

CHINESE CULTURAL GROUP, MERTON

Winter 2011



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塞翁失马。焉知非福。

Sài wēng shī mǎ. yān zhī fēi fú.

The old man at the frontier lost his horse. How do you know it is not a blessing?

无风不起浪

Wú fēng bù qǐ làng

There is no wave without wind.

December is in full swing, along with its full schedule of activities, festivity, nativity and positivity. Christmas lights are up, it's the season of love, peace and forgiving; time for parties and celebration; time for presents and exchanging kisses; and enjoying God's blessing at this special time.

*On behalf of Chinese Cultural Group Merton,
wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.*



Word from the Chairman—Eugene Byrne

We have been able to provide a more interesting programme recently. A small group was able to enjoy a private visit to the British Library, courtesy of Dr Frances Wood, Curator of Chinese Collections and a noted authority on Chinese culture, who brought out some examples of fine calligraphy from earlier dynasties, not on public display, and showed them to us. Our Christmas Party at Guild House on 20th December is going to go well despite the short notice. Then I-Chen Tsai has gone to some trouble to arrange the visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum on 7th February for a tour of their porcelain collection. That will be very interesting and will be followed by our New Year lunch in Chinatown. Even if you can't get away for the V&A visit I hope that you will book in for the lunch.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Guild, Russell Humphreys, is leaving this month for a well-earned retirement after some years of distinguished service. We owe him and the Guild a lot for their support and we wish him a happy retirement. He will be replaced by Wendy Pridmore in January and we look forward to working with her.



Our Christmas Celebration

**TUESDAY 20TH DECEMBER 2011
AT 3.30 PM AT THE GUILD HOUSE**



We are celebrating Christmas again in our unique way and we shall be serving hot mince pies and other festive nibbles. You will be accompanied for carol singing (in both English and Mandarin) by a small ensemble. There will also be Chinese music and singing.

Do come and join us to celebrate the start of the Festive season. **Admission is FREE.** Please bring your friends and neighbours - simply partying and having fun together.

RSVP for catering purposes.



CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY

4th October 2011—TALK ON CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY

In preparation for our members' visit to the British Library, Chairman Eugene Byrne gave us a talk on classical Chinese calligraphy on 4th October. In the picture, Eugene is explaining the Chinese character for "dance" (舞wǔ) and how the brush strokes express the energy and spirit of this character. Eugene also points out that calligraphy is an important art form, people don't have to be studying Chinese in order to be able to enjoy, at least to some extent, the sheer beauty and elegance of fine writing.



18th October 2011—VISIT TO THE BRITISH LIBRARY

Chinese Cultural Group Merton paid a visit to the British Library on 18th October, 2011. We were fortunate enough to have an expert show us many examples of Chinese calligraphy, such as some calligraphy fragments dating back to the 4th century by one of the most important calligraphy artists, Wang Xizhi (王羲之). In the picture, Dr. Frances Wood, curator of the British Library, is showing CCGM members Zhiguolun (御筆知過論) written by Qianlong Emperor. The precious books have exquisitely carved lacquered covers.



Celebrating Chinese New Year 2012—Year of the Dragon

Following our success of last year, we have been urged by members and friends for a repeat performance. Only, this time we want to do even better. We want to make it a celebration lasting all day.

On Tuesday, 7th February 2012, the 15th day into the Year of the Dragon, we have organised a guided tour at Victoria and Albert Museum to look at the museum's Chinese collections as part of our Chinese New Year celebrations, before having our festive lunch, an 8-course banquet at the Top of the Town Chinese Restaurant in Gerrard Street, London China Town. There will also be a raffle.

For the museum tour, you will be led by the museum guide, Angela Ing, to appreciate the beauty of exquisite porcelain from China and introduction on the T.T. Tsui Gallery, where it possesses one of the most comprehensive and important collections of Chinese art dating from 3000 BC to the present time.



TOUR & FESTIVE LUNCH INFORMATION:

Date: Tuesday 7th February 2012
 Time: 11am (Tour) ; 1pm (Lunch)
 Tour Tickets: £3 (limited space only—please book early)
 Lunch Tickets: £12 for members (subsidised by CCGM),
 and £17 for non-members

Please book your ticket with Helen Marti on 0208 946 0735, also available from everyone on the Committee (refer to Page 6 for details.)
 Organised by Maggie Woo & I-Chen



PAUL HIDER (海德) - Life in China

Getting news from “home” is a staggered system here in China. I scan the internet daily for any big news stories, but then find out the details and background some 2-3 weeks later when I receive, by post, summaries of the week in newspaper (“Weekly Telegraph”) and magazine (“The Week”) format.

So it was only recently that I read about someone from the Royal College of Nursing having been criticised for suggesting that families should be more involved in caring for hospitalised loved ones. The critics argued that it was the responsibility of professionals to look after the sick, and family members had no business getting involved in the process. I had to smile, having recently visited my Chinese mother-in-law in hospital...

There is no appointment system for seeing Chinese doctors (who usually work in hospitals here, rather than local clinic or surgeries). It's very much first come, first served. If you register before 7am you can usually get to see the doctor before 9am, although his friends (or friends-of-friends) may well skip the queue. Leaving it later in the day just means an ever-increasingly long queue.

So it's often helpful to get a friend or family member to register for you, if you are ill. In Chinese hospitals it's sometimes hard to see the nurses and doctors for the vast number of visitors milling around. Family and friends bring in hot meals (though hospitals have a basic canteen for patients) and sit around for large parts of the day chatting, playing cards or exploring the wards! Patients who need to move to other rooms for tests can rely on their friends to wheel them or carry them there, and it is your relatives who usually end up queuing for any medicines you need (see photo).



So is family involvement in hospitals a good or bad thing? My Chinese students are shocked when I tell them British hospitals only allow visitors at certain times of the day. And having relatives looking after you when you feel poorly must be nicer than simply being seen now and again by strangers, however professional they are. Mind you, having spent an hour in a dentist's chair recently, I'm not totally sold on the way strangers can wander into the room and watch you getting your teeth drilled without so much as a raised eyebrow from the dentist. And when the treatment stops because the dentist gets a phonecall and wants a chat with a friend, you do start to pine for the NHS! I guess privacy and access make unhappy bedfellows!

By Paul Hider (Article #2)

China 2012: A Year of Change (By Dr Kerry Brown)

The People's Republic of China might not be a multi-party democracy, but in 2012 it will enjoy the same kind of leadership transition that might be taking place in France, the US and South Korea. In October, at the Party Congress which should be held once every five years (in this case, it will be the eighteenth since the founding of the Communist Party in 1921) a new group of leaders will be appointed. These will be what is popularly called the 'fifth generation', replacing the fourth led by current President Hu Jintao, and Premier Wen Jiabao.

It shouldn't surprise us that in a state with its historic roots in central planning and Soviet Russia style political architecture, there should also be a managed elite leader succession. Multi party democracies throw up uncertainty and surprises. At the end, even in the most one sided contest, one is never quite sure what the final result will be. But in China, where the Party has a deep fear of instability, and uncertainty is regarded with displeasure, leadership changes have to be planned.

This is not to say that this time they will be easy. Something like 70 per cent of the top leadership positions will see changes. This is a big turnover. Seven out of the current nine members of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, the summit of decision making in contemporary China, will be due to retire. There is the faint possibility that just like last time in 2002, the size of the standing committee is increased by one or two. In that case, we will be seeing a lot of fresh faces walking out from behind the red curtain at the Great Hall of the People on the final day of the Congress later this year when the announcements are made.

For all that we don't know about who gets what slot in the new lineup, there is a lot we can make educated guesses about. The new leadership will be, by definition, younger men (with perhaps one woman), with some in their mid to late forties. Their main memories will be of the era after 1978 when China was always getting richer and stronger rather than the Cultural Revolution from 1966 onwards, which weighs so heavy in the minds of the generation before them that is now moving on. They'll be from more diverse backgrounds than the current leaders – with political scientists, graduates in economy and social studies, and perhaps even one or two with degrees in Chinese.

What is hardest to guess at is their political outlook. These are leaders who will necessarily have much more reduced political capital than generations before. There won't be one figure with a dominant say in everything as there was under Mao, and then Deng. Instead, they will have to continue practising the consensus led approach of Hu Jintao, who has managed to balance the various parts of the party on the left and the right and avoid large scale infighting and disunity.

Even so, there are some big decisions looming for the new leaders. Since 1978, China has been a spectacular factory of GDP growth, pumping out at least 10 per

cent a year, and in the process rising to become, as of 2011, the world's largest importer, the largest

exporter, and the second largest economy. For a country that was effectively bankrupt in 1978, with no foreign reserves, and a decimated infrastructure and human capital, this is an amazing achievement.

The big problem is that now that the country has grown sufficiently rich, there are tougher social political challenges to address. The legal structure of China is in urgent need of reform, with civil cases, petitions and protests growing sharply since 2005. Now people are better off, they have more to argue over, with property rights and taxation and pensions causing particular problems. Civil society is immensely important, but still lacks a proper legal status. And the Party itself is aware of needing to introduce fundamental reforms to the way it governs itself. For the new leadership, therefore, the simple strategy of focussing on the economy available to Hu and Wen will no longer be sufficient. For them, the task is to build a sustainable, balanced, and more just society by 2020. They will need all the help they can get in this immense task.

Kerry Brown is Head of the Asia Programme at Chatham House where he leads the Europe China Research and Advice Network (ECRAN). His 'Hu Jintao: China's Silent Ruler' will be published in March 2012.



CHINESE CULTURAL GROUP MERTON

Social group programme from January to December 2012

Date	Time	Programme	Speaker
3rd January	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: Self-strengthening 1860 -1890	Eugene Byrne
17th January	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: Year of the Dragon, its significance and rituals	Maggie Woo
7th February	11.00 a.m.-V&A; 1 p.m.-Lunch	Chinese New Year Celebration: Visit to V&A Museum followed by CNY lunch at "Top of the Town"	Maggie Woo Ivy Salvage
21st February	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: The End of the Qing Dynasty 1911	Eugene Byrne
6th March	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Chinese musical instruments: demonstration & Workshop	Sonia Reagan
20th March	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: The Founding Father: Sun Yatsen	Eugene Byrne
3rd April; Easter break	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Chinese film: "Farewell my Concubine"	Maggie Woo
17th April	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: Luan & Chiang: the Republic 1911-1949	Eugene Byrne
Thursday 3rd May	2.00-3.30 p.m.	Chinese Opera event, jointly held with Drake House Club Venue : Drake House, Wimbledon	Kathy Hall
15th May	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: the Communist Party of China: 1919	Eugene Byrne
5th June: Half- Term break	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: Taiwan	I-Chen Tsai
19th June	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Celebrating Dragon Boat Festival - Cookery demonstration	Rosetta Chak Sissi Wong
3rd July	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: The Long March 1935	Eugene Byrne
17th July	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Mahjong	R& D Chak & Chris- tina Yan
4th September	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: The Japanese Invasion 1937	Eugene Byrne
18th September	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Celebrating Mid-Autumn Festival	Lee Monczak & Helen Chiew
2nd October	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: World War II 1937-49	Eugene Byrne
16th October	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Quiz on China and things Chinese	Maggie Woo
6th November	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: "We have stood up" 1949	Eugene Byrne
20th November	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Chinese Chess	Sissi Wong R & D Chak
4th Decembr	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Talk: History of China/ Art/ Literature	Eugene Byrne
18th December	3.30-5.30 pm	Taiji Qigong Shibashi Christmas Celebration	Alex Roney & Ivy Salvage

Pi Pa 琵琶

Imagine the sound of hundreds of pearls spilling onto a thin jade plate. This was how Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Bai Juyi described the sound made by an ancient Chinese instrument, the **PIPA**.

The ancient pipa, or Chinese lute, is a plucked, four-string Chinese instrument with a half pear-shaped wooden body. It has a short, bent neck and 30 frets extending onto the soundboard. Sounding somewhat like a mandolin, it has a wide and full chromatic range and is tuned A-E-D-A. The pipa has been played for nearly 2,000 years in China and Central Asia and taken several forms over the centuries. It belongs to the category of plucked-string instruments (弹拨乐器).



The name "pipá" is made up of two Chinese syllables, "pí" (琵) and "pá" (琶), meaning forward-plucking and backward-plucking of the strings. These are the two most common ways of playing the instrument but there are many variations. (More information refer to <http://www.shanghaidaily.com/folkmusic/pipa/pipa.asp>)

Members' corner

Jane Asher goes all over the world to swim in strange places. Last year it was Turkey, to swim the Hellespont, this year it was Ukraine, specifically the Crimea, to swim in the Black Sea.

The trip was really to swim in the European Masters swimming championships (for people over 25 years of age) and word had gone round among the people



who usually go to these competitions that there would be problems. So lots of people opted out. However, it sounded intriguing, so Jane and one of her friends decided to take their chances, and it proved to be a very interesting experience.

Jane will give a talk at Drake House Club at Wimbledon Guild on the 2nd February 2012 from 2.00-3.30 pm on her trip to Yalta: a tourist resort in Crimea, Ukraine. All are welcome.

Our Committee Members

NAMES & CONTACT DETAILS:-

Chair:	Eugene Byrne	8947 1346
Vice Chair:	Maggie Woo	8879 0126
Secretary:	Helen Marti	8946 0735
Assistant Secretary:	I-Chen Tsai	07972 108375
Treasurer:	Ivy Salvage	8542 9154
Newsletter Editor:	Lee Monczak	8288 2568

and

Alex Roney	89471412
Helen Chiew	8947 4170
Rosetta Chak	8540 9396
Sissy Wong (our new member)	

Notice: From the Treasurer

As from January 2012, the charges for attendance at the Group's meetings will be **£3.00.**

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS FOR HEALTH

1. **IF YOU SMOKE** - give it up - and smoke electric ciggies if you must ..Just living in London is like smoking a pack or two each day.
2. Try to **STRETCH YOUR BODY** as high as you can - it will help to prevent you from losing height as you get older.
- 3 Try to **EXERCISE YOUR EYES** every morning by looking close and far - rolling them and so stretch all the eye muscles before you get up in the morning. It will help to keep your sight good - and may even improve it!
4. Try to **TREAT EVERYONE** equally - not easy!
5. **ENJOY SOMETHING** each day - even if it is only a beautiful passing cloud. THEN - you will always have something to look forward to.

By Alex Roney

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Next Quarterly Newsletter

Please email Lee if you have any
interesting article to be considered .
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Prepared for the Chinese Cultural Group Merton
 by Lee Monczak