



China Oxford Scholarship Fund

Spring 2011

COSF Welcomes Oxford University's Vice-Chancellor to Hong Kong



The China Oxford Scholarship Fund had the opportunity to welcome Oxford University's Vice-Chancellor **Professor Andrew Hamilton** to Hong Kong on the 16th of April. The evening gathering took place at The Hong Kong Bankers Club in Central where the Chairmen of COSF's Development Committee **Kenneth Fok** and **Rachel Cartland** had the chance to update Prof. Hamilton on the Fund's activities in Hong Kong and China. Also present were COSF Committee members **Ronald Kwok**, **Andrew Lo**, **Sharon Chan Muksch**, **Roland Muksch** and **Prof. Paul Tam**. COSF HK Trustee **William Louey** also joined the group which included **Jeremy Woodall**, the Director of Oxford University's China Office in Hong Kong and his colleague **Victoria Lau**. During his Hong Kong visit, the Vice-Chancellor launched a new research centre established by the **Chinese University of Hong Kong** and Oxford University. The **CERT-CUHK-Oxford University Centre for Disaster and Medical Humanitarian Response** is one of many collaborative research programmes created by Oxford University in China. Prof. Hamilton also travelled to Beijing and Singapore as part of Oxford University's celebrations of its important and growing links with Asia.

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International Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends,

- The Fund looks forward to strengthening its working relationship with Oxford University and its China office in Hong Kong. It is always fruitful to have the opportunity to meet with Prof. Hamilton during his visits to China. We look forward to seeing him more often as well as working closely with the office's new Director, Jeremy Woodall.
- It is satisfying to know that an increasing number of students have shown an interest in pursuing postgraduate studies at Oxford University and interest in the China Oxford Scholarship Fund. With the help of presentations such as the one which was organised by Prof. Tam at the University of Hong Kong, it is exciting to know we are engaging more students this way.
- I am delighted that COSF alumni such as Dr Yuen Yi Lo are already making contributions in their respective fields in Hong Kong and China. I look forward to hearing more about other COSF Scholars so that we may keep all our supporters informed of their progress after their completion of their studies at Oxford.
- I hope that we will be able to develop our series of speakers events as it has proven to be useful for fundraising. I am pleased eminent scholars such as Tim Mackintosh-Smith support our initiative by taking part in this programme.
- China's environmental challenges have been a global concern in the past few decades. I am pleased that the Fund had the opportunity to report on Prof. Alistair Borthwick's recent seminar on this topic at Wadham College and had the opportunity to speak with China conservationist and explorer How Man Wong.
- It is good to know that our Scholars have had the opportunity to meet with their respective sponsors and benefactors through informal gatherings. I look forward to seeing this continue on a regular basis.



Timothy Beardson
International Chairman

Promoting COSF



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L-R Prof. Paul Tam, COSF Scholar Dr Yuen Yi Lo and Trustee Annie Bentley

One of the many aims of the China Oxford Scholarship Fund is to raise awareness about its awards programme. On the 23rd March 2011, the Pro Vice-Chancellor of The University of Hong Kong (HKU) and COSF Committee member [Prof. Paul Tam](#) spearheaded a publicity campaign on campus to do just that. On hand to assist Prof. Tam was COSF Trustee [Annie Bentley](#) who is one of the founding members of COSF. Paul and Annie made a presentation to the students by expanding on the history of COSF as well as explaining the criteria for winning an award and the value of applying to the scholarship programme.

As part of their presentation, they also introduced to the audience COSF Scholar [Dr Yuen Yi Lo](#) who was able to talk about her experiences attending Oxford University. With the help of an £8,000 China Oxford Award, Yuen Yi began her first year of postgraduate studies reading for an MSc in Applied Linguistics in 2006. A year later, she obtained other scholarships and completed her doctorate at the Department of Education in 2010. She is currently an assistant professor at the Hong Kong Institute of Education and has establishing her academic career back in Hong Kong focusing on teacher development and languages education.

Yuen Yi joins the growing number of COSF alumni who have returned to China and Hong Kong to work in their respective fields and have helped the Fund to promote its awards programme at universities in cities such as Shanghai and Beijing.

From Sana'a to Hong Kong



Panorama of Sana'a in Yemen



How do you replicate a journey that took place more than 900 years ago in the most trying of conditions in ancient Arabia? That seemed to be on the minds of a number of guests who attended an intimate luncheon with renowned Arabist and lecturer [Tim MacKintosh-Smith](#) who was in Hong Kong early this year for a fundraising event for COSF.

On the 15th March, the respected travel writer talked about Yemen and his travels following the journey of a famous 12th century Moroccan traveller with a group of COSF supporters at the Hong Kong Club in Central. Tim has lived for nearly thirty years in the Yemeni capital Sana'a on the ruin-mound of the ancient Sabaeen city. He is also an eminent scholar of the Moroccan explorer [Ibn Battutah](#). He is often considered one of the greatest travellers with journeys covering almost 75,000 miles in his lifetime. Tim has written of his travels from Morocco to China and has immersed himself in Ibn Battutah's life, except that he has not accumulated 10 wives along the way as Ibn did!

Those who attended the private luncheon were COSF's International Chairman [Timothy Beardson](#) and his wife [Clair](#), COSF's Awards Panel Chairman [Rupert McCowan](#), COSF Development Committee Co-Chairman [Rachel Cartland](#), [William Kerr](#), [Nigel](#) and [Lorna Aiken](#) and [James Ogilvy-Stuart](#). The private luncheon raised \$15,000 HK dollars for COSF.



Tim Mackintosh-Smith



Nigel and Lorna Aiken



Clair Beardson and James Ogilvy-Stuart

Welcome Jeremy Woodall



L-R Annie Bentley, Rachel Cartland, Rupert McCowan,
Peggy Liu, Jeremy Woodall and Kenneth Fok

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Since the University of Oxford officially opened its China office in Hong Kong in November 2007, the office has been able to develop meaningful, long-term relationships with the University's alumni in Hong Kong and China. This has also enabled the China Oxford Scholarship Fund to work with the University's China office in its role to facilitate interaction between Oxford and the wider community. The Fund was able to welcome the office's newly-appointed Director, [Jeremy Woodall](#), with a small luncheon gathering in March. "Members of the Hong Kong COSF Development Committee were delighted to have an opportunity to get together informally with Jeremy", said [Rachel Cartland](#), the Co-Chairman of COSF's Development Committee. The luncheon gathering with Jeremy took place at "On Lot 10" which is known to be one of Hong Kong's top restaurants for French cuisine and co-owned by COSF Trustee [Annie Bentley](#).

"We look forward to much co-operation with the Office, to our mutual benefit", added Rachel. Those who were at the luncheon to welcome Jeremy on behalf of COSF were Co-Chairman of the Development Committee and COSF Trustee [Kenneth Fok](#), Committee member [Peggy Liu](#), Awards Panel Chairman [Rupert McCowan](#). Oxford's China office also serves as a first point of contact for Hong Kong and Chinese students who are considering applying to the University of Oxford.



UK Update



L-R Paul Ramsbottom, Kerui Min, Rupert Villers, Simon Fourmy & Carl Yuheng Ren

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Since 2008, The Wolfson Foundation has sponsored the [Wolfson China Scholarship](#) with the China Oxford Scholarship Fund. So far, five postgraduate students have been able to benefit from this generous Scholarship which is worth £12,500. In March, Wolfson China Scholars [Carl Yuheng Ren](#) and [Kerui Min](#) had the opportunity to meet with [The Wolfson Foundation](#) by attending a luncheon in London with the Foundation's Chief Executive [Paul Ramsbottom](#) and Director of Funding [Simon Fourmy](#). COSF Trustee in the United Kingdom [Rupert Villers](#) also attended the gathering which took place at the Latium Italian restaurant in central London. Rupert has organised this informal gathering since the Wolfson China Scholarships were established. A good time was had by all and the China Oxford Scholarship Fund looks forward to future gatherings between the Wolfson China Scholars and The Wolfson Foundation. The past Wolfson China Scholars are [Yimin Wu](#), [Helen Yi-Kit Wang](#) and [Robert Jiahe Xi](#). Meanwhile, another gathering took place in May when benefactor [Araceli Keelan](#) met with past and present [Brian Keelan Award](#) recipients and COSF Scholars. Araceli has been providing pastoral care to Scholars since the Brian Keelan Award was created in 2007. During a visit to Oxford University on the 25th May, Araceli invited Tang Oxford Award recipient [Sophie Feifei Deng](#), Wolfson China Scholar [Yimin Wu](#) and Brian Keelan Award recipients [Fangzhe Qiu](#) and [Lindsay Zi Lin](#) for supper at the Sojo Chinese restaurant in Oxford. Joining the group were UK Awards Panel member and Oxford University's Professor of Earth Sciences [Derek Siveter](#) and Araceli's son [Geordie](#) who is studying Theology at Oxford and is at Regent's Park.





Herdsman in Northern Tibetan plateau. Photo courtesy of CERS

China's Long Road Towards Conservation

In the past three decades, China has engaged in breakneck development to propel itself onto the global stage as a major economic player. In the process concerns have been growing about the country's ability to safeguard its ecology and conservation efforts. China's Ministry of Science and Technology has registered its concerns citing that more than a quarter of the country's grasslands having been lost to farming and mining just in the past ten years. In addition, more than half of China's coastal wetlands area has been lost to reclamation and development since the 1950s. With the present growing trend of industries moving away from the coastal areas and exploring opportunities inland and westwards, some conservation groups are not sure about China's environmental future. There appears to be hope though with the Chinese authorities establishing more than 2,500 nature reserves in the past two decades and the growing awareness amongst China's young generation that the country's environment, ecology and heritage are worth preserving.



Oxford Seminar on China and the Environment



Professor Alistair Borthwick with members of the Oxford Chinese Scholars and Students Association at the Old Refectory Room in Wadham College

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China and the environment have developed into a subject of global importance and concern in the past few decades. The topic took centre stage on the 16th May when [Alistair Borthwick](#), Professor of Engineering Science at Oxford University, addressed students during a speakers' forum series organised by the [Oxford Chinese Scholars and Students Association](#). The evening talk took place at Wadham College where Prof. Borthwick highlighted three important case studies. They were the sustainability of the Lower Yellow River; the flood risk caused by the earthquake-induced landslides and dams in Sichuan; and the development of the Three Gorges Dam Project. With more than 30 years experience in civil, coastal and offshore engineering as well as more than 3 years of field work in China, Prof. Borthwick spoke first-hand of the environmental challenges facing the country along with governance issues. Prof. Borthwick began his talk by examining the physical and human influences on the environment in regards to air, water and soil pollution in China. This was complemented by a wealth of data on China's complex geographical environment as well as some references to Chinese poetry which were presented to the audience during the hour-long seminar. Prof. Borthwick is also an adjunct Professor at Peking University and a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers. He worked for Brown & Root (UK) Ltd and was a member of the design team of the Hutton Tension Leg Platform which won the Queen's Award for Technological Achievement in 1984. From 1984 to 1990, Prof. Borthwick was a Lecturer and later Reader at the University of Salford before joining Oxford University. Prof. Borthwick's interests include shallow-flow processes such as flood risk, fluvial hydraulics and river basin eco-systems, coastal processes, offshore engineering, marine renewable energy, and water resources engineering. Prof. Borthwick was formerly a UK Awards Panel member for COSF.



China's rare black-necked cranes. Photo courtesy of CERS

Exploration & Conservation in China

Imagine exploring China as it was opening up to the world in the 1980s. Also try and imagine trekking across its hinterland and wilderness discovering animal species and investigating the sources of the mighty Yellow River, the Yangtze River and the Mekong River. For How Man Wong, he has done just that and more as the Founder and President of the China Exploration and Research Society (CERS). The organisation was one of the first non-profit groups to establish itself in China and one of the few that have successfully carried out sustainable conservation projects in remote areas of the country. This year marks the 25th anniversary of CERS's establishment and there appears to be no slowing down for the 62-year-old who was voted by Time Magazine as one of the "25 Asian Heroes" and regarded as one of the most accomplished living China explorers. As he is busily planning the road ahead for his work in China and beyond, COSF was able to meet with How Man during his March visit to Britain.

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Adel Awni Dajani and How Man Wong

Islamic Frontiers of China

The 2nd edition of the *Islamic Frontiers of China—Peoples of the Silk Road* was launched in London on the 11th March, 2011. The book provides a rare and fascinating glimpse into the rich and diverse Islamic culture in China. How Man Wong and Adel Awni Dajani co-authored the book which is published by I.B. Tauris.



L-R Tibetan farmer processing Yak milk and rural Chinese schoolchildren. Photos courtesy of CERS

Q&A with How Man Wong

What prompted your interest in China 30 years ago?

I was born and raised in Hong Kong and attended an Irish Jesuit high school. We knew very little about mainland China in those days despite the border being only 10 to 20 kilometres away. It was kind of a no man's land. At that time of growing up, we had very little history about contemporary China. Our study and understanding of China pretty much ended with the Opium War up till the Qing Dynasty. As soon as I graduated from university, the first opportunity came up in 1974 for me to go into China with a group of Hong Kong journalists. I took the opportunity and went in. That was kind of the first trigger of my curiosity of China.

What was your first impression on your first trip to China?

Everywhere you went, there were big posters and people were regimented and marching around. Everyone of course looked monotonous and the same. Everyone had the same Mao jacket on. You kind of couldn't identity individual faces. It was really a mass face for the entire country during those couple of early trips to China in the late 1960s.

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Why did you decide to create CERS?

I was fascinated by ethnic geography and very quickly I was picked up by the National Geographic as a photojournalist and that led to six major expeditions. I left National Geographic in 1986. At that time it was an important step in my career. I felt that I was no longer happy being just a writer photographer explorer because things I discovered and documented in pictures and writings were vanishing and disappearing quickly such as festivals and music. All these things were being eclipsed. So I decided to start an organisation that moved beyond just documentation, exploration and writing and into conservation.

What was CERS's first project in China?

It was in 1986 soon after we were established. I was going to the Tibetan area. I took along a 72-year-old American doctor who was born in Tibet. It was his first trip back since he left when he was 10 years old. My fascination was still in ethnic minorities but at the same time I was starting to look into the heritage and some of the history of the activities by others who lived in the area such as the missionaries, doctors and explorers. We quickly moved into the first memorable conservation project that actually dovetailed with my 1983 trip to Manchuria to study the nomadic hunters. They were a tiny little tribe so we went back in 1988 to film them and to collect objects that we felt we could preserve because the small group of fewer than 200 individuals were fast-vanishing in terms of their material culture. They were throwing things away and replacing them with modern facilities so we had that opportunity to collect a number of objects to preserve for posterity and for their own future generations. We also made video documentation of the last women shamens of that minority group.

Which project has been the most rewarding for you?

I am mostly attracted to tiny projects that yield big returns. It's almost like the entrepreneurial way of getting a return on investments. I get the most gratifying results if I walk by something that most people walk by and overlook. By the time you are finished with it, everyone can appreciate its value. Take the Lisu hilltribes. We moved in there to work on the golden monkeys in the area. We suddenly realised the tribes were losing their hunting culture, their legends and their architecture with the changing of their little log cabins and replacing them with Tibetan-style housing. We grabbed the opportunity to purchase the last two homes and successfully saved the remaining log cabin-style architecture of the Lisu hilltribe in China.

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Traditional Hainan Village



Cranes prepared for tagging



Hainan's rare gibbons

Photos courtesy of CERS

How did the ethnic minorities react when outsiders were interested in their heritage?

In many cases they were fascinated by us as we were fascinated by them. I think our process of trying to preserve their heritage also made them realise that some of the things they saw as primitive and backwards were of value to someone else. I think this also brought in a certain new context for the local people as well. Sometimes we were laughed at with them thinking why bother to preserve some things. However, before they knew it, these things totally disappeared. Certainly in more recent cases such as in Hainan Island where we were preserving one of the last existing architecture of a village. Most of the people preferred an upgrade and moved into cement houses no matter how uncomfortable they looked as it was more modern. In our conservation work, it's not necessary that you get people's appreciation right away but I hope that what we are preserving that they and their later generations will appreciate these things and realise how valuable these things are before they are gone and can't bring it back.

Which project was the most difficult to get off the ground?

When something is difficult it becomes even more challenging. I really like challenges so I think just going back earlier to the village in Hainan. In terms of the time factor, by the time I saw the village we had less than 2 weeks to react because there were plans to bulldoze the whole village. So we had to make our case to the local government to stall the demolition and allow us to access a number of houses. Before a month was over, we were able to present a plan as to what we were going to do and showing we had the capability of doing it. We invited people to look at our other project sites so that they had the confidence and trust in us. It was all very intricate but it happened very quickly. This is just one of many cases. We still explore and defining important geographical features such as looking at the river sources of the Yangtze, the Yellow River and the Mekong. These make up very important geographic undertakings for us as well using state of the art technology.

What was conservation like in China when you started?

When I started conservation, it was like the backwaters of China. Now it has become mainstream so there are many new NGOs that have sprung up and younger generations are much more educated about conservation with their hearts and consciousness. I think our role has been partially eclipsed because China is a changing scene now.

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Men using otters to help fish along the Yangtze River



Li Ethnic Minority Villager