OBITUARY


Our former Hon. Secretary and Vice-President Ian Diamond, died recently at his home in Adelaide, aged 80. He was also an Hon. Fellow of our Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, an honour he greatly prized.

Ian was educated at St. Peter’s College, Adelaide, and at the University of Adelaide (M.A.). After working as an archivist in Australia, he went to the then British Colony of Fiji where he served from 1958, establishing and running the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission until he transferred to Hong Kong in 1971 to set up the Public Records Office there.

Ian’s service to the RAS was noteworthy. He was our Hon. Secretary 1974-78, Councillor 1978-82, and Vice-President 1983-85, when he retired from the service of the Hong Kong Government. He then returned to his native Australia, with his wife Ishbel, another fine contributor to the good of Hong Kong during their stay in the former Colony.

For much of Ian’s time on the RAS Council, it used to meet in his office in the Public Records Office, then located on the first floor of the Murray Road Multi-storey Car Park at Lambeth Walk. This was but a stone’s throw from the appropriately named Bull and Bear, which served as our meeting place when Ian was on overseas leave and his office temporarily unavailable to us.

Ian was determined to record the remaining old buildings in Hong Kong, before the developers moved in. Together, Tony Rydings (our Hon Librarian), Rev. Carl Smith, Dr. Solomon Bard and Ian completed a photographic survey of fast disappearing parts of the old urban area. Ian did the researching, surveying and note-taking, and Tony was the main photographer, with timely help from the Photographic Group of the South China Athletic Association.

The recorded areas included the historic Western District of Hong Kong Island and (later) Yaumatei in Kowloon. Out of the over 2,000
prints available from the first survey, some 85 photographs, with accompanying text, were included in *Hong Kong: Going and Gone*, published by the Branch in 1980. A reprint, using enhanced negatives from the first edition, is now being contemplated. The prints from Yaumatei helped identify locations of interest when a second photographic survey with the help of the Cathay Camera Club resulted in a later RAS publication, *The Heart of the Metropolis: Yaumatei and its People* which appeared in the late 1990s.

Ian’s article on the new Hong Kong PRO (*The Paper Chase - Archives and the Public Records Office of Hong Kong*) was published in Vol. 14 of the Journal (1974), and is both informative and entertaining. Another useful essay, *Facilities for Research in the Public Records Office of Hong Kong* (Alan Birch, Y.C. Jao and Elizabeth Sinn [eds.]) appeared between pages 153-192 of *Research Materials for Hong Kong Studies*, published by the Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong in 1984. Ian also produced an interesting *Note* on Lieutenant T.B. Collinson, Royal Engineers (later Major-General) who served in Hong Kong in the 1840s and was responsible for the early mapping and accurate sketching of the area. Some of Collinson’s letters had survived through the philatelic interest of their covers, and Ian had somehow spotted them, but I am unclear as to whether the Note was published, or where.

A humorous man, dry and contained in the Australian way, Ian was quick to see the funny side of any situation, and was a good raconteur. He made full use of these attributes in his article on the PRO, when he described what he styled ‘the classic delusions about us [archivists].’ One was that he ‘should look like a cross between Charles Darwin and Karl Marx in their old age,’ and that when not poring over old papers all day, he should be scouring cellars or attics for more documents, and ‘making delighted chuckling sounds in my [his] throat like Ben Gunn discovering a cheese’ when he lit upon a choice specimen. And I shall always recall his unbounded glee when he found (I think in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, or else in a leading English daily) a reference to ‘a Sawn-off Damocles’ instead of the famed ‘Sword of’!

Ian was a skilful, extraordinarily patient worker in wood and metal, as well as a collector of Peking and also Afghan glass, the latter being Roman-like glass work found in the bazaars of Kabul (he had gone to Afghanistan in 1974 on a UNESCO consultancy).
In short, Ian was cast in the true RAS mould; a good friend, and a joy to be with. We shall miss him sadly.

JAMES HAYES
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