

Charles Edward Michael Terry

Founding Commissioner of Hong Kong Civil Aid Service in 1951-1967

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15 December 2016



The Honourable Charles Edward Michael Terry (泰利), CBE, CStJ, JP, Assistant General Manager of the Hong Kong & Kowloon Wharf and Godown Co., Ltd. (香港九龍碼頭及貨倉有限公司), joined the Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社) since the early 1930s as an Active Member holding the Classification “Storage Merchandise”. Terry’s voluntary service to the community began with the appointment of Chief Air Raid Warden (防空救護隊首席防空監察員) for Kowloon, New Kowloon and the New Territories commencing on 1 August 1941 until August 1945. The other major community service rendered by Terry was being the Founding Commissioner of the Civil Aid Service (民眾安全服務隊處長) from 1951 until 1967 in the British Crown Colony Hong Kong.



1937 – The complex, including the piers, of The Hong Kong & Kowloon Wharf and Godown Co., Ltd. located at the west coast of Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon Peninsula, Hong Kong.

Founding and leadership of the Civil Aid Service

Charles Edward Michael Terry established the Civil Aid Service (CAS) (民眾安全服務隊) in 1951 as Hong Kong's primary auxiliary emergency organization, serving as its founding Commissioner until 1967. Modeled on United Kingdom civil aid structures, the CAS was designed to supplement government resources in civil defense and disaster management, including search and rescue tasks, operating under colonial ordinances to mobilize civilian support during crises. CAS is funded by the Hong Kong Government and its voluntary members wear uniforms.

In April 1938, the Hong Kong Government established the Hong Kong Air Raid Precaution Corps (香港防空救護隊) (ARPC), the forerunner of the CAS. During the turmoil of war in 1930s, the Hong Kong Government set up the ARPC to provide citizens with defense knowledge and skills in case of air raid. Terry was appointed Chief Air Raid Warden for Kowloon, New Kowloon and the New Territories commencing on 1 August 1941.

After the Pacific War (1941-1945), in August 1945 the Hong Kong ARPC was dismissed. With passage of the 《Essential Services Corps Ordinance, Cap. 197》 in December 1949 and the order for compulsory service in September 1951 by the Hong Kong Government, Terry was appointed by Hong Kong Governor Sir Alexander William George Herder Grantham (香港總督葛量洪爵士) to take up the responsibility in forming the new organization of Civil Aid Service (CAS) which was modelled after Civil Aid agencies in the United Kingdom. Terry became the first Commissioner of CAS.

In the beginning, most of the members came from the former Hong Kong ARPC. At that time, the CAS was mainly tasked with air defense and rescue work including training on surveillance, air raid rescue, first aid and handling of damaged public facilities. In the early days of the CAS, its uniform design was similar to that of the ARPC, i.e. deep blue blouse and trousers with unit and rank insignia on the shoulder, grey-blue garter and waist belt, blue beret and peak-cap (or Mark II steel helmet during operations) (see photo on Page 3).

Under Terry's leadership, the CAS prioritized the recruitment and rigorous training of volunteers in essential skills, including search and rescue, first aid, and logistical support for emergencies such as typhoons and fires. This involved establishing dedicated training programs that equipped members for rapid deployment, fostering a force capable of assisting in urban and rural disaster zones across the Colony.

By 1967, these efforts had built a structured volunteer cadre of approximately 10,000 members that enhanced Hong Kong's operational readiness, reducing reliance on military or ad hoc responses through organized civil contributions.

Terry's oversight ensured the CAS's integration into broader public safety frameworks, with volunteers providing auxiliary roles in relief operations that mitigated the impacts of recurrent natural hazards prevalent in the region during the post-war era. This

foundational work laid the groundwork for the Service's enduring role in bolstering communal resilience, as evidenced by its sustained auxiliary functions in subsequent decades.



Since 4 January 1952, the CAS established with respective wards at Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and New Territories. The next year in 1953, the Hong Kong Training Centre was completed at Hawthorn Road, Happy Valley (跑馬地荷塘道). The Centre, providing with indoor and outdoor training areas, was officially opened by Hong Kong Governor Sir Alexander Grantham on 15 November 1953.

After completion of the CAS Headquarters in 1966 at No. 100 Caroline Hill Road, Causeway Bay (銅鑼灣加路連山道), Terry retired from the CAS the next year in 1967.

In 2006, the CAS Headquarters was moved to Yau Ma Tei (油麻地), Kowloon Peninsula.

Duties

The stated duties of the CAS are:

- to provide support to the government regular emergency forces on counter disaster activities, mountain search and rescue, flood rescue, countryside fire protection duties;
- to provide crowd control and management services in major public functions;
- to patrol country parks and hiking trails and to assist people in need of help;
- to stage performances to enhance public attention on major campaigns or activities organized by government departments and non-government organizations;
- to provide training activities and professional services on mountain safety/rescue for government departments and non-government organizations.

By 2012, marking its 60th anniversary, CAS maintained over 3,600 active members demonstrating operational continuity from colonial origins into the post-1997 era under the Security Bureau.

The Story of Charles Edward Michael Terry

Charles Edward Michael Terry, CBE, CStJ, JP (1 January 1897 – 13 April 1980), was a British businessman and public servant in colonial Hong Kong, best known for his roles as an unofficial member of the Legislative Council (立法局) from 1950 to 1959 and the Executive Council (行政局) from 1956 to 1961. Originally arriving in Hong Kong as a police constable, Terry transitioned into business as Assistant General Manager of the Hong Kong & Kowloon Wharf and Godown Company, while contributing to civil defense efforts, including as Chief Air Raid Warden for Kowloon, New Kowloon, and the New Territories from 1941 to 1945 and as founding commissioner of the Hong Kong Civil Aid Service from 1951 to 1967.

Early life and arrival in Hong Kong

Terry was born in 1897, originating from Britain. Details of his family background remain sparse in available records, with no documented ties to prominent British commerce or civil service lineages that directly influenced his trajectory. Terry's initial entry into Hong Kong occurred as a police constable, a common pathway for young British men seeking employment in the Colony's administration during the early 20th century. This role facilitated his settlement in the British-controlled entrepôt, where Hong Kong's position as a free port generated empirical demand for administrative and logistical personnel amid rapid trade expansion post-1898 New Territories lease (展拓香港界址專條).

Business career

Role in the Hong Kong & Kowloon Wharf and Godown Company

Terry began his career at the Hong Kong & Kowloon Wharf and Godown Company Limited as an assistant, recorded in the 1928 jurors list. By 1941, he had advanced to the position of Assistant Manager, a role he held at the outset of the Japanese Occupation during World War II, after which he was interned at Stanley Internment Camp (赤柱拘留營).

After the War, Terry rose to Assistant General Manager, a senior executive position he maintained into the 1950s and beyond, overseeing operations critical to the Company's function as a major handler of dockside warehousing and wharf services in Hong Kong's entrepôt economy. In this capacity, his responsibilities encompassed managing godown storage for imports and exports, coordinating ship berthing at the Company's extensive Kowloon facilities, and ensuring efficient cargo throughput amid post-War reconstruction demands. Under Terry's operational leadership, the Company facilitated Hong Kong's rapid recovery in maritime trade, processing substantial volumes of goods that bolstered the Colony's resilience against global supply disruptions in the late 1940s and 1950s, with wharf infrastructure handling millions of tons annually by the mid-century. This direct involvement in logistics infrastructure supported the steady growth of Hong Kong's port activities, which saw cargo tonnage increase from approximately 2.5 million tons in 1947 to over 5 million by 1955.

Contributions to Hong Kong's logistics and trade infrastructure

Terry served as Assistant General Manager of the Hong Kong & Kowloon Wharf and Godown Company, a key private operator of piers and warehouses on the Kowloon Peninsula, with his involvement spanning from at least the early 1930s. In this capacity, he oversaw operations critical to cargo handling and storage, enabling the Company's facilities to support Hong Kong's entrepôt trade amid post-World War II recovery. The wharves at Tsim Sha Tsui (尖沙咀) processed imports and exports efficiently, leveraging the Colony's natural harbor advantages without reliance on centralized state planning.

Under British colonial governance's laissez-faire framework, private firms like the Wharf Company scaled infrastructure responsively to market demands, avoiding bureaucratic delays that often hinder state-led projects. This approach facilitated rapid adaptation to surging trade volumes as refugees and capital inflows from the Chinese mainland boosted economic activity after 1949. Hong Kong's total commercial cargo tonnage, for instance, rose from 2.8 million tons in 1947 to 4.2 million tons by 1950 and reached 11.6 million tons by 1960, with private wharves handling the majority of berthing before government container terminals emerged in the late 1960s. The Company's godowns and piers, managed during Terry's tenure, directly contributed to this capacity by providing reliable storage and trans-shipment for goods re-exported to regional markets, underscoring how decentralized private management sustained Hong Kong's competitive edge as a low-regulation trade hub.

Efficiency improvements in wharf operations, such as streamlined merchandise storage under classifications like Terry's Rotary designation, aligned with broader post-War logistics enhancements that minimized costs and maximized throughput. This private-sector dynamism contrasted with more interventionist models elsewhere, allowing empirical trade growth to outpace infrastructure investment through incremental, profit-driven optimizations rather than grand public works. By the 1950s, such facilities helped Hong Kong re-establish itself as a vital link in global supply chains, with exports comprising over 50% of GDP by the decade's end.

Wartime and immediate post-War involvement

Leadership in civil defense during World War II

Terry was appointed Chief Air Raid Warden for Kowloon, New Kowloon, and the New Territories, effective 1 August 1941, amid rising tensions with Imperial Japan's forces encroaching on Chinese territories. This appointment positioned him to lead civil defense efforts in densely populated urban districts and expansive rural areas, where vulnerabilities to aerial bombardment were acute due to limited natural cover and proximity to potential invasion routes.

As head of the local Air Raid Precautions Corps, Terry coordinated the recruitment, training, and deployment of air raid wardens, contributing to the Hong Kong Government's broader initiative to enlist around 9,600 wardens colony-wide for public protection and

response duties. His oversight extended to designating public shelters, installing alert sirens, and conducting drills to instill skills in blackout procedures, evacuation routes, and casualty handling, adapting British ARP protocols to Hong Kong's topography of harbours, hills, and wharves. Wardens under his command engaged in practical exercises, such as manning shelter entrances, in the final weeks before hostilities erupted.

These preparations enabled a structured civilian response during the initial Japanese air raids commencing 8 December 1941, when coordinated warden posts helped direct populations to safety and suppress widespread disorder, despite the swift transition to ground assaults that overwhelmed defenses.

Presidency of the St. Patrick's Society

Terry served as president of the St. Patrick's Society of Hong Kong in 1941. The organization, founded in 1931, functioned as a social forum for expatriates of Irish descent and their allies in the British Colony, emphasizing the promotion of Irish cultural heritage through gatherings and commemorative events.

Amid the escalating uncertainties of World War II in the Pacific, with Hong Kong bracing for potential invasion, Terry's presidency emphasized maintaining communal bonds between Irish expatriates and the broader British community. He participated in inter-societal functions, such as the Scottish Society's Burns Night celebration on 26 January 1941 at the Peninsula Hotel (半島酒店), which drew around 250 attendees and underscored collaborative expatriate efforts to preserve national traditions and uplift spirits during wartime preparations. These activities contributed to the social cohesion of Hong Kong's expatriate networks, fostering resilience in the face of impending conflict without direct overlap into formalized civil defense operations.

Government and advisory roles

Unofficial membership in the Legislative Council

Terry was appointed as an unofficial member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong on 8 February 1950 by Governor Sir Alexander Grantham, serving until 5 September 1959 in a capacity representing business interests. As one of the appointed non-official members, Terry participated in legislative debates and votes, contributing to the passage of bills affecting Hong Kong's commercial and infrastructural development during the post-War economic expansion period. His role emphasized pragmatic input from the mercantile sector, advocating for policies that supported trade, logistics, and fiscal stability amid rapid industrialization.

In legislative proceedings, Terry engaged actively in discussions on economic planning and regulatory matters. For instance, on 17 March 1954, he addressed the Council on the necessity of forward estimating in government budgeting, highlighting its role in anticipating economic needs and avoiding ad-hoc fiscal decisions, as the "sole survivor" of prior advocates for such systematic forecasting. This reflected his push for evidence-based, growth-oriented

fiscal policies that aligned with business requirements for predictable infrastructure investment and trade facilitation. He also posed targeted questions, such as on 5 November 1958 regarding enforcement of signage regulations under Section 30A of the 《Public Health and Urban Services Ordinance》, underscoring concerns over urban commercial compliance that could impact business operations.

Terry's votes and committee work further demonstrated his influence on pragmatic legislation. On 28 March 1951, he supported amendments to bills enhancing administrative efficiency, voting alongside figures like Philip Stanley Cassidy (嘉薛地 Hong Kong Rotary Club Vice President 1932-1933) to refine proposals for better governance alignment with economic realities. He seconded readings of bills, including those amending corporate structures for educational and civic bodies, ensuring they did not hinder commercial interests, and reported on committee progress without amendments, as in the case of the Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools Incorporation Bill in 1953. Through these actions, Terry helped steer outcomes toward balanced deregulation and investment-friendly laws, prioritizing empirical economic drivers over ideological constraints, which contributed to Hong Kong's sustained post-War mercantile growth.

Unofficial membership in the Executive Council

Terry was appointed an unofficial member of Hong Kong's Executive Council in 1956, serving until 28 May 1961, when he was succeeded by Richard Charles Lee (利銘澤). In this capacity, Terry advised the Governor on executive policies, including administrative decisions and strategic priorities for colonial governance, drawing on his extensive experience in commerce and logistics to inform recommendations grounded in practical economic realities.

His tenure coincided with Hong Kong's post-War reconstruction phase, where Executive Council deliberations focused on fostering industrial expansion, port enhancements, and regulatory frameworks to support trade resurgence. Terry's input, shaped by his leadership at the Wharf Company, emphasized data-driven approaches to infrastructure investment and operational efficiency, contributing to policies that prioritized verifiable economic indicators over speculative planning. This business-centric perspective helped balance official bureaucratic views with insights from private enterprise, promoting resilient development strategies amid regional uncertainties.

The continuity of advisory roles was maintained through Terry's successor, Richard Charles Lee, another prominent businessman, which preserved the influence of commercial expertise in executive consultations and underscored the Council's reliance on empirically oriented, sector-specific counsel for long-term policy stability.

Chairmanship of the Hong Kong St. John Ambulance

Terry was appointed by Hong Kong Governor Sir Robert Brown Black (香港總督柏立基爵士), Chairman of the Council of the Order of St. John in Hong Kong (香港聖約翰救護機構

理事會) in 1963, a position he held until 1971. In this role, he led the governance of the Hong Kong St. John Ambulance, an affiliate of the Venerable Order of Saint John dedicated to providing volunteer-based first-aid training, ambulance services, and medical welfare programs throughout the Colony. The organization, established in Hong Kong since 1884, operated under the direction of the St. John Ambulance Headquarters in London, emphasizing humanitarian aid in alignment with the Order's medieval traditions of charitable medical service.

During Terry's chairmanship, the St. John Ambulance maintained its core functions, including the operation of brigades for emergency response and public education in first aid, amid Hong Kong's post-War population growth and urban expansion. His prior experience in civil defense and public service, including founding the Civil Aid Service, informed efforts to coordinate ambulance operations with broader emergency frameworks, though specific metrics on brigade expansions or response efficacy under his direct oversight remain undocumented in available records. Terry's commitment to the order was recognized through his appointment as Commander of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (CStJ), reflecting sustained leadership in its Hong Kong chapter.

Later years and relocation to Australia

Following his retirement as Founding Commissioner of the Hong Kong Civil Aid Service in 1967, Terry continued select public commitments in the Colony, including his chairmanship of the local St. John Ambulance Council until 1971. In the ensuing years, at age 74, he relocated from Hong Kong to Queensland, Australia, marking the end of his long association with the British colonial administration amid routine retirement transitions for expatriate officials of his generation. There, he lived quietly without documented resumption of formal civic roles, reflecting the close of a career dedicated to voluntary service.

The Honourable Rotarian Charles Edward Michael Terry passed away in Queensland, Australia, on 13 April 1980.

Honours

For his public services in Hong Kong, Rotarian Terry was in:

- (1) 1955 – appointed Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom.
- (2) 1959 -- appointed Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) by Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom.
- (3) 1963 – appointed Officer of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem (OStJ) by Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom.
- (4) 1971 – appointed Commander of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem (CStJ) by Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom.

