In this issue Fung Chi Ming writes the first of two articles on the history of rickshaws in Hong Kong, both public and private, including their manufacture and maintenance. He talks about how they came to be here, the proprietors and the "pullers", and ends with an absorbing account of his visits to Sai Ying Pun to discover the site of several rickshaw makers.

Dan Waters tells us about changes in the construction industry since his arrival in Hong Kong in the mid-1950s. As he mentions one thing that does remain from that time is the use of bamboo scaffolding, something frequently remarked on by first time visitors who gaze in awe at the scaffolders, nicknamed "spiders," for their gravity-defying skills in web-like constructions.

Over twenty mines were exploited during the 20th century in Hong Kong. They have all closed, though quarrying, which has been conducted since the 19th century, continues in several locations. In this newsletter I have written about the Needle Hill Tungsten mine which came about as a result of a well-spent lunch break.

The 'Queries and Answers' section is arousing interest. If you have a question about any aspect of HK's industrial history please send it to indhhk@gmail.com. If you can supply information about any of these queries I will also include this in a future issue. CM Fung did so and then expanded his initial response into two articles.

As always, feel free to pass on the Newsletter, my name and email address to anyone you feel may be interested.

Best wishes

Hugh Farmer indhhk@gmail.com

In this issue

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The rickshaw is long out of date, but in days past it was a widely used form of urban transport. For public hire and for private use, it also created new employment. The first rickshaw in Hong Kong was of Japanese construction. But, as time went by, the rickshaws that came into use were locally made. There were many stores involved in the manufacture and maintenance of rickshaws. Repairs were always needed, especially during the periods when rickshaws had to be presented to the Government for inspection and re-registration.

The rickshaw has its origin in Japan. It was reportedly the brainchild of Rev. J. Goble of American Baptist Free Mission who built one in 1869 to carry his invalid wife Mrs. E. W. Goble to take the air in the streets of Yokohama. Rickshaws soon became popular and spread throughout Asia. It made its way to Hong Kong in January 1874, when one was imported from Japan for a shipbroker named Mr. S. L. Heinemann who wanted his own form of transport (*The Hong Kong Times*, 23 January 1874; *The Chronicle & Directory for China, Japan, & The Philippines*, 1874).

The rickshaw was tried out for public transport in Hong Kong in April 1880 when a total of 30 were plying for hire (*The Hongkong Daily Press*, 1 May 1880). Afterwards, the number in service rose, growing from "500" in 1882 to "585" in 1896, and then "700" in 1900. In 1901 the Government issued hundreds of additional licences, in response to the city residents' complaints that their private rickshaws were lying idle for want of coolies. As a result, new rickshaws were made to add to the fleet, making a total of "1,340" public rickshaws by the end of 1901 (*Hongkong Legislative Council Sessional Papers*, No. 10/1902).

Most of the coolies did not have rickshaws of their own but hired them from "bosses". In the census of the population of the city of Victoria in 1881, a total of 15 persons were counted as "Jinricksha Letters" – rent capitalists who let out rickshaws for hire. Rickshaws were often let twice in the course of 24 hours, both day and night, in the same way that taxis are handled at

present. By the end of 1891, seven "Jinricksha Makers" came into existence within the city limits (Census reports for 1881 and 1891). Newspaper advertisements provide evidence that rickshaws were in considerable demand from wealthy families and businesses that needed or wanted their own form of private transport.



Advertisement in a Hong Kong Chinese newspaper (Source: Wah Tsz Yat Po 華字日報, 11 April 1901)

The undersigned of the above advertisement—a rickshaw maker—welcomes orders from local people. He begs to inform the public that his products are skillfully made, fitted with high-quality lacquer and woodwork, and very reasonably priced. In that year (1901) there were 23 rickshaw makers with a production capacity of 500 rickshaws a year (*Hongkong Legislative Council Sessional Papers*, No. 47/1901).

By the twentieth century, Hong Kong had built up a reputation as a reliable provider of rickshaws. In 1906, Mr. C. Partridge, District Commissioner in Ikot Ekpene, Southern Nigeria, asked for tenders from Hong Kong producers for large numbers of rickshaw wheels and axles (*The Hongkong Government Gazette*, 15 June 1906).

In March 1914, a firm of rickshaw makers in Hong Kong recruited a batch of 101 coolies to proceed to France to pull rickshaws at the Lyons International Exhibition (Report of the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, 1914).

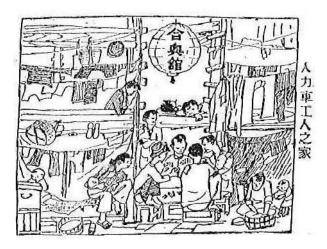
The 1915 edition of *The Anglo Chinese Commercial Directory* (original Chinese title: 香港商務交通錄) recorded the addresses and names of 21 rickshaw makers' stores which were located in many different parts of Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon Peninsula. Although the proprietors and/or managers of the stores were mostly men, there were female proprietors such as Miss Cheung Yim (張嚴氏) who was apparently a widow.



Source: The Anglo Chinese Commercial Directory, 1915

In 1920, a number of proprietors of rickshaw makers' stores joined together to establish the Hong Kong Ricksha Trade Employers (On-Hang) Association (香港人力車安行商會) to promote the benefits of member stores.

The function of a rickshaw makers' store was something more than the manufacture of rickshaws and repairs. Many of the store keepers were not just "bosses" letting out rickshaws, but also providers of dormitory accommodation. There were many cases where on the ground floor there was a hall consisting of a rickshaw workshop and office, whilst on the upper floors cubicles were built for those who plied their trade at pulling rickshaws.



An artist's impression of the home of rickshaw pullers' families (Source: Hong Kong Chinese newspaper *Ta Kung Po* 大公報, 3 March 1952)

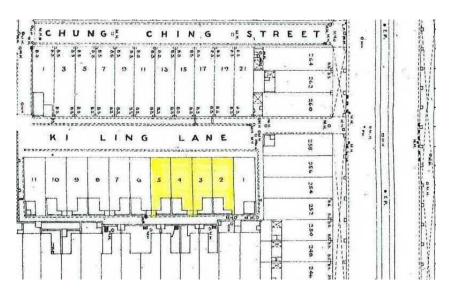
Up to the early twentieth century, rickshaws were in abundance. By 1923, 1,982 rickshaws were plying their trade – 1,250 on Hong Kong Island and 732 in Kowloon; in addition, there were 1,441 private rickshaws. The number of rickshaws in the city reached an all-time record of 3,411 in 1924. This was followed with a downward trend of the trade so that by 1939, only 900 public rickshaws were in use, while the number of private rickshaws had dropped to 268 (Annual Reports of the Police Force, various years).

During the war from Christmas Day 1941 to August 1945, the lack of motor vehicles enabled the rickshaw trade to make a comeback. Since raw materials were in short supply, the makers assembled new rickshaws by reusing old accessory parts. According to the figures given in

wartime newspapers, the fleet of rickshaws in service rose from 858 to 1,029 during the period June 1942 to January 1944. There were still plenty of rickshaws during the immediate post-1945 period, but as soon as Hong Kong's economy recovered, the final decline of the rickshaw trade started.

As the ownership of rickshaws became less profitable, proprietors started to abandon the business. In 1960, the Hong Kong Ricksha Trade Employers (On-Hang) Association ceased registration at its own request. The following years saw a rapid closure of rickshaw stores. In 1976, a little more than 100 years since the first rickshaw rolled down the city streets, a rickshaw making shop in Western District – the last remaining of its kind – was found to be "littered with old spare parts and an assortment of rusting tools" (*Hong Kong Standard*, 11 April 1976).

Let us momentarily take a journey to the western end of Hong Kong Island, where there is an alleyway called Ki Ling Lane (奇靈里, originally called 畸玲里). Based on the evidence available so far, Ki Ling Lane was the site of several rickshaw makers' stores. Out of a row of 11 houses in the Lane, at least four of the numbers (that is, nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5) had been used to accommodate rickshaw makers' stores.



Site plan showing houses nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Ki Ling Lane, 1955 (Image courtesy: Crown Lands & Survey Office P.W.D. Hong Kong)

When I made a site visit to Ki Ling Lane just a little more than 20 years ago, I found that nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5 were either vacant or had changed business. At that time, the old house at no. 2 was blocked up, whilst nos. 3, 4 and 5 were boarded up awaiting their date with the bulldozers. In the following year (1993), the old houses were knocked down and the building sites for houses were converted into a public open space known as Ki Ling Lane Children's Playground. Nowadays, the children's playground has become a thing of the past, as the site is being converted into a station of the new West Island Line of Mass Transit Railway.



View of Ki Ling Lane, 1992, nos. 1 and 2 (left photo) and nos. 3 and 4 (right photo) (Source: Fung Chi Ming/ Photo taken by the author)

I sincerely hope readers enjoy the contents of this article and that it helps them share in a subject that provides a glimpse of the larger history of Hong Kong.

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Bits and Pieces

The Industrial Museum of Ermoupolis, Greece

In Newsletter Two I mentioned that I visit the Greek island of Syros every summer and that the main town Ermoupolis contains the impressive *Industrial Museum of Ermoupolis*. In the second half of the 19th century Ermoupolis was the major Greek industrial centre, larger than Piraeus/Athens with tanneries, ironworks, sawmills, print-dyeing plants, weaving and knitting

mills, shipbuilding and soap factories. Industrial manufacturing continued into the 20th century but in a state of almost continuous decline.

The Industrial Museum consists of three buildings which were once the Katsimantis paint works, the Aneroussis lead shot factory and the Kornilakis tannery. It provides a great testimony to the industrial history of the island. There are about twenty well-maintained machines, dozens of objects, tools, raw materials, finished products, digital files of photographs and recordings of oral testimonies of old workers, craftsmen and women.



The Industrial Museum of Ermoupolis, Syros Island, Greece

Hong Kong's Industrial History is fast disappearing. I believe that a deeper understanding and appreciation of this heritage through study, preservation and presentation is vital. Buildings, machinery, sites, products and documents all have value, as do the personal histories of some of those hundreds of thousands involved. The Industrial history of Hong Kong has intrinsic value.

And ultimately shouldn't Hong Kong have its own Industrial History Museum?

..... if a small Greek island can why not Hong Kong?

HF

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The Hong Kong Oral History Group

If you're interested in the development of the oral history of Hong Kong visit the OHG's new webpage here: http://www.archives.org.hk/. The next OHG meeting will take place on 19/F St George's Building on Thursday 12 September at 6:30.

Book Review: Toy Town: How a Hong Kong industry played a global game and Louis Marx



http://www.toytownthebook.com/

In the early 1970s Hong Kong was the world's largest exporter of toys. The industry moved to China in the 1980s and less surprisingly the mainland currently holds that number one rank. The story of the growth of toy manufacturing in Hong Kong over the last sixty years is told in *Toy Town* written by Sarah Monks, commissioned by the Toy Manufacturers Association of Hong Kong and published by PPP Company Limited.

Many of the toy industry's pioneers relate their experiences to the author. I was particularly amused by an account of the time New York toy king Louis Marx spent in Hong Kong. He was the first American to set up a toy factory here and resided at the Repulse Bay hotel. There he would frequently conduct his business on the beach working from a bridge table set on the sand...

"dictating memos into a portable voice recorder and feeding steaks to his dogs. Sometimes he ran up and down the beach holding an English dictionary, learning new words to improve his vocabulary. He got around town in a chauffeur-driven convertible Jaquar."

The Marx logo was the letters "MAR" in a circle with a large X through it, resembling an American railroad crossing sign. As the X sometimes goes unseen, Marx toys were, and are still today, often misidentified as "Mar" toys.





The Logo and The Man

In 1952 Marx established *The Elm Tool and Die Company* which was managed by David Yea. There appears to be very limited information about this Hong Kong company; any you can provide would be welcomed.

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Seen on an AFCD sign by the path leading to Sheung Yiu Folk Museum, Sai Kung, "Rough leaves of the sandpaper vine, Tetracera Asiatica, were used for polishing ivory chopsticks and tinware..." I wonder when, where and by whom such chopsticks were made in Hong Kong.

Ivory chopsticks appear to still be manufactured, though probably not in Hong Kong. In November 2011 Hong Kong customs officials found 60 kg of ivory chopsticks and bracelets hidden inside of a container filled with plastic scrap.

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If you are under the impression that industrial enterprises in Hong Kong began in the early part of the 20th century or even post WW2 and were mostly non-Chinese think again. In the 1870s the Chinese community began moving from producing simple handicrafts and started building factories. These included two for preserving ginger and other processed food including soy sauce and preserved fruit, several machine-makers, a tannery, a paper factory and a manufacturer of matches. Other enterprises in the early 1880s included:

"workshops for making cigars, tobacco, clothing, glass, oars, rifles, ropes, umbrellas, spectacles, tooth-powder and soap, as well as small factories for producing goods in bamboo and rattan".

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Industrial Developments in Hong Kong: some personal observations

Dan Waters

In January 1955, not long after I had arrived in Hong Kong, and when I was a lecturer at the Technical College (since upgraded to the Polytechnic University) in Wood Road, Wanchai, I visited a number of our building students who had been attached for six weeks to building sites. I was accompanied by a Chinese colleague who became a lifelong friend. This gave me the opportunity to observe for the first time various building practices in what was then a British Crown Colony.

We first visited the Government Electrical and Mechanical Engineering establishment, in So Kon Po on Hong Kong Island, where a new workshop was being built. I remember a group of middle aged Chinese women were knocking nails out of dismantled timber formwork. These nails were then straightened for reuse. The women were paid HK\$1.50 a day. A skilled craftsman at the time received about HK\$5.00 a day. (Just after the end of World War Two I was informed people would work a full day for two bowls of rice). The practice of straightening nails continued for about another three years. After then it was more economical to buy new nails.

Later, my colleague and I visited Alexandra House, in Central, which was being rebuilt in 1955. There, the clerk-of-works said to me, 'We have wheel barrows on this site!' This was quite an innovation at the time as, previously, objects had been transported largely by 'carrying (shoulder) poles'.

In the 1950s it was common practice for concrete to be mixed on the actual floor of a new building which was being constructed. As the new structure increased in height so did the level at which the concrete was being mixed. It was not until 1963 that trucks carrying ready-mixed concrete could be spotted on the roads of Hong Kong.



Bamboo Scaffolding

Acrow Scaffolding

In 1957 I took a party of building students down to Central to see an exhibition of 'Acrow' tubular steel as well as tubular aluminium scaffolding. At the time a number of people were saying that, before long, these would replace bamboo scaffolding. That was well over half a century ago but bamboo scaffolding is still very much with us in its original form. There is one difference however. Previously the bindings had been slivers cut off the outside of bamboo although these had been soaked in water to make them more pliable. In the 1970s these were replaced by plastic lashings. One disadvantage of the latter is that they are not biodegradable.

Hong Kong is not the only place where significant progress has been made in many fields. When I left England in 1954 it was not customary for 'hard hats' (safety helmets) to be worn on building sites. Quite rightly, since then, safety regulations have been tightened considerably, not only in the United Kingdom but also in Hong Kong.

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Queries and Answers

2. Rickshaws

Fung Chi Ming has expanded his brief entry in the last newsletter into two full articles, the first of which appears above. It may be useful to identify the location of Ki Ling Lane, Sai Ying Pun, mentioned in this piece. The old buildings have already gone and the playground will, as CM says, be converted into an exit, B3 to be precise, of the new Sai Ying Pun station. The anticipated completion date (according to a poster fixed on a wall at the construction site) is 30th June 2014.



5. Mui Wo salt pans

Eric Spain asked whether there were salt pans in Mui Wo around the time of WW2. Frank Watson found a 2005 interview with an elderly Mui Wo resident which suggested that this may have been the case. A map from that period might provide conclusive evidence. "namussi" at gwulo.com tried using the Hong Kong government map service www.hkgeospatial.gov.hk but found the earliest aerial photo there of Mui Wo was from 1963. Thanks "namussi". The search continues.

7. Indigo in Hong Kong

From the China Mail 1st May 1876. "The Postmaster General has issued the following notification...'The Italian Post Office has complained that, in the mail for the Continent...which left Hongkong on the 20th January, was a sample of Indigo, which became loose and damaged the whole mail...The public are therefore again earnestly begged not to attempt to send dyestuffs in powder through the Post...' Indigo is a tropical plant cultivated as a source of dark blue dye. James Chan asks: Where did the Indigo used in HK around that time originate?

8. Peninsular Spinners Ltd. and Hong Kong Spinners Ltd.

Carles Brasó Broggi, based in Shanghai but currently living in Hong Kong, is researching two related companies. Peninsula Spinners Ltd. was established in Hong Kong in 1948 and became Hong Kong Spinners Ltd. in 1954. Carles is also interested in the founder of HK Spinners, C.Y. Wong (Wang Qiyu or Wang Chi Yue, 1883-1965) and T.Y. Wong (Wang Tongyuan or Wong Tong Yuen) who by 1975 was Chairman and Managing Director. Can anyone provide more information about the two companies or men?

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Needle Hill Tungsten Mine

Hugh Farmer

This brief history of the Needle Hill Tungsten Mine does not attempt to cover the geology or mineralogy of the mine, nor details of the mine workings. For a much fuller account, which includes this information plus maps, photographs, plans, location of mine entrances and further references, see *The Geological Society of Hong Kong Newsletter Vol 9 No 3 pp29-40 (1991)* which can be viewed online as shown in source 1 below.

Tungsten/Wolfram/Wolframite is the main source of the metal tungsten which has a wide range of uses, the largest of which is as tungsten carbide in cemented carbides. Cemented carbides (also called hard metals) are wear-resistant materials used by the metalworking, mining, petroleum and construction industries. Tungsten is widely used in light bulb and

vacuum tube filaments, as well as electrodes, because it can be drawn into very thin metal wires that have a high melting point. It was also used in armour-piercing ammunition.



"Wolfram. Needle Hill Mine. Jubilee Reservoir. Kowloon" [no date] The specimen is in the Stephen Hui Geological Museum, HKUniv

This abandoned mine is situated on the southern slopes of Needle Hill between Upper Shing Mun reservoir and Tai Wai. It was among the largest mining operations Hong Kong has seen.

The deposit was discovered in 1935 by a civil engineer, Mr G Hull, who was working on the construction of the Jubilee Reservoir (now known as Shing Mun). Hull was panning in a stream at lunchtime. He recognized wolframite-rich placer deposits (which are an accumulation of valuable minerals formed by gravity separation during sedimentary processes) in sediments being excavated from the Upper Shing Mun river and traced the mineralisation to quartz veins on Needle Hill.

Hull obtained a mining licence in the same year but the lease was subsequently transferred to Marsman Hong Kong China Ltd. Marsman undertook prospecting from 1935-1937, and development works began in 1938 with three adits used to extract the ore. From 1938-1941 an estimated average annual production of 120 tonnes of wolframite concentrate was achieved with the establishment of a medium capacity gravity concentration plant capable of treating 100 tonnes of crude ore per day.



The red line indicates the approximate location of the Needle Hill Mine lease area

With the occupation of Hong Kong by the Japanese Imperial Forces in December 1941 the mine was abandoned. However in July 1942 a Japanese concern, the Taiwan Development Company (which had started operations in Taiwan in December 1936) began operating the mine, adding two more adits. Although no production records exist for the period 1942-1945 old miners interviewed in 1991 suggest annual production of 140 tonnes of wolframite concentrate.

No records appear to exist relating to mining activities in the area during the period 1945-1949.

However, from 1949-1951 there was a boom in the price of tungsten largely as a result of the Korean war and about 5,000 people worked veins and placers at several sites in the New Territories, of which Needle Hill was the most important. Many of these sites were worked in a primitive, unregulated fashion including surface scratching, foxhole digging and placer sluicing causing extensive stream pollution and hillside erosion. This led the Hong Kong government to start regulating mining.

Consequently the government created the position of Superintendent of Mines to supervise mining generally, enforce safety standards and to recommend a revision of mining legislation. This led to the establishment of the Hong Kong Mining Ordinance in 1954.

From 1951-1955 operations at Needle Hill were run (possibly sub-leased) by the Hoong Foo Mining Co., and about 222 tonnes of wolframite concentrate was extracted annually by mining contractors. In 1955 mine ownership was transferred to the Yan Hing Mining Co. Ltd. and mining resumed in 1958. The chief mining engineer and general manager was Dr Stephen Hui after whom the Hong Kong Geological Museum is named.

The period 1958-1967 is the most well documented in the mine's history due to the detailed records maintained by Yan Hing. These show a total extraction of 63,846 tonnes of crude ore. However in 1967 mining was suspended due to the low market price of tungsten and increasing labour costs.



Entrance to Adit 5

In 1977, Yan Hing produced estimates of the remaining probable ore reserves. The estimates, which were crude due to the lack of detailed mining records between 1938 and 1955, suggested that at a production rate of 22,000 tonnes per year the mine had a predicted life of about 15 years. However operations did not resume.

In 1984 the condition and extent of the mine workings were investigated to assess the potential implications for the Route 5 Shing Mun road tunnels because mine records indicated that these tunnels would pass through or very close to the mine tunnels. It was found that the mine had extensive intact workings. It was concluded that the road tunnels would pass as close as a metre at one location and that they would require 'dewatering' and concrete backfilling prior to

the Route 5 tunnel excavation. All of the mine tunnels were subsequently sealed with concrete bulkheads to prevent unauthorized access.

A visit to the area in 1991 by members of the Geological Society of Hong Kong found numerous waste tips and the ruins of old mine buildings. Despite tunnel entrances being supposedly blocked the intrepid group managed to enter Adit 8 though as entry was "very difficult" and as the workings were "extensive...unstable and dangerous the reader is advised not to attempt to enter them". The group also managed to access some of the lower, and presumably narrower, workings where they found timber and bamboo ladders which they presumed had been left after the 1984 investigations.

There are several reports of recent visits to the area. One from 2012 says many old mining artefacts can be seen in the adits including the remains of scaffolding and ladders mentioned above, plus railway tracks. It adds that some of the tunnels can still be accessed but most are partially flooded. All these reports urge extreme caution when attempting to enter any part of the mine.

Wolframite was also mined in Hong Kong at Lin Fa Shan and Sha Lo Wan with minor workings at Castle Peak and Devil's Peak.

* A report by the Labour Office in 1939 states that "the maximum payable in respect of death or permanent injury in the case of Chinese workers at the Needle Hill Mine (Marsman Hong Kong China Ltd.) is one hundred and eighty dollars and for temporary total incapacity three dollars a week. This is covered by insurance."

Sources

- 1 The Geological Society of Hong Kong Newsletter Vol 9 No 3 pp29-40 (1991) http://www.geolsoc.org.hk/ newsletters/Newsletter%201991%20Vol.9%20No.3.pdf
- 2 Geocaching

http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=ce48fc65-e70b-4f5b-a4ff-c09ecbe2f2e4

- 3 B. Owen + R. Shaw Hong Kong Landscapes: Shaping the Barren Rock HKUP 2007
- 4 RJ Sewell, DLK Tang, R Shaw Hong Kong Geology A 400-Million Year Journey Gov HKSAR
- 5 Report by the Labour Officer, Mr HR Butters on Labour and Labour Conditions in Hong Kong 1939 Printed by Noronhat + Co Ltd
- 6 Taiwan Development Company http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/en/content?ID=3745
- 7 Stephen Hui http://www.earthsciences.hku.hk/shmuseum/about_stephen.php

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New Subscribers

Here are those who have expressed interest in our group since the last newsletter:

Carles Brasó Broggi, Shanghai Bernard Chan Matthew Edmondson James Hayes Holly Ip

Rob Jennings, Manager, Archives and Public Affairs, John Swire & Sons, London, UK Rosman Wai

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Sources

Here are some more sources to further your research and interest:

Maps

http://www.hkgeospatial.gov.hk/website/gih2/home.jsp

The Hong Kong Map Service provides digital map products to the public.

http://www.landsd.gov.hk/mapping/en/paper_map/photo.htm

Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department

http://www.ypmap.com

www.centamap.com

http://www.legco.gov.hk/general/english/sec/lc_archives/lc_archives_holding.htm

The Legislative Council ("LegCo") Archives established in January 2012, is responsible for developing and implementing an integrated archives and records management program for LegCo and providing archival services for LegCo Members, staff and the public.

http://www.theshipslist.com

Useful information about HK shipping companies

http://oldhk.tumblr.com/archive

Historical photographs of Hong Kong

http://hpc.vcea.net/Collection/Warren_Swire, has several hundred photographs taken 1906-1940 of Butterfield & Swire's subsidiaries in China, including Hong Kong.

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