

Leonard Charles Fenton Bellamy

First Club Secretary 1930-1932 & President 1939-1940

The Rotary Club of Hong Kong

By Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian)

1 February 2015



Lieutenant Leonard Charles Fenton Bellamy, MC, AMIEE, MInstT (1884 – 1964), Associate Member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, Member of the Institute of Transport, was a charter member of the Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社) in 1930 and served as the English Secretary jointly with the Chinese Secretary Benjamin Wong-Tape (黃炳耀太平紳士), JP. Leonard later served the Club as President in 1939-1940. Holding the Classification “Transportation – City & Inter-urban Tramways”, Leonard was the General Manager of The Hongkong Tramways, Ltd. (香港電車有限公司). Other than Rotary, before the Second World War, he was active in supporting Scouting being a council member of the Boy Scouts Association, Hong Kong Branch (香港童子軍總會).

The British Crown Colony Hong Kong located at the south China coast was the first prospect of Rotary International to extend Rotary landing on the continent of Asia. The story has to be dated back to June 1918. However, failure reports were received after several attempts not until the visit of Jim to Hong Kong in 1930 – the last goal of his Far East Rotary Extension Mission in two and a half years. The birth of the Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社) was given by the voluntary mission of Past President “Jim” James Wheeler Davidson of Calgary Rotary Club, Alberta, Canada, and who was the 3rd Vice-President of Rotary International in 1926-1927, with the assistance of his wife Lillian and daughter Marjory. Jim was an explorer, writer, United States diplomat, merchant and philanthropist. Affectionately, Jim was honoured as “The Marco Polo of Rotary” who established most of the first Rotary clubs in countries of the Orient.

In overcoming the previous experiences of failure by others, Jim’s first approach to each new country would be contact of the government officials from whom he had letters of

introduction. He approached the difficult problem in Hong Kong without any fears of failure. He was fortunate in the fact that the new Governor, Sir William Peel, had come to Hong Kong from Kuala Lumpur, The Federated Malay States, and that he had attended the official inauguration meeting of Kuala Lumpur Rotary Club in 1929 there. As he was seated next to Jim at that dinner meeting, Jim was able to tell Sir William much about Rotary.

With eight introduction letters issued by Governor Sir William Peel (香港總督貝璐爵士), Jim was able to invite a group of potential members to the organizing meetings through the efforts of leading citizens, Dr. Robert Hormus Kotewall (羅旭蘇博士), William Edward Leonard Shenton, William Woodward Hornell, Dr. Arthur W. Woo (胡惠德醫生), etc.

Sir William Woodward Hornell (康寧爵士), Kt, CIE, MA (*Oxon*), Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong (香港大學校長) (1924-1937), was elected Charter President of the Hong Kong Rotary Club. The inaugural dinner meeting of the Hong Kong Rotary Club was held on Tuesday, 8 December 1930, at the Lane Crawford restaurant (The Café Wiseman) in the basement of the newly built Exchange House, the center of industry and finance in Hong Kong. The charter members included 79 of the leading citizens: 31 Chinese, 46 Americans and Europeans, 1 Indian and 1 Japanese. The Club was admitted to Rotary International on 20 February 1931.

Within the Great Chinese Region, Hong Kong Rotary Club remains today the oldest with more than 80 years of regular weekly meetings. The Club is the home of most number of Rotary International officers, including vice-president, director, administrative advisors, and district governors, and was also the home of 13 knights bachelor invested by the sovereign of the British Empire.



Leonard was born in 1884 in Liscard of Wallasey, the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Merseyside, England, to a father of tramway engineer Charles Revill Bellamy. Charles Revill came to Liverpool as the engineer in charge of public street lighting and became the Manager of Liverpool Tramways. He encouraged his boys into the field of Electrical Engineering, which they did with great aplomb and all six of them had distinguished service in the Great War. Leonard was the 5th boy of the six.

He was educated at the Liverpool Institute High School. After an apprenticeship at Dick Kerr & Co., Ltd. (English Electric), he went out to Burma in 1907 and rose to assistant manager of the Rangoon Tramways and Supply Company. In 1910 he returned to take a post as Assistant Manager, St. Helens and District Tramways Co., Ltd. From 1912 to 1914 he was Borough Engineer and Tramway Manager, Ilkeston, Notts.

During the First World War (1914-1918) he served as 2nd Lieutenant with the Royal Corps of Signals (55th West Lancs) and won the Military Cross at Gallipoli. He returned in 1919, resigning his commission in 1922.

3356 GAZETTE, SEPTEMBER 18, 1918.

T./Lt. Leonard Charles Fenton Bellamy,
R.E.

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. During a week's fighting, as brigade signal officer, he worked untiringly day and night to maintain communication with the battalion, and it was largely due to his efforts that the forward communications of the brigade were maintained intact most of the time. One day he was out nearly all day under heavy shell fire superintending the laying of a line and the establishing of visual signalling between a test station and brigade headquarters, which he successfully accomplished and maintained.

Leonard moved to Kiln Lane, St. Helens, to become General Manager of St. Helens Corporation Tramways.

By 1924 he was appointed General Manager, Hong Kong Tramways Ltd. The Hong Kong tram system began operations in 1904, using electric trams from its start and evolving into the world's largest double-decker fleet. It was authorized by the British administration in 1901 and built by the Hong Kong Tramways Electric Company Limited. Since 1904 Hong Kong Tramways commenced operations with 26 single-deck electric trams. The first route ran from Kennedy Town (堅尼地城) to Causeway Bay (銅鑼灣) and was later extended to Shau Kei Wan (筲箕灣). The initial fleet was single-deck, but double-decker trams were introduced by 1912 to meet growing demand. From 1913 to 1925, open-top and eventually fully enclosed double-decker trams were introduced.

An extract from the speech of the President of the Hong Kong Automobile Association Mr. L. C. F. Bellamy said:

"I should like to refer to the Sai Kung Road project in the New Territories. In his Budget speech on September 5th, 1929, the Colonial Secretary called attention to the proposed Circular Eastern Road. The wonderful possibilities of this enterprise have been stressed on many subsequent occasions.... All members of this Association earnestly hope that Government finances will soon render it possible to proceed with the Sai Kung Road scheme and your Committee is of opinion that any reasonable outlay in connection with the proposed road will prove a sound Government investment."



Hong Kong Tramway in 1930



Hong Kong Tramway in 1938

After outbreak of the Pacific War (1941-1945), Hong Kong was captured and occupied by the Imperial Japanese forces. Under Leonard's leadership during the Occupation, tram service was severely limited, with only 12 trams running between Causeway Bay (銅鑼灣) and Western Market (上環街市). After three years and eight months of Japanese Occupation, all 109 tramcars still remained, but only 15 were operational. By October 1945, 40 tramcars were back into service.

《Hong Kong Telegraph》 3 February 1941

The Scottish Society celebrates Burns Night in the Rose Room of the Peninsula Hotel – there are about 250 members and guests present. While proposing the toast to “the immortal memory”, Professor Walter Brown of Hong Kong University speaks about Burns as a man and as a poet, dwelling on his services to freedom

The dinner is served in traditional style with the Barley Bree and the Haggis (piped to the Chieftain's table by the St. Andrew's Society honorary pipers).

The Chieftain is SCMP journalist Ben Wylie and also in attendance are past Chieftain G. D. R. Black, C. E. Terry (President of St. Patrick's Society), L. C. F. Bellamy (Vice-President of St. George's Society), Sir Atholl MacGregor, French Consul-General Louis Reynaud, C. G. Perdue and Dr. Selwyn-Clarke.

After the War on his return to England, Leonard resumed an engineering career in Reading, Berkshire. Leonard passed away in 1964 in Reading.



Medals awarded to Lieutenant Leonard Charles Fenton Bellamy, from left to right:

- (1) Military Cross -- granted in recognition of “an act or acts of exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy on land” to all members of the British Armed Forces of any rank.
- (2) 1915 Star Medal -- awarded for service during the first part of the First World War.
- (3) British War Medal -- awarded for service in the First World War.
- (4) Inter-Allied Victory Medal -- awarded to commemorate the Allied victory in the First World War.

