

Emeritus Professor Dr. William Innes Gerrard, MD

The Hong Kong Rotarian honoured with 11 orders/medals

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Emeritus Professor of the University of Hong Kong (香港大學) in 1950, Dr. William Innes Gerrard, CBE, FRCP, MRCP, MD (*Aberd*), MBChB (*Aberd*), DPH (*Aberd*), JP (13 May 1884 - 7 March 1956), was an Active Member of the Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社) in the 1930s holding the Classification “Education – Medicine”.

William was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, the eldest son of Macpherson Grant Gerrard, a teacher, and Mary Anne (Laggie) Gerrard. He was educated at Robert Gordon’s College and Aberdeen University. After junior hospital appointments he took the Diploma in Public Health (DPH), in 1911, and then held a public health appointment in Aberdeenshire. At the outbreak of the First World War he joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in August 1914, and subsequently transferred to the regular Royal Naval Medical Service in H.M.S. Jupiter at the time of her epic ice-breaking voyage to Archangel Port, Russia, in early 1915.

As the only port through which Great Britain could supply Russia with munitions and equipment, until the Dardanelles could be opened, it was vital to force a channel through the icefields. In his Official History of Naval Operations in the Great War, Sir Julian Corbett records that, “the regular ice-breaker had broken down and the old battleship Jupiter established as one of many records of the War, so far as was known, by being the first vessel that had reached Archangel during February.” H.M.S. Jupiter remained there until the first week of May and later saw service in the Mediterranean. Among those officers and ratings subsequently decorated by the Tsar was Surgeon Gerrard.

William was posted as medical specialist to the Royal Navy Hospital, Malta, after obtaining his Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians (MRCP), in 1925. Remaining in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve throughout the 1920s, William retired in 1929, whilst holding the rank of Surgeon Lieutenant-Commander.

Coming to the British Crown Colony Hong Kong in 1929, William was appointed Professor of Medicine in the University of Hong Kong and resigned from the Royal Navy with the rank of Surgeon-Commander.

While in Hong Kong William had little time or facilities for original work, but he established himself as a successful teacher and consultant and played an active part in developing the clinical professorial unit in the new Queen Mary Hospital (瑪麗醫院). He was an urbane and kindly man, held in high regard by Europeans and Chinese. Although tall and handsome he was not robust physically, and was handicapped by the loss of an eye from detachment of the retina.

Listed here below is a brief record of his services in Hong Kong:

Registered to practice in Hong Kong on 18 March 1936 through Educational Opportunity Program (EOP); Honorary visiting physician to the Government Civil Hospital on 10 October 1929; Professor of Medicine in Hong Kong University from 1929 to 1939; Member of the Medical Board since 25 November 1935 for a three-year term; Member of the Nursing Board since 28 March 1935 – EOP; Physician in charge of medical treatment of opium addicts in government institutions, 1937.

In 1938, William was appointed Unofficial Justice of the Peace for Hong Kong by Governor Sir Geoffry Northcote (香港總督羅富國爵士) until 1941, but there was time conflict with 1939 departure from Hong Kong for British military mission.

On the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, William was recalled to the Royal Navy and was appointed Surgeon-Captain in charge of the medical division in the naval hospital at Kingseat, Aberdeenshire. On reaching retiring age he spent his remaining years in semi-retirement at Cults, near Aberdeen. William finally retired with the rank of Acting Captain. He died on 7 March 1956.

Honours

- (1) 1915 – Decorated Russian Order of St. Anne (Civil Division, Third Class) for his services in H.M.S. Jupiter by the Tsar of the Russian Empire
- (2) 1930 -- Appointed Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) by George V, King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions, and Emperor of India
- (3) 1935 – Decorated King's Silver Jubilee Medal by the British Government
- (4) 1937 – Decorated King's Coronation Medal by the British Government
- (5) 1938 – Decorated Associate Commander of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (CStJ) by George VI, King of the United Kingdom and the Dominions of the British Commonwealth
- (6) 1945 – Appointed Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire by George VI, King of the United Kingdom and the Dominions of the British Commonwealth
- (7) Conferred the Order of Brilliant Jade, 4th Class (四等采玉大勳章) #121 by the President of the Republic of China (中華民國國民政府主席).
- (8) Star Medal (Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve)
- (9) British War Medal (Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve)
- (10) Victory Medal (Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve)
- (11) Defence Medal (Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve)