the Wright brothers had succeeded in lifting their aeroplane into the air and flying several hundred yards, a similar feat was to be attempted in Hong Kong on 18 March 1911. A makeshift 'airfield' was hastily prepared on a stretch of beach at Sha Tin and a large number of eager spectators, including Governor Sir Frederick Lugard and his party, had gathered at Sha Tin Village in expectation of seeing the brave Belgian gentleman by the name of Van den Born give the first aviation exhibition in Hong Kong.

Alas, they were disappointed; the wind proved to be too high to allow the aviator to take off. The disappointed crowd had dispersed, while the governor and his party took the next train back to Kowloon.

A flight did take place successfully the following week, but according to Dr Edward Pryor's informative and carefully researched lecture, reported in the City News in March 1955, the 18 March flight went ahead after the wind had suddenly dropped, though by that time many of the visitors had already departed.

PORPOISES IN THE HARBOUR: An unusual spectacle was witnessed in Hongkong Harbour this morning ... a shoal of porpoises passed right through the narrows. There were some thirty or more porpoises in the shoal, and the average length of the fish appeared to be about ten feet. A number of launches followed the wake of the unaccustomed visitors.

Hongkong Telegraph
23 March 1911

❖ *If they averaged 10 feet, they were probably dolphins (porpoises, which are similar, are generally smaller). Their appearance in Hong Kong waters is common though usually not in the busy harbour. Both, porpoises and dolphins, are, of course, not fish but mammals; the editor should have known better.*

Photographic Advert: Your own baby, if you have one, can be enlarged, tinted and framed for $2.

Editorial comment: But so many people prefer to let nature do this enlarging, tinting and so on.

Hongkong Telegraph
11 April 1911

For the second time within a few months, a shipload of smuggled Chinese coolies have been thrown overboard in the Pacific Ocean and drowned. The men were all being taken from Lower California, Mexico and on the approach of the revenue cutters were heartlessly dumped into the sea, there to perish ... the cutter 'Orient' witnessed the first murder, and attempted to save the helpless coolies but was too late.

Hongkong Telegraph
15 April 1911

❖ *One is left speechless at this horrible act of barbarism.*

MOTORS IN THE COLONY: The number of accidents due to motor cars ... during the last few weeks ... together with the reckless manner in which they are now driven, has led to new police regulations being framed to control traffic. There will be ... a prohibited area within which motor cars will not be allowed to encroach. This area extends from the 'Parade Ground' [Murray Parade Ground] to Pokfoolum Road, and from Queen's Road to Bonham Road.

Hongkong Telegraph
24 April 1911

❖ *Motor cars were permitted, however, to reach Caine Road via D'Aguilar, Wellington and Arbuthnot Roads. A wise decision; if only it could be enforced again! See also Motor Car, p.260.*

Motor Car, Hong Kong, c.1920
Although the first petrol-driven internal combustion engine appeared in the 1880s, the first model with the essential elements of a modern motor car, or automobile as it is sometimes called, dates from about 1900–01. The motor car in the photograph is, of course, a much later model, of the 1920s. It is difficult to fix precisely the date when motor car first made its appearance in Hong Kong; probably around 1903–05. It was not received kindly by the public and attracted a good deal of unfavourable comment in the press. But by 1910–12, it became clear that the motor car 'had come to stay' (one newspaper had mistakenly printed 'had come to slay'), so much so that in 1913, the Clock Tower on Pedder Street, a much loved landmark, was pulled down in the interest of safe traffic.

Hongkong Telegraph
8 May 1911

6778 people visited the Museum at the City Hall last week.

Hongkong Telegraph
16 May 1911

The death has occurred at Peking in his sixty ninth year of the notorious Li Lien-ying, the Chief Eunuch of the late Empress Dowager Tzu-Hsi. … The power wielded by Li Lien-ying was colossal. … His successor, Chang Yuan-fu, is already a bye-word in the capital. … When his downfall comes it is devoutly to be hoped that he and the deceased Li Lien-ying will be the last of their obnoxious breed.

❖ *Obnoxious breed it was indeed. Believed to have been introduced into the court during the Han dynasty, eunuchs used their power to foment discord, and were largely the cause of intrigue, malice, wickedness, confusion, and revolt.*

Chinese Civilization ... from the very earliest times [in China] the taste for learning was cultivated and has continued to be a distinguishing characteristic of our people ... through all its history to the present day. Centuries before Homer there existed in the country a literature which attests to the very highest state of intellectual attainment.

Hongkong Telegraph
17 May 1911

The new Post Office is gradually shedding the unsightly but necessary structures of the builders, and beginning to assume its proper aspect. From the harbour it has a most imposing appearance and is certainly an outstanding architectural feature of the Colony.

❖ *Demolished in 1976, and replaced by a hideous, box-like but utilitarian structure on the waterfront.*

Hongkong Telegraph
18 May 1911

The General Post Office, Central District, Hong Kong Island, c.1920
This splendid building, in red brick with arched verandahs, which could make any city proud, was built between 1903 and 1911, replacing a much smaller one on Queen's Road Central. The picture shows its magnificent corner turret at the junction of Connaught Road and Pedder Street. Barely noticeable in the foreground, is the statue of the Duke of Connaught facing Blake Pier, moved here from the Statue Square in 1907. The General Post Office Building was demolished in 1976 to be replaced by the new one on the waterfront next to Blake Pier (now the Outlying Islands Pier).

Hongkong Telegraph
2 June 1911

HEALTH IN THE TROPICS: Dr. James Cantlie, formerly of Hongkong, is reported to have expressed the following views ... the younger the age at which a man proceeds to the tropics the greater the risk of contracting disease. ... I never have any hesitation in recommending a healthy man of between 30 and 50 to proceed to the tropics to take up work there; but I do my best to dissuade anyone under 21 doing so. ... It usually takes about 2 years after taking up residence in a warm country that effects of climate are manifested, and it depends upon soundness of wind and limb, and the strength of character of the individual, what the future is to be.

❖ *The same Dr Cantlie who was one of the founders, in 1887, of the Hongkong Medical College, and who after retirement in Scotland was instrumental in rescuing Dr Sun Yat-sen from the Chinese Embassy in London where the latter was held after being kidnapped. Like most medical men at the time, Dr Cantlie regarded Europeans largely unsuitable for life in tropics. We know better now. It was not the climate or the heat, but indulgence in alcohol and the prevalence of infectious diseases, mostly without specific cure, that made life in the tropics difficult.*

Hongkong Telegraph
3 June 1911

Official Notice: Unless with the express permission of the Department of Public Works, no wheeled vehicles will be allowed on Kennedy Road other than the following:- a ricksha, bicycle, tricycle or other similar machine not propelled by a motor, and a perambulator [pram for short] or other similar machine. Any such wheeled vehicle must proceed round the bends of Kennedy Road at a moderate speed.

Hongkong Telegraph
21 June 1911

The first public appearance of the top hat in its shiny modern form was in London on January 10th 1797 and proved to be nothing if not sensational. The wearer was John Heatherington, a Strand haberdasher, and the unwonted sight of his new and shiny head gear caused such a turmoil in the street that he was charged with breach of the peace and 'inciting to riot' and was bound over to keep peace in the sum of £500.

Hongkong Telegraph
4 August 1911

Kowloon-Canton Railway: It is reported that H.E. the Viceroy [of Kwangtung] appointed officials to draft up a series of regulations in connection with the running of the ... Railway. ... One series deals with

the management of the employees of the railway. ... Fog signals and the firing of bombs will be introduced in cases of bad weather. ... The employees of the Railway when on duty will not be permitted to entertain passengers. Special apartments will be set apart for the convenience of female passengers, prisoners and lunatics.

❖ *The last regulation must be particularly reassuring for female passengers!*

Hongkong Telegraph
17 August 1911

Wealthy Chinese, who have come down to Hongkong in the last few months, having bought up all the suitable houses. ... on the Island as residence, are now ... turning their attention to Kowloon. ... we should see a very important development of the territory within a very short time. There appears to be no confidence among the Chinese that the revolution movement in Canton ... will die out. So long as this feeling prevails we shall see the men who have something to lose in a great revolutionary explosion ... eager to establish homes where life and property are more safe and secure — and their first in this connection will certainly be centered on Hongkong.

❖ *Note the similarity to the flow of wealth and entrepreneurial ability in the 1950s.*

Hongkong Telegraph
6 September 1911

To-day a Chinese festival is held, which has a parallel in Europe 'All Souls Day' ... Celebrations on a huge scale are carried on in the Civil and Military Temple [Man Mo Temple on Hollywood Road], while many of the Chinese firms ... make special arrangements for the day. ... Paper offerings will be burnt, the donors hoping that these articles will reach those in the spirit world who are homeless and hungry ...

❖ *This probably refers to the festival known as the 'Festival for the Hungry Ghosts', celebrated on the 15th day of the 7th Moon; the comparison with 'All Souls Day' is not really apt. See photograph of Man Mo Temple, p.99.*

Hongkong Telegraph
7 September 1911

Hongkong is faced by a somewhat serious situation with regard to the rice supply. The Chinese in Hongkong rely almost entirely upon rice from Siam [Thailand]. The old crop in that country is now practically exhausted and the new crop is not yet quite ripe. As a result less supplies

are coming forward and during the last two months the price has advanced from $6 per picul to $10. Unless additional supplies shortly come forward from Siam, there is imminent danger that there will be a rice famine in Hongkong.

❖ *It was, indeed, serious. The situation was brought partially under control by stopping all exports of rice from Hong Kong, by strict measures against hoarding and speculation of rice, and urgent appeals to Siam for more supplies.*

Walled Village, Tuen Mun, New Territories, c.1930s
The village is Nai Wai (泥圍), one of several established by the To (陶) Clan, which straddle Castle Peak Road at Tuen Mun. A fine walled village ('wai' usually refers to a walled village) dating from the 14 century AD, it is square in plan with four corner towers. Many of the original houses inside have been gradually replaced with modern houses (one can be seen in the photograph). In the past, the villagers farmed the adjoining fields, growing mainly rice and vegetables.

Hongkong Telegraph
14 September 1911

FOUND ... a brown donkey, straying at West Point. Apply to the Inspector on duty, Central Police Station.

Hongkong Telegraph
19 September 1911

From the Editorial:
The tragic incident ... of a motor-car 'running amok' and crushing out of existence six men once more calls attention to the high price that mankind has to pay for his triumph over time and distance. The motor-car is with us at Hongkong and ... 'has come to stay'. ... We recognise that the motor-car is an agent of utility and convenience. ... But, unhappily, while the owner of a car may not necessarily be a criminal, its ownership does not always supply faculties and attributes which Nature has denied.

❖ *Today we can recognize this as the beginning of a lethal record, as the motorcar in increasing numbers and with increasing speed collects an ever-increasing number of victims.*

Hongkong Telegraph
5 October 1911

KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY: CEREMONY: Despite the [rumours] ... of possible trouble at the opening of the railway, the ceremony passed off without a hitch yesterday ... After passing the British frontier the train that conveyed the visitors from Hongkong passed a line guarded by soldiers with bayonets fixed and a plentiful supply of ammunition. ... Unfortunately Their Excellencies the Governor of Hongkong and the Viceroy of Canton were unable to be present.

❖ *This was the first 'through train' after the Chinese section of the railway had been completed. Their Excellencies' absence is explained by the fact that the ceremony was postponed at the last moment from the 2nd to the 4th of October due to the former date being a day of religious observances in China.*

Kowloon-Canton Railway, Opening of the Chinese Section of the Railway, August 1911
The Chinese Section of the Railway was completed almost a year after the British Section. The occasions was marked by official functions and receptions some of which were attended by the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Frederick Lugard. In the photograph, which was probably taken at Lo Wu, prominent Chinese and British guests are seen attending the opening ceremony.

Hongkong Telegraph
14 October 1911

Bella Penida, a chauffeur in the employ of the Exile Garage, was again brought up before Mr. J.R.Wood at the Magistracy this morning on a charge of exceeding the speed limit by driving his car at the rate of sixteen miles an hour instead of ten, as provided in the Ordinance at Praya East ...

Hongkong Telegraph
20 October 1911

HONGKONG AND THE REVOLUTION: Among the Chinese in Hongkong there are many different schools of opinion on the rebellion and the probabilities of success. Many of those born and bred in Hongkong ... are by no means as enthusiastic over it as the Cantonese. ... The former say that to them the result matters little for they are British subjects and their home is here. ... The Cantonese refugee follows the struggle keenly because when it is over he will be able to go home to his paddy fields ... but at the same time he has a devout hope that the revolution will succeed.

❖ *The newspapers were full of news of the revolution; not surprising, for this was one of the greatest milestones in China's history, terminating the last Imperial dynasty.*

Hongkong Telegraph
24 October 1911

THE REBELLION; EUROPEAN PRESS OPINION: The Daily Telegraph says that at present there is no need for foreign intervention. The Manchus have deprived China of all opportunities for educational development and self-culture. Such an effete government should be removed.

Hongkong Telegraph
27 October 1911

The overthrow of the Manchus is considered in revolutionary quarters to be imminent.

❖ *Canton declared its independence from Peking on 29 October.*

Hongkong Telegraph
31 October 1911

Telegram:
An Imperial Edict has been issued in which the Throne apologises for its Governmental mistakes, grants the National Assembly full power to form a constitution, provides for the reorganization of the cabinet and the exclusion of the Imperial Family therefrom.

❖ *Too little, too late!*

WINGED AEROPLANES: The Wright brothers, who have been experimenting quietly for months ... have begun preparations to test a new aeroplane which ... will, if successful, revolutionise the present types. The new machines will be ... without propellers. The brothers have been engaged in perfecting a device to apply power to movable wings in imitation of the flight of birds, dispensing with the motor-driven screw entirely and they believe that they have succeeded.

Hongkong Telegraph
3 November 1911

❖ *Their belief was premature; the new contraption was a dismal failure. The birds still reign supreme. Can one imagine a jumbo jet with flapping wings?*

The Nobel prize for chemistry has been won by Madame Curie. She and her late husband Pierre Curie were responsible for the discovery of radium. This is the second of the Nobel honours that the Curies have received.

Hongkong Telegraph
9 November 1911

❖ *She was recently reburied in a place of honour in France (actually she was Polish by birth by the name of Sklodowska). At the time of her award of the Nobel prize, Madame Curie, as a woman, was not entitled to vote!*

A life-size model of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the Chinese revolutionary leader, has been added to Madame Tussaud's Exhibition.

Hongkong Telegraph
29 November 1911

❖ *The ultimate seal of renown?*

WOMEN IN CHINA: The leaders of the revolutionary movement which is now taking place in China announced that ... they will aim at encouraging friendly relations with foreigners, and this change would have a great and far reaching effect on the lives of women. ... Three thousand years ago, when our ancestors were roaming primeval forests, the position of the Chinese women was the same as it is today. She has remained stationary. ... Western lands are holding out helping hands to their sisters, who form part of the oldest civilization in the world. Modern literature and journalists are also largely responsible for the awakening of Chinese women. The two books published, within the last few years, on the Germs of Feminism and the Right of the Chinese Woman in the choice of a Husband, voice the modern ideas which are taking root in the country.

Hongkong Telegraph
1 December 1911

Chinese Ladies, Hong Kong, c.1900
The four young women are sitting on a bench, probably in the Botanical Gardens. The two attractive young women in the centre are well coiffured and dressed in pretty embroidered clothes. Their feet are bound as was the custom with women of the privileged class. On either side, the two women, wearing black clothes, are probably their maids, their feet are not bound. Foot binding was less popular in South China than in the north, and was generally less common in lower classes. Women farmers avoided the custom as it would seriously interfere with performing heavy work in the field.

Hongkong Telegraph
5 December 1911

THE ENGLISH PIGTAIL: In all that has been said of the shedding of the queue by the Chinese, we have seen no mention of the fact that our own sailors, as far back as the days of Elizabeth [I], wore pigtails. The sailors of Nelson's day took an immense pride in them.

Hongkong Telegraph
9 December 1911

PHILHARMONIC CONCERT: The Hongkong Philharmonic Society is a shining example of what can be done by a number of people who are sufficiently serious to work together regularly and constantly to attain a given objective. ... That this has been done was abundantly proved by the programme presented at the Annual Concert last time at the City Hall.

❖ *The post-war Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, bearing no direct descent from the pre-war Society, began in 1947 as an amateur orchestra and delighted numerous audiences with its regular concerts. It turned professional in 1975 and has since grown into a full-sized fine symphony orchestra.*

Cheung Chau (長洲), c.1920
Cheung Chau, meaning 'long island', is shaped like a dumb-bell (the geographical term for it is 'tombolo'), and is located in the south-west area of the territory. The photograph shows the island's main village occupying the narrow sandbar between two rocky landmasses. The island has had a mixed population of farmers, shopkeepers, and fisherfolk for many centuries. A number of archaeological sites and an ancient rock engraving also point to prehistoric human activity on the island. Its sheltered western bay has always afforded safe and calm anchorage to numerous fishing boats, as the photograph reveals.

Hongkong Telegraph
15 December 1911

A telegram from New York states that an interesting experiment has just been carried out ... to ascertain the time it takes for a telegram to encircle the globe. The telegram of nine words was dispatched from the editorial office via Honolulu, Manila, Hongkong, Singapore ... and back to the starting point. The message was exactly 16.5 minutes on its journey.

Hongkong Telegraph
19 December 1911

COLONY'S BADGE: Among the matters which came before the Legislative Council ... is an important resolution ... 'that the existing badge of the Colony is not only inartistic but it is unsuitable for reproduction especially on flags'.

❖ *The badge represented a pastoral scene in which, among other things, a top-hatted and frock-coated Englishman was shaking hands with a Chinese man.*

1912

Hongkong Telegraph
3 January 1912

EMU'S MENU: Among the indigenous birds of Queensland [Australia] the emu is one of the most interesting. ... In the stomach of a specimen which was recently killed were found four pennies and five halfpennies. Other things found inside the emu were:- nine 2 inch nails, five marbles ... one umbrella ferrule, one key, one medal ... two studs, three buttons, one safety pin, two staples, three washers and 24 pieces of broken china, while a large pin was found embedded in the liver. The emu was only young, and was a fine specimen.

Hongkong Telegraph
8 January 1912

The streets of Hongkong were once again decked with flags, the occasion being the official day of rejoicing upon the establishment of a Republic in China.

Hongkong Telegraph
15 January 1912

With fitting ceremony the Courts of Justice began today what will, it is hoped, prove to be a long career of usefulness. There are differences of opinion in regard to the architectural beauty and structural fitness of the Courts but it may be fairly claimed that they are an improvement upon the old premises in Queen's Road. An interesting fact about the Law Courts is that over 12,000 tons of granite have been used in its structure.

❖ *Ninety years later, opinions are unanimous that it is a fine example of the neo-classical architecture. Its usefulness has been of long duration, the building now serving as the Legco Building. See Supreme Court Building, p.202.*

Hongkong Telegraph
22 January 1912

Hongkong has reason to be proud of the part it has played in the sphere of tropical medicine. It was here that the plague bacillus was discovered and it was also in this Colony that initial steps were taken towards the extermination of the malarial mosquito. Hongkong itself has been transformed from a place with an evil reputation into one of the healthiest localities in the East.

❖ *During the first plague epidemic in Hong Kong, in 1894, Kitasato of Japan and Yersin of France discovered the plague bacillus in Hong Kong. However, the claim that Hong Kong had become one of the healthiest places in the East is a dubious one. Right up until the Second World War, typhoid, meningitis, cholera, smallpox, malaria, and especially tuberculosis were prevalent in Hong Kong in sporadic and epidemic forms.*

Hongkong Telegraph
5 February 1912

HONGKONG'S THEATRE: Dusty and draughty, unlovely and uncomfortable, unbearably cold in winter, intolerably hot in summer, inconvenient and in all respects woefully lacking and out of date ... [the theatre] excites no feeling of pride in the breasts of the residents of the Colony ... a theatre which would be a disgrace to a small provincial town in England.

❖ *The Hong Kong's only theatre, thus strongly castigated, was located in the City Hall.*

Hongkong Telegraph
13 February 1912

From Shanghai, February 12th, 'THE THREE EDICTS' :-
By the first the Throne accepts the Republic. In the second the Throne accepts the conditions agreed upon by Yuan Shi-kai and the Republicans. The third informs the Viceroys and Governors that the Throne retires from political power to meet the wishes of the people.

❖ *From Autocracy to Democracy — a truly gigantic step for China.*

Hongkong Telegraph
2 March 1912

The daring of the West River pirates seems to know no limits for on Thursday night they attacked the British Steamer *Tai On* on her voyage to Hongkong from Kongmoon escorted by a Chinese torpedo boat ... Fortunately no one was hurt by the bullets of the pirates, though some passed very close.

Hongkong Telegraph
4 March 1912

It was gratifying in a measure to those who have a pride in our unrivalled harbour and its limitless facilities for shipping to learn ... that the question of the projected commercial wireless for this Colony has not been neglected.

Hongkong Telegraph
5 March 1912

UNIVERSITY OF HONGKONG
OPENING CEREMONY
THE UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS
will be opened on
Monday March 11th 1912 at 2.30 p.m. by
His Excellency Sir Frederick J. D. Lugard GCMG, CB, DSO
Governor of Hongkong and Chancellor of the University
To be followed by a
UNIVERSITY BAZAAR

South China Morning Post
12 March 1912

The modern thimble dates from 1684 when the goldsmith Nicholas Benschoten of Amsterdam sent one as a present to a lady friend.

❖ *A small item of useless but interesting information.*

South China Morning Post
26 March 1912

The Board of the Interior [in China] has issued a new regulation forbidding the practice of footbinding throughout China.

University of Hong Kong at the Inauguration

Two years, almost to the day, after the foundation stone of the main building of the new university had been laid, the building was ready for the inauguration of the university, on 11 March 1912. The opening ceremony, in the presence of a large and distinguished gathering, was performed by Sir Frederick Lugard, the Governor of Hong Kong and chancellor of the university; it was followed by a highly successful and popular university bazaar.

The Main Building, a gift to the people of Hong Kong by a local Parsee businessman, Sir Hormusjee Mody, is a magnificent structure in the traditional red-brick university style. A local firm of architects, Leigh and Orange, designed and supervised the construction of the building of brick and granite. Described also as 'Renaissance' in style, it presents external and internal colonnades on two floors supported by rows of large granite pillars, and is surmounted by a tall clock tower and four turrets. Within there are open courtyards, two with tall palm trees planted in its first year of existence.

The Main Building is the centre of one of the oldest of the Far Eastern universities, which is acknowledged as the foremost bearer of Western culture, science and learning to the youth of the Orient.

One of the finest buildings of the British period in Hong Kong, it is a gazetted historic building.

South China Morning Post
28 March 1912

The official flag of the new Chinese Republic, hoisted at the Legation in London, has five bars of colour — red, yellow, blue, white and black.

❖ *The day before, on the 27th, Dr Sun Yat-sen — who was appointed provisional president — formally resigned presidency, making way for Yuan Shih-kai.*

South China Morning Post
30 March 1912

The notification appointing the Government Hospital at Kennedy Town to be a Leper Asylum for the segregation and treatment of lepers has been rescinded.

Few today will remember that leprosy was common in Hong Kong in the early times. The island of Hei Ling Chau was long used to segregate lepers, and was only discontinued to be so used in the 1970s.

Hongkong Telegraph
6 April 1912

Yesterday was Ching Ming, or day of pure brightness, when the Chinese delight to honour their dead. ... In only one instance did the writer see a grave untended and as he passed it he thought of the neglected ... weatherbeaten grey stones at Stanley that mark the resting place of the pioneers of the British Colony.

❖ *The 'neglected' stones are, in fact, the early garrison graves. Later, they were looked after by the Government and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and well maintained up to the present.*

South China Morning Post
9 April 1912

Now that the Revolution has ended, the indications are that a great future lies ahead of China ... Manchu power has been completely overthrown and all its retarding influence swept aside. ... The stupendous task of commercial and industrial reform is now about to begin.

South China Morning Post
10 April 1912

From the Editorial:
Two interesting items of news, which may well be coupled, are furnished in telegrams received within the last twenty-four hours. The first is that Mongolia has declined to join the Republic, the second is that a kind of holy war is said to be proceeding in Tibet.

❖ *No matter! Both would be swiftly brought to heel.*

For the first time in the history of ... air flying a man leaped from an aeroplane at Jefferson Barracks [USA] this afternoon and descended to the earth in a parachute.

South China Morning Post
11 April 1912

London: Reuter's correspondent at New York states that the liner Titanic has sent a wireless message to the effect that she has collided with an iceberg, and asks for assistance. ... The Titanic is reported to be sinking by the head. The women are being taken off the vessel in lifeboats.

❖ *The news all over the world at the time was dominated by the incredible tragedy of the sinking of the* Titanic *which was widely believed to be unsinkable. Some 1,500 lives were lost because there were no sufficient lifeboats and rafts to carry all on board.*

South China Morning Post
16 April 1912

Dr. Sun Yat-sen has decided to reside in Macao and the house he has chosen is already in a fair way to completion. His family has left for the Portuguese settlement and he will follow shortly.

❖ *Those who visit Macao are undoubtedly familiar with this house — an important historical building in the place.*

Hongkong Telegraph
2 May 1912

It is reported that Great Britain has declared it her intention formally to recognise the New Republic conditional upon the New Territory adjoining Kowloon being further extended.

❖ *The extension was not achieved.*

Hongkong Telegraph
4 May 1912

Eight overhead fans have been installed above the counters in the General Post Office. This consideration for the perspiring public is greatly appreciated these days.

Hongkong Daily Press
28 May 1912

From the Editorial:
If the inner history of the Chinese Revolution ever comes to be faithfully written it will ... be found that the part played therein by the Chinese in Hongkong, particularly of the merchant class, was a much more active one that most people at present imagine to have been the case ...

South China Morning Post
30 May 1912

Because of the right of asylum which they enjoyed at the very door of their native land, they were able to pave the way for the great uprising in a variety of ways; indeed, the view is held in some quarters that the rebellion was largely engineered from a block of buildings in Bonham Strand.

❖ *That the revolution, at least partly, was hatched at Bonham Strand may well be true, but as for 'asylum' — the meetings there were clandestine and Sun Yat-sen himself was declared in Hong Kong 'persona non grata'.*

Hongkong Waterfront, c.1920

There may be more than a few today who would find the waterfront shown here aesthetically more pleasing than the cramped jagged outline of the present one.

When this photograph was taken, the last massive reclamation in the central section of the town had been completed only 16 years before. It resulted in the shift of the mercantile offices to the east and the intrusion of the Chinese businesses into what was only a few years ago not merely the European business quarter, but also the residential part of town.

On the newly reclaimed land, massive, imposing-looking colonial-style buildings with corner turrets and arched verandahs were erected. Lining the new waterfront, renamed Connaught Road, they had totally transfigured the waterfront.

Let us now identify these edifices of the past: on the extreme left, just inside the photograph and projecting into the harbour, is the Victoria Recreation Club (now at Deep Water Bay). Moving right, next is the building of Butterfield & Swire, then a three-storey office of the *Telegraph*; then the large and imposing Hongkong Club, on its new site since 1897. There follows a gap which is Statue Square, in front of which stands a statue of Queen Victoria (seen here at an angle). Through the gap and beyond Statue Square, we can glimpse part of the Supreme Court (now the Legco Building), and still further behind on Queen's Road, the magnificent City Hall.

Next, two fine four-storey buildings, seen from the front side, are Queen's Building in front and Prince's just behind, separated by Chater Road. Further along the waterfront, next to Queen's, is St George's Building, then the King's Building and the narrow building without a name. Then comes Pedder Street and the last building seen on the right is the General Post Office.

Hongkong Telegraph
7 June 1912

HONGKONG'S FUTURE: ... notwithstanding some pessimistic forebodings, the confidence of the community and the Government in the future of the Colony has been strikingly shown in many ways ... Within the past ten years, for instance, the Colony has seen completed the extensive scheme of reclamation along the city water frontage, whereby 65 acres have been added to the city, 34 acres being building land, on which some of the finest business houses in Asia have been erected. [The writer] further refers to the erection of Government Offices costing over $1,000,000, and new Courts of Justice costing $865,000, not to mention the latest addition in the shape of the Hongkong University.

Queen's Building, Central District, Hong Kong Island, c.1905
The photograph shows the east and north aspects of this magnificent building, completed in 1899. Behind it, portion of the Prince's Building, completed in 1904, can be seen. The massive Praya Reclamation of 1890–1904 resulted in the new waterfront (see opposite page), later to be renamed Connaught Road, on which a number of large, imposing buildings was erected, like the Queen's. Together they had totally transformed the Central District into a stately and impressive area. None, however, survived the post-Second World War redevelopment fever.

Hongkong Telegraph
14 June 1912

The statement made by ... the Officer Administering the Government [in effect, the Acting Governor] on the subject of vehicle regulations ... 'Early in May' said His Excellency, 'I was concerned at the constant accidents caused by motor vehicles, and I obtained a report which showed that there are 21 motor cars in Hongkong, of which seven are privately owned, and 14 belong to four garages. No accidents had been caused by the former, while the latter had been responsible for 28 accidents during the 16 months ... which resulted in four persons being killed and four seriously injured, a very bad record.'

❖ *Most interesting statistics of Hong Kong's early motoring history. A bad record, indeed! Fourteen cars responsible for 28 accidents.*

Hongkong Telegraph
17 June 1912

Dr. Sun Yat-sen arrived in the Colony ... en route for Peking. He is at present staying at the Hongkong Hotel, and his movements abroad have been followed with great interest by the Chinese.

❖ *Although he had relinquished presidency, his advice was frequently sought by the new Chinese republic.*

Hongkong Telegraph
3 July 1912

HONGKONG'S DOUBLE DECKERS: The Tramway Company are proceeding apace, equipping cars ... with seating accommodation on top. Though it was at first doubted by many of the public, whether the 'double decker' would be a success in Hongkong, results have proved that the step was a good one ... The ride to Shaukiwan is a most enjoyable one.

❖ *The first 'double deckers' had open tops, but in 1925 became fully enclosed.*

Hongkong Telegraph
9 July 1912

CHINESE LADY DOCTOR: A Chinese woman, Dr. Yamei Kin, is at the Head of the Imperial Pei-Yang Woman's Medical School and Hospital, and is visiting physician to ... [several institutions] all of which are Government Institutions. She is the first woman to receive an appointment as head of her own work.

A telegram ... announces the death of the famous missionary, Dr. Griffith John. Shattered in health, and so weak that he could hardly stand on landing, Dr. John reached London early January this year, after more than half a century of work in China in the service of the London Missionary Society. ... Founded 'a remarkable mission which by 1905 had a Church membership of 6,500'.

Hongkong Telegraph
26 July 1912

His Holiness the Dali Lama and his acolytes are on their way back to Lhasa, singing their *Song of Degrees* ... and surrounded by the refinements of civilization, the whole crowned by the holy one's bath tub. Thus this contact with European luxury spoils native simplicity. A gracious rain was falling on the Tibetan inheritance as the August procession moved off, its members expressing their delight at escaping from the Indian climate. ... The anabasis of the Dali Lama is an episode to touch the heart.

❖ *Note the strange spelling 'Dali Lama'! In case readers have difficulty with 'anabasis', as I had, it may be translated as the 'military march into the interior', and was first used to describe the march of the Persian King Cyrus (the Younger) into Asia in 401 BC.*

Hongkong Telegraph
27 July 1912

Ex-Emperor Cuts Off His Queue: The Dowager Empress has induced the young Emperor to discard his queue, thereby setting to the members of the Imperial Household an example showing the reconciliation of the Manchus to the Republican Regime.

❖ *It is sometimes forgotten that while the Republic reigned officially outside, the Emperor continued to rule over his small isolated Forbidden City (the Imperial Palace) and his entourage well into the 1920s.*

Hongkong Telegraph
29 July 1912

SLEEPING POLICE: In view of the frequency of burglary ... of late we might be permitted once again to ask, 'Where are the Police?' To answer our query, they are, or some of them have been *asleep*. ... It may be a pretty and reposeful sight to see our supposed guardians of the peace wooing the Goddess of Sleep in the open air, but we need hardly point out that this is not quite what they are paid to do ...

Hongkong Telegraph
7 August 1912

Hongkong Telegraph
8 August 1912

A boy at Wanchai was knocked down by a bullock cart yesterday and his leg was broken.

❖ *Bullock carts in Wan Chai in 1912!*

Hongkong Telegraph
9 August 1912

ANCIENT CHINESE WRITING: The British Museum has acquired a collection of ancient bones inscribed with archaic Chinese characters of a more primitive type than any yet found. ... the characters have been deciphered only in part. ... The bones having been inscribed with questions, were seared with hot irons, and the cracks which then appeared in the bones were interpreted according to certain rules of divination. ... The enquiries related to such things as the prospect of rainfall, harvest ... hunting expeditions, change of residence, and so forth. One eminent authority inclines to assign the date to the early part of the Chou dynasty, which lasted from B.C. 1122 to B.C. 249; but the moderate Chinese critics attribute them to the Shang dynasty, which lasted from B.C. 1766 to B.C. 1122. In any case they are the oldest forms of Chinese writing that have survived.

❖ *This must be one of the earliest references to what became known as the 'oracle bones'. Today some of these inscribed bones are attributed to pre-Shang period.*

Hongkong Telegraph
23 August 1912

Twelve months hard labour in each case was the sentence ... at the Police Court, today, on a man and a woman charged with kidnapping a child aged eleven years, from her mother. ... The police, it was stated, were unable to obtain the return of the child from the Country as they had not the amount required for the redemption of the child. The mother said she would have to pawn two other children to raise the amount required to get the stolen child back.

❖ *This seems to defy all reason — that a kidnapped child should have to be bought back.*

Hongkong Telegraph
24 August 1912

THE TIGER AGAIN: The police have received a report from the schoolmaster ... in ... Sai Kung, that on the 21st inst. he heard his pigs making a great noise and he looked out of the window to see what was disturbing them. To his surprise he saw a tiger making off with a pig that weighed 102 catties and was valued at $20.

❖ *See also* Hongkong Telegraph *7 February 1911, p.256.*

Sedan Chair, Hong Kong, c.1920s
Described as an enclosed chair for one passenger carried on poles by two bearers, sedan chair is not an exclusively Oriental mode of conveyance, but was used in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, and was even said to have been invented in France (the city of Sedan). On Hong Kong Island's hilly terrain, it proved indispensable and could carry passengers to heights where no rickshaw could possibly reach.

Hongkong Telegraph
30 August 1912

From the Editorial:
SLAVERY IN HONGKONG: ... serious point is raised in the annual report ... of the Registrar General of Hongkong that purchased children can be found in probably 90 per cent of the well-to-do Chinese families in the Colony. ... [It is] the admitted fact that young children are rather freely disposed of for money ... and it is safe to assume from this ... that in many instances these children are deprived of all true freedom.

❖ *The problem of these 'mui tsai' children had troubled the official conscience of the Hong Kong Government since the 1860s but nothing was done (but see also Po Leung Kuk, p.143). The male children fared rather better for they were usually 'adopted' when there was no male heir; but the girls were mostly bought for domestic servitude. It is wrong, however, to call it slavery, since they had legal rights, especially in cases of proven maltreatment. Still, it was a reprehensible custom which did not stop until the end of Second World War.*

Hongkong Telegraph
4 September 1912

A Zeppelin airship has carried 57 passengers round Hamburg for two hours.

❖ *Although some attempts to launch an airship were made as early as 1870, the first practical airship was constructed in 1900 by Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin of Germany.*

According to a Chinese paper, General Li has decided to send 60 students abroad at a cost of taels 40,000 per annum. ... eight students to study Navy affairs in Great Britain ... six students to study military affairs in Germany ... twenty students to study mineralogy in Belgium ... ten students to study industrial affairs in America ... eight students to study law in France and mathematics in Italy respectively ... And eight students to study political economy in Japan. If the funds are not sufficient for so many students to complete their courses, rich people will be invited to contribute money for the purpose.

Hongkong Telegraph
12 September 1912

Thus it is that a force like the Hongkong Volunteer Corps should be regarded as providing the opportunity for useful service that any able man should be eager to embrace. ... The day may come when it will be realised volunteering is no mere hobby. It is a serious business, and an obligation on such as have strength and facilities for pursuing it.

❖ *That day did come — in December 1941 — when the Hongkong Volunteers fought hard and proved their worth defending the territory against the Japanese attack.* *See also Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps, p.251.*

Hongkong Telegraph
23 September 1912

A fine of five dollars or fourteen days was imposed at the Police Court this morning, for cruelty to a chicken by carrying it in a bag minus ventilation.

A chicken escaped from a roof and flew to the Telegraph and Telephone wires. Roosting there it short-circuited business and obstructed traffic by reason of the crowds that collected to watch the ludicrous attempts of three stalwart constables to dislodge it. In court today the bird will no doubt be reprimanded.

❖ *One can only hope that it was the same chicken, described in the previous snippet, avenging its incarceration without ventilation.*

What many scientists present pronounced a wonderful demonstration was given by Miss Helen Keller at Boston recently, when she sang the scale and spoke in three languages at the ontological congress at Harvard Medical School.

Hongkong Telegraph
24 September 1912

❖ *Helen Keller (1880-1968) became blind and deaf when 18 months old, yet achieved world renown when she graduated from a college and published several books.*

Somewhat of a sensation has been caused by the sudden disappearance of the compradore of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. He was missed on Sunday and it is said that defalcations which are laid to his account total about five hundred lakhs of dollars. The bank does not suffer much.

Hongkong Telegraph
30 September 1912

❖ *Two now seldom used words perhaps need an explanation: 'defalcation' which means misappropriation of money, and 'lakh', which comes from India and has been much used in the past in the Far East, means a hundred thousand.*

In China, as is well known, salt has been a great monopoly for three thousand years, and the salt-tax forms, with the ground tax ... and the maritime customs, the chief income of the state. Import of salt into China is forbidden ... and all the salt consumed by the population is derived from sea-water, salt marshes or salt springs.

South China Morning Post
17 October 1912

❖ *The whole of China was divided into 14 salt-producing areas. Some popular uprisings have been recorded, such as during the Ming dynasty, when the local population objected to the government collecting their salt. Abandoned salt-fields can still be seen at Tai O, on Lantao Island.*

The chair and rickshaw coolies of Hongkong have gone on strike, owing, it is said, to their resentment of heavy fines recently imposed for loitering and obstruction in the streets. In Kowloon the rickshaws are plying as usual.

Hongkong Telegraph
29 October 1912

❖ *In those days, when apart from the tramways, rickshaws and sedan chairs were almost the only means of transportation, the inconvenience caused by the strike was very considerable. Fortunately, this one lasted only a few days.*

Nathan Road, Kowloon, c.1930

This unique photograph of Nathan Road about 70 years ago shows several interesting features: the modest, two-three storey-high colonial houses line both sides of the street; today all have been replaced by high-rise commercial buildings.

There are few people on the street and only three motor vehicles visible. One of them is the No. 7 bus, a small single-decker, on its way to the Star Ferry (the destination sign is clearly visible). At least this bus number and the route remain the same to this day.

A Sikh policeman is seen on the left, and in the middle of the road a traffic sign proclaims prominently the speed limit of 20 miles per hour. With hardly any motor traffic on the street and with less than 1,000 motor vehicles licensed at the time, this seems a wise precaution. If only this had been adhered to, there might have been fewer major accidents on the roads.

In the absence of definite landmarks, it is difficult to tell which part of Nathan Road is shown in this photograph, but it is probably not far from its junction with Gascoigne Road. The scene is one of slow and tranquil pace, so sadly missing from present-day Kowloon.

An aeroplane flight from England to India is now under consideration ... the distance along the proposed route is 4,800 miles and it is estimated that each day's stage would be 400 miles.

Hongkong Telegraph
30 October 1912

❖ *That is a total of 12 days, weather permitting! But considering that only nine years previously, Orville Wright flew his biplane, with his brother Wilbur running alongside, for just 36 metres (a tiny fraction of a mile) before diving to the ground, it had been a phenomenal achievement.*

POST OFFICE INSCRIPTION: The inscription on the wall of the Hongkong Post Office 'As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country', has been recently embellished by a heavy hard-wood framework of ornamental design.

Hongkong Telegraph
9 November 1912

❖ *The inscription, I believe, has been preserved.*

BOYCOTT OF THE TRAMS: On Sunday evening ... the neighbourhood of Sai Wan Ho was thrown into a state of excitement when some two thousand Chinese who take exception to the new regulation adopted by the tramway, excluding the tender of Chinese coin in payment of fares, held up the cars, threw stones at them, and in one instance assaulted the police, a Chinese detective being bitten on the thumb.

Hongkong Telegraph
25 November 1912

❖ *For a short while the Chinese tradesmen in Canton retaliated by refusing to accept Hong Kong money. The boycott of the trams lasted for one month. In an attempt to appease the protesters, the tramway company had offered free rides for Chinese passengers rather than accept Chinese coins, but the free rides had only lasted for two days.*

At the Police Court, this morning, Sergeant Thompson charged the master of a fishing junk with being in unlawful possession of 35 sticks of dynamite. He was asked if he intended using it for fishing and he replied that he used it for frightening sharks. ... Defendant was fined $250.

Hongkong Telegraph
17 December 1912

Hongkong Telegraph
18 December 1912

The Dairy Farm: So successfully do the Dairy Farm Ltd. advertise, that it is practically safe to assert that had they no shop premises, they would not suffer much. The fact that they have one of the cleanest and freshest looking stores in the City is a clear indication of the care devoted to the goods that they sell. Hams, in nice white cloths, may be seen, of a quality which is the hallmark of the firm's reputation, bacon of undisputed excellence, German sausages of all kinds, prepared under expert supervision. ... As for butter and cheese, the quality of these commodities is so well known that further mention of them would be superfluous.

❖ *The Dairy Farm Co., which is still flourishing today, should take notice of this highly complimentary account.*

Hongkong Telegraph
26 December 1912

Street noises represent one of by no means lesser evils from which ... the people who live in [Hongkong] suffer. But, as with mosquitoes, cockroaches, prickly heat and a host of other annoyances ... in time we get inured to them. We are nevertheless glad when we see that some attempt is made to mitigate the nuisance. It will be noticed that it now becomes an offence for a person to make or cause to be made any noise 'calculated to disturb or interfere with the public tranquillity' ... between sunset and the hour of six in the following morning. We would that the clause operated at all hours of the day and night.

Hongkong Telegraph
28 December 1912

The Time Ball at Blackhead Point is to drop on Sundays, and Government holidays, as well as on ordinary weekends, beginning on 1st January. ... For the benefit of captains of vessels about to leave, who have had no opportunity of correcting their chronometers while in Port, the Ball will, when necessary, be dropped at some other [daylight] hour on application to the Harbour Master.

❖ *See also p.239. Since the Time Ball Signal was available since 1884, it may be assumed that the present announcement refers to the additional signals on public holidays and weekends. The Time Ball was a large hollow copper ball painted black. Dropping the ball at precisely 1 pm served as a time signal and could be observed by the ships in harbour so that their chronometers could be checked. This continued until 1933, when the signal was replaced by radio signals.*

Main Depot of Dairy Farm Company, c.1908
The building is still there — at the junction of Wyndham Street and Lower Albert Road, on Hong Kong Island — though considerably altered. The Dairy Farm Company's origins go as far back as 1856, but the company was not properly established and incorporated until 1886. It has always maintained extensive grounds on the south side of the island and until 30 years ago even maintained its own herd of cows.

Company records show that the Main Central Depot, shown in this photograph, was first built on the site in 1892; extensive reconstructions have completely changed its appearance. It is likely that the two blocks which today comprise the building, bearing the dates 1913 and 1917, are the result of rebuilding.

The two blocks are of brick and stone foundation and stand on split levels following the steep slope of Wyndham Street. Their style is simple and colonial. The building has some historical significance as the Dairy Farm Company is a very old Hong Kong firm. After 1981 the building ceased to be used by the company and now houses the Foreign Correspondents' Club and the Fringe Club.

Sung Dynasty Inscription, Tai Miu Wan, Sai Kung, 1976
The inscription carved on a large boulder on the north shore of Tai Miu Wan (Joss House Bay) records a visit of an officer named Yen I-chang, in charge of the local salt production, in the year AD 1274 in the Southern Sung (Song) Dynasty. We shall never know what caused Yen I-chang to resort to this unusual method of chronicling what must have been a routine visit, but we shall be forever grateful to his memory, for he left us a most remarkable and lasting historical relic — an engraved inscription of some 108 characters, precisely dated. The inscription is of particular interest, informing us of the Government's control of the salt production and speculating on the fate of a couple of early temples in the area. Skilfully engraved in a style consistent with the date, the inscription is well preserved and easily read. However, its ancient literary style makes interpretation difficult; a plaque offering a paraphrase in modern Chinese, and a translation in English, have been installed near the inscription.

Postscript

This, of course, is not a conclusion. *Voices From the Past* has only covered half of the British Hong Kong's history. By 1918 Hong Kong was still a staunch British colonial outpost, but subtle changes were taking place. The strict colonial veneer was softening, the community strata becoming blurred. The selected snippets reflect the amazing resilience of Hong Kong people in the face of many adversities. Starting with Hong Kong's inhospitable terrain, and continuing with periodic devastating typhoons, epidemics of plague, malaria, cholera and other crippling diseases, financial crises, Hong Kong seemed to weather them all and go on with ever increasing success. Hong Kong was born in war and conflict but had provided peace and stability for its people. *Voices From the Past* also reveals the gradual awakening of Hong Kong people's social, political and cultural aspirations which would not be stilled and would eventually, though not in this volume, bear fruit. There is also a lighter side of Hong Kong life with its day-to-day vicissitudes and its own peculiar brand of humour. It would become clear that Hong Kong was assuming a unique identity of its own which in time would create its own breed of undaunted people who would proudly refer to themselves as 'Hong Kong Belongers'.

It is hoped that the reader has enjoyed the *Voices From the Past* and perhaps discovered in it, as had the author in compiling it, new unsuspected and fascinating aspects of Hong Kong.