

Celebrating the Guild's 25 Years in Hong Kong

LIVERYMAN PETER ROBINSON Hong Kong Regional Chairman

My installation as the Hong Kong Region's 17th Chairman began as usual with a hand over from the now Immediate Past Chairman at our Annual General Meeting in March last year. It was not until the minutes of the AGM were being circulated that the full significance of that meeting, being the 24th, dawned on me. Next year's was going to be the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Hong Kong Region of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators. As local custom has it, such an auspicious occasion could not go unmarked. Planning started.

In the end it was decided to mark the occasion with two events. The first was to take the form of a formal dinner to which I would invite Past Chairmen of the Region, the Master and Past Masters of the last 25 years to attend with their ladies. The second event was to be a family barbeque in the hangar of the Hong Kong Aviation Club at which we hoped to have as many of our expanding membership and their families present as possible – a bit of a risk in January with regard to the weather, but one that paid off.

Our founding Chairman, Patrick Preston, served in that capacity for five years and was the driving force behind the establishment of the Region. Pat



Speech: Past Master David Mauleverer conveyed the Master's 'warm greetings and congratulations', at the formal dinner. Seated at the top table are (left to right): Mrs Jean Preston, David Mauleverer, Captain Peter Robinson and Captain Patrick Preston. At the inner side of the table sprig are: Mrs Dianne Binnie, Past Chairman Captain John Howie, Mrs Heather McDonald, Past Chairman Captain Richard Stanley and Mrs Val Thorning.

has a long history with the Guild and traces his association back to 1929 when his father attended "the meeting" at Rules Restaurant in Maiden Lane, London, which invited all "B" licence pilots and certified air navigators to meet to "explore the possibility of setting up a Company on lines similar to the Great City Companies of London". The Guild was formed as a result of that meeting. In his speech to the assembled Past Chairmen and Past Masters at our celebration dinner, Pat told us that as he was growing up, he recalls his father "disappearing off to London from time-to-time and returning speaking enthusiastically about the enjoyable evenings he had in the company of like-minded people at Guild events". Pat joined the Guild upon obtaining his Commercial Pilot's Licence and later came to Hong Kong in 1976 to take up employment with Cathay Pacific Airways and set about promoting the Guild and eventually founding the Region.

Pat also mentioned in his speech the help he received from London, specifically from the then Clerk, Wilf Rossiter, and how much he helped in the establishment of the HK Region which came into being in January 1982. My research into who exactly were the Region's foundation members has been hampered by having to work for a living and to date obtaining a list has proved elusive. However, the Region's minute book contains a membership list, dated mid-1984, that records the Region's membership at 58. It is apparent that right from the start, the Guild in Hong Kong was an active and vibrant organisation. Of those

listed as members in 1984, seven were to serve as Regional Chairmen, which I think speaks volumes as far as dedication to the cause is concerned.

George Todkill took over from Pat as Chairman, serving two years, and also demonstrated to Hong Kong's predominantly airline aviation scene that the Guild was not just about airlines. George was President of the Hong Kong Aviation Club, an active flying

instructor and heavily involved in HK general aviation. Unfortunately, George passed away some years ago, but his active and lively contribution to the Guild is still fondly remembered.

Jack Smith was the third Regional Chairman, also serving two years in



Decanter: Past Master Alderman David Mauleverer presents a crystal decanter, a gift from the Court to the Hong Kong Region marking their 25th anniversary, to Captain Peter Robinson, Regional Chairman.

that post. In terms of length of active service to the Region, nobody comes close to Jack's contribution. He was one of the founding members, has served as Secretary, Treasurer, more than once, and very notably has been the Region's Administrator for the past 14 years. Jack's special contribution was recognised in 2001 when he received the Guild's Award of Merit for services to the Guild. Jack maintains his active interest in the Guild and the Region despite having 'retired' over a decade ago. Those of us who have recently had the honour of serving as the Region's Chairmen, find it hard to imagine how we could possibly do the job without Jack's guidance and sagely



Clerk's briefing: Paul Tacon, Learned Clerk, hard at work in Hong Kong keeping the HK Regional Committee informed about current issues! From left: Mr John Li (Vice Chairman), the Learned Clerk, Captain Peter Robinson (HK Chairman), Captain Jack Smith (Past Chairman and Regional Administrator) and Mr Ian Fogarty (Immediate Past Chairman).



(Photo: Samuel Lo®)



Drink to that: the Hong Kong Region's 25 years are toasted by (from left) Past Master Alderman David Mauleverer, Captain Peter Robinson, Regional Chairman, and Patrick Preston, the Region's first Chairman.

advice. As was noted at our celebration dinner, those attending had Jack to thank for the lion's share of work in organising the salubrious and sumptuous dinner. Jack even has a wall dedicated to him in Cobham House, the Guild's headquarters in London!

From what was a vibrant beginning, the Region has maintained its growth and is actively involved in a range of activities. We now have some 160 members and, it is pleasing to note, the average age of the membership is declining, particularly recently with the influx of young aviators who have joined the aviation profession in Hong Kong. Our membership has among it those who work for, in alphabetical order, Air Hong Kong, Cathay Pacific, Dragonair, Fedex, Government Flying Service, HK Civil Aviation Department, Hong Kong Airlines, Hong Kong Aviation Club, Hong Kong Express Airways and Oasis Hong Kong Airlines. (Please forgive me if I have omitted anyone.) Also represented is the full mix of nationalities of those so employed. I am delighted to report that we have two members as Principal Officers on the Regional Committee who are only in their twenties, namely Second Officer Gary Lui and Second Officer Kirsty Smith, serving as Treasurer and Social Secretary

respectively.

In Hong Kong the Guild maintains an active social calendar with regular and varied functions. In the last twelve months we have held a charity dinner, a formal Ladies' Night, hosted the Master's visit, which included a cocktail party in the Clipper Room of the Peninsula Hotel, an evening at a Happy Valley Race Meeting, and a formal dinner at the Hong Kong Football Club. Completing the list for the year were the two events held in January to mark our Silver Jubilee.

The charity dinner was reported in the October 2006 edition of *Guild News*, so I won't say too much more about it here, other than to reiterate how satisfying it was to be able to combine our social activity with charity. At the end of the night the atmosphere was nothing short of euphoric as the young people at the Pinehill Vocational Training School (for the mild and moderately mentally handicapped) realised how successful they had been and proved for the first time they could host such an event so well. The months of preparation had been worth it. I know a similar function with another organisation has

since occurred and that others are interested in following in our footsteps. I am proud and very satisfied that the Guild has had a hand in starting something that will prove financially beneficial for the school and a source of immense satisfaction to the students. Our members certainly had a most enjoyable evening with the added dimension of witnessing the justifiably proud smiles of the students. Hong Kong members please note that we are looking to do it again in June this year.

Last September saw our traditional Ladies' Night Formal dinner held in the Police Officers' Club, Causeway Bay. We were among the first to use a newly renovated private dining area that was warm and intimate. The 30-plus attendees were well satisfied and it provided an appropriate event to present some Freedom certificates and to acknowledge the success of Christian Kiesthardt. He had recently returned from Adelaide where he successfully gained his PPL on a Guild Scholarship. More about the scholarship programme later.

The Master's annual visit is the major event in our calendar and last year's, I can report, went very smoothly, much to my relief. Again, a lot of preparation by many paid off. The aim of introducing the Master to as many Hong Kong members as possible was broadly achieved, although the inevitable constraints of working in the aviation industry meant that some members were unable to attend. The last edition of *Guild News* has these events well reported, so again I will not repeat the details this time.

Much effort went into planning the 25th Anniversary celebration, which began with the Chairmen's Dinner. We



Long into the night: the evening continues, leaving little doubt that historic occasions are well worth celebrating. In the picture (from left), front row: Captain John Howie, Paul Tacon (Learned Clerk) and Mr James Binnie. Middle row: Captains Charles Montgomery, Keith Griffin and Peter Langridge, Past Masters Chris Hodgkinson and David Mauleverer, Captain Peter Robinson (Regional Chairman), Past Chairman Wing Commander (Ret'd) Harry Mayhew, Mr John Li (Vice Chairman HK Region), Captain Nigel Humphries and Past Master Arthur Thorning. Back row: Captain Brian Greeves, Mr Ian Fogarty (Immediate Past Chairman HK Region), and Captains Richard Stanley, Jack Smith, Patrick Preston and Colin Cox. Former Past Chairman of the Region, Captain John Farley, was absent.



Scholarship winner: having gained his PPL, scholarship winner Christian Kiesthardt now has to complete his schooling! With him are Mr John Li (left) (Vice Chairman) and Peter Robinson (right) (Chairman).

looked like achieving the impossible in aviation circles; getting every one there! Until the last minute we had all sixteen of the surviving Chairmen attending. Unfortunately, the son of Past Chairman John Farley met with a serious sporting accident a few days before our dinner and required major surgery. John was naturally unable to be with us, but I am pleased to report that the medical procedures went well and his son is well on the road to being fully recovered. I had invited all Chairmen and Masters of the last 25 years to attend the celebration. It was indeed pleasing for us to be honoured with the presence of three Past Masters and their wives: Alderman Captain David and Annie Mauleverer, Captain Chris and Alison Hodgkinson and Arthur and Val Thorning. I was also very pleased that the Learned Clerk, Paul Tacon, and Mrs Maggie Todkill, widow of George Todkill, were able to join us as well. John Li, the Region's current Vice Chairman, completed the guest list.

The Hong Kong Club did us proud and provided a spectacular venue, excellent food and, of course, very good service. The evening followed City procedure with Past Master Mauleverer giving an entertaining speech before proposing the City Toast. He started by conveying the Master's "warm greetings and congratulations" to the Region before going on to point out the links that aviation, the Guild and Hong Kong had in developing together. Drawing several themes together, he managed to further combine us all by incorporating everyone's surname into a witty conclusion to a very well-received speech. Before closing, David presented me with a beautiful crystal decanter from the Court to mark the

Region's anniversary. It was my great pleasure to accept on behalf of the Region.

In toasting the guests, I mentioned the privilege and honour I felt to be the Chairman, particularly on such an occasion. Indeed, if it were not for the efforts of all assembled I would not have been standing there addressing everyone! I was glad to report that the

Hong Kong Region was in good shape and was actively involved in discussions on many topical aviation matters. Pleasingly, our attendance at the various conferences, meetings and working groups is not only welcome but actively sought, and we have strong relationships with our regulators and the industry. With our growing and youthful membership I am confident that the Guild will continue to be a strong and meaningful body in the Region for a long time to come.

Patrick Preston spoke next and proposed the toast to the Guild. He provided us with some first-hand history of how and what led to the formation of the Hong Kong Region. He was proud to be able to claim an unbroken association with it since its formation. "To say that the success of this branch has far exceeded what I had envisaged would not be to exaggerate" he said, and went on to acknowledge the contribution of those who came after him. So it was with feeling that we rose at the end of his speech to toast the Guild.

Two days later was the final event to be reported on here, a family barbeque at the Hong Kong Aviation Club, when some 75 to 80 people attended. I measure some of its success by the fact that a few of our guests from London

went to the trouble of altering their travel plans so that they could attend. It was also an opportunity for some of our younger members to meet with some of the Guild's 'elder statesmen'. My observation of the night was that of much mingling and lots of people happily enjoying the company of their fellow aviators. I also suspect that some more serious business was conducted within a couple of huddles throughout the night. This is another aspect of the social events that I feel is most important. The Guild is unique in its ability to draw together people from the broad aviation spectrum. I am sure that quite a few problems and issues get sorted in these casual meetings that would otherwise not happen. Being the conduit that allows this happen is to me an important part of the Guild's activities.

Turning to the more formal side of Guild's business in Hong Kong, I am fortunate to have a strong technical committee. In an attempt to meet the growing demands on its time, the technical committee will be enlarged and broken into functional areas with a person in charge of each area and a couple of assistants. Fortunately, we have volunteers to man these positions but, as always, more are welcome. If any of our members wish to step forward and have not done so yet, please do not hesitate. Our aim is to have sufficient people so that Guild representation can be maintained with knowledgeable people, but without it becoming a burden to any individual.

Captain Nigel Tuffs served as Chairman of the Technical Committee for several years, but due to a pending change of domicile stepped down from his position at the March AGM. I wish to publicly thank Nigel for his efforts, I wish him well for the future and to state that should he change his mind in the future, there's always an opening! Taking over from Nigel we have Captain Brent Hawkins who is an experienced and senior airline captain



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(Photo: Samuel Lo©)

with many years of check and training experience. Brent inherits a good team and a busy agenda. We are currently involved as one of the parties in talks with the HK Civil Aviation Department over the future HK Flight Time Limitations and have regular meetings with the Hong Kong Observatory to keep abreast of the latest windshear detection, prediction technology and research. In addition, we are well down the track to formulating a view on the Multi-crew Pilot's Licence so that we stand ready to offer our advice when and if asked, as well as keeping abreast of ATC and airspace issues in the Region. All of this keeps the technical committee quite busy.

The last major area we have running is our flying scholarship programme. The Region has been involved in offering flying scholarships for many years, although when Kai Tak Airport closed and the airlines moved to Chek Lap Kok, things for recreational general aviation in Hong Kong became quite quiet for a while. The Hong Kong Aviation Club is basically not allowed to operate from HK International Airport. Even if it were, the cost structure would make it more expensive than it is now, and aviating in HK is not cheap! Over the intervening period recreational GA, mainly under the auspices of the HK Aviation Club, has continued with fixed wing operations at Sek Kong, a former RAF Base but now operated by the People's Liberation Army, and an active and burgeoning rotary wing element operating still from Kai Tak. The situation immediately after the closure of Kai Tak made providing flying training for a Guild scholarship next to impossible, so the programme died. It is also true to say that the Asian Economic Crisis and the SARS virus outbreak did their bit to make sponsors sparse as well. However, all that is history and the Region once again has an active and continuing scholarship programme.


The resurrection of the Region's scholarships was initially made possible by the generosity of Captain

Michael Miller who promised "that when he won the London to Sydney Air Race" he would donate part of his winnings to provide a PPL flying scholarship for two young people from HK. Mike went on to win that air race, but was unfortunately killed as a result of injuries received in a motor racing accident before the funds appeared or anything was formalised. However, Mike's widow, 'SP' Miller, made sure that her late husband's wish came to fruition and we had the funds for our first scholarship in several years. I am pleased to report that one of those scholarship winners is currently working as a Licensed Aircraft Ground Engineer, and the other, having completed university, is undergoing interviews for a pilot position with an established local airline. The Captain Michael Miller Memorial Scholarship was only going to be a one-off, so it was with a great sense of relief that the committee learned of an extremely generous benefactor that wished to fund the Guild Flying Scholarship Programme. Respecting the wishes of this benefactor I will say no more, other than that finances are no longer a problem.

Since the inception of this perpetual scholarship, we have produced one PPL holder who is still completing his schooling and very much wants to be an airline pilot. Three others have completed approximately half their training and are planning to gain their full PPL after completing training in the (HK) summer school and university holidays later this year. By the time you read this, we should know the names of this year's scholarship winners and they will join last year's winners in Adelaide later in the year to start their training as well. Previous *Guild News* articles have explained why we currently use Australia for our scholarship flying training, so I won't repeat those details.

There are many who helped this scholarship come into being. There is our benefactor, without whom it simply wouldn't happen; there is Cathay Pacific Airways, who have

generously provided free air travel for our winners; and we have the support of Flight Training Adelaide who, apart from providing high quality flying training, assist us in many other generous ways to help keep our costs manageable. John Li, the Region's Vice Chairman is also the Scholarship Chairman, which runs as a separate company and is an officially-registered Hong Kong Government charity. John was the driving force in setting this up and deserves special mention for this alone. It is satisfying to see such success and there are many others who have helped in many ways. To those of you I have not mentioned specifically, I hope you will accept a general 'thank you' for helping in a job well done.

As you can see, the Hong Kong Region has a strong and growing membership, and an active committee. We have an active technical committee with willing volunteers to help us in our areas of interest and a vibrant and financially healthy scholarship fund that has produced three PPLs and three "half-PPLs" in the last three years. Not bad for 160 members. So it is with confidence that I see the Guild continuing to root and flourish in Hong Kong. Long may it continue. 

HONG KONG REGION GUILD CHAIRMEN

Patrick Preston	1982 - 1987
George Todkill	1987 - 1989
Jack Smith	1989 - 1991
Peter Langridge	1991 - 1992
James Binnie	1992 - 1994
Brian Greeves	1994 - 1995
Colin Cox	1995 - 1996
Alasdair McDonald	1996 - 1997
John Howie	1997 - 1998
John Farley	1998 - 1999
Nigel Humphries	1999 - 2000
Charles Montgomery	2000 - 2001
Harry Mayhew	2001 - 2002
Richard Stanley	2002 - 2003
Keith Griffin	2003 - 2004
Ian Fogarty	2004 - 2006
Peter Robinson	2006 -