



HERO News

保衛香港突圍羣英協會 (二战中英聯軍)



Hong Kong Escape
Re-enactment
Organisation

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From the Chair

HERO is now officially recognised by both Sino-British governments as a credible organisation, and continues to grow from strength to strength. Following another successful year, HERO held its 2012 AGM earlier this month and the executive committee was unanimously voted in again to continue the existing HERO projects. It will, however, be necessary to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting towards the end of April 2013 as several of the existing members, having been on the Committee since its inception in 2008, would like to retire at the end of March 2013. We would therefore like to invite all interested parties to put their names forward to join the committee in pursuit of future projects now under consideration. HERO is a global organisation with executive members in Australia, Hong Kong, North America, and the UK and would welcome your help in achieving future goals.

HERO has exceeded all expectations to date with the gathering of a substantial number of escapee descendants in Hong Kong in December 2009 for the opening of the HERO exhibition, and subsequent retracing of the escape route in China to Waichow, now Huizhou. As you all know, while staying in Waichow the descendants recreated the iconic [group photo](#) in exactly the same place sixty eight years to the day after their forefathers.

The HERO exhibition “Escape from Hong Kong: The Road to Waichow” at the [Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence](#) has been an overwhelming success, having been extended from one year to three and a half years. It is due to close on 31st March 2013, so I would urge anybody who would like to see the exhibition to make arrangements in the near future. It is a truly memorable experience honouring our forebears.

Beyond Waichow

HERO is now pursuing post exhibition projects and, as already mentioned, we very much hope that some of you will join the committee and help to organise these projects beyond 2013. Anyone interested should contact [Sheena Recaldin](#), the HERO Secretary General.

To keep up to date please access the [HERO News/Media/Events website](#).

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of HERO to wish everyone Seasons Greetings and good health for the New Year.

Richard Hide 魏理查

HERO Chairman 主席

Inside this issue:

Ron Ashby	2
Museum Update	3
Christmas Party	3
Emma in HK	3

Ron Ashby, 1911—1998 (MTB 07)

Ron was born in 1910 and brought up in Watford where his family were directors of Benskin's brewery. At the age of 19 he had a big row with his father - they never spoke again - packed his bags and got on a train. Lots of young men have done that in the past but this one was the Trans Siberian Express! He ended up in Canton, where he worked for Dodwell and co, who were a big firm of Far East merchants, similar to Jardines. They were also Far East agents for the Canadian Pacific Railway. What his job was I am not sure. He said it was "selling Dodge trucks" but he had a large bungalow on the cliffs above Stanley bay and an excellent colonial social life, so I think his job must have been a bit more than that.

His passion was wild fowling and they used to spend weekends up in the marshes of the New Territories, based on a house-boat called Morning Flight. He also had a small gaff cutter and was a member of the RHKYC. As such he was one of the founders of the HKRNVR, which was sponsored by the club. Later on in the "imperial" RNVR, officers had to have sea time and training before being commissioned, but such as Ashby and Kennedy were known as "yachtsmen" and got their training on the job! They also both went on to win the Volunteer Reserve Decoration, for more than 20 years in the RNVR.



When he got back to England he was Ist lieutenant of a steam gun boat, under Sir Peter Scott, and went on to form up and command the 33rd MTB flotilla of brand new Fairmile "Dog boats". They were soon sent to the Med, as part of a convoy, at slow speed and were shelled by U boats in the Bay of Biscay. Ashby ordered the flotilla to "crash start" and they flew off in all directions in the dark at high speed. The U boats, finding themselves in the middle of a hornet's nest, crash dived. They later picked up about 20 survivors who turned out to come from 2 different U boats who had collided in the panic dive. When they got to Gibraltar his claim for the "kills" was refused, as the boats were stripped out for the long voyage and were not fitted with any weapons!

After Italy he was transferred to Calcutta, where he became senior officer, coastal forces, in the Arakan campaign for the re-taking of Burma and as such, was one of the few RNVR officers to reach the rank of acting Captain. He had 8 flotillas of Faimile "B" ML's (65 boats) with all their attendant landing craft and support ships. The ML's depot and maintenance ship was the old Heinrich Jesson, the ship on which they had escaped from Rangoon in 1942 and now named HMIS Barracuda. They were all very proud that this, the last civilian ship to leave Hong Kong, Singapore, Rangoon and Akyab in 1941/2 was thus the first to sail back into Akyab, Rangoon and Singapore when they were re-taken in 1945.

After the war he commanded the radar trials ship HMS Boxer and the depot ship HMS Duncansby Head, which he was on board when son Vaughan was born in a nursing home in London. He was actually ashore duck shooting off the west coast of Scotland and the news was brought to him by the Coxwain in a motor boat, bearing the telegram and a flask of pusser's rum.

In 1947 he bought a boatyard on the Norfolk Broads, called Hearts Cruisers, and also bought a 72ft MGB which they converted as a house-boat, and lived aboard for the next 41 years. The boat was called Morning Flight in memory of the boat that he used for duck shooting before the war in Hong Kong. He also became chairman of Blakes Holidays, the famous boat letting agency.

His passion was still shooting and in the 60's he became known as probably the best game shot in Norfolk. In 1988 he moved to a house in the countryside where he spent a pleasant retirement until he died aged 87, just a couple of years after he and Eileen had celebrated their golden wedding.

News and Events

Museum Update from Alison McEwan

The Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence [HKMCD] has confirmed the closure of our special exhibition on the 31st March 2013. They are keen to feature our story in a smaller way in their permanent WW2 galleries and to this end have asked me to approach any members who currently have items on loan to them through HERO if they would be interested in coming to an arrangement with them to keep any items. I envisage long-term loans made directly between lenders and HKMCD, without my involvement. If anyone would like to donate any items that is also a possibility.

I will however be returning to HK at the end of the exhibition to collect any items that lenders would like returned, and arrange for them to be delivered back to you. I would like to thank all the lenders who made this exhibition such a success – from a proposed one year display it turned into 3 ¼ years!

HKMCD has plans for a revamp of their exhibition space. They will work on the new storyline and identify exhibits they will use hopefully by the end of 2014. The targeted completion date of the revamp exercise is 2018.

Although the proposal from St Stephen's College to host a HERO exhibition [see earlier Newsletter] is interesting, it would need some effort and expense on HERO's part to establish a separate exhibition there. This would also not be open to the public apart from on Open Days. The bungalow is not a temperature controlled museum and I believe any insurance would also need to be borne by the exhibitors or HERO. For these reasons, I have not recommended it to the Committee. I am happy that the HERO story will find a permanent home in the HKMCD.

HERO Christmas Party!

It's that time of year again, and we're organising a HERO Christmas party! Whilst we know that you don't all live in or near London (or in some cases even in England!), perhaps some of you might like the idea of a trip to London to combine some Christmas shopping with a festive HERO get-together, and we do hope that you will be able to join us - it will be fun!

Anyone interested should contact [Sheena Recaldin](#), the HERO Secretary General as soon as possible.

Details as follows:

Date: Sunday 16 December 2012

Time: 12:30

Restaurant: [Ping Pong Southbank](#)

Location: Festival Terrace Southbank Centre Belvedere Road, London

SE1 8XX, Tel: +44 2079604160

Emma Oxford in HK

Emma was visiting Hong Kong in November for her forthcoming memoir of her parents, Max and Audrey Oxford.

Emma, a HERO executive member, got together with HERO President Donald Chan and two of Admiral Chan Chak's granddaughters, Sharon Chan and Lindzay Chan, to chat about next steps for HERO in Hong Kong.



We need your help

If you are interested in supporting our aims, please contact your local HERO representative.



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