

Kowloon Rotarian Hugh Moss Gerald Forsgate First Chairman of Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

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The Honourable Hugh Moss Gerald Forsgate (霍士傑), C.B.E., J.P., (22 February 1919 – 21 October 2001) was the first Chairman of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) (九廣鐵路公司) since its incorporation on 24 December 1982 until 23 December 1990. This appointment was given by Hong Kong Governor Sir Edward Youde (香港總督尤德爵士). The major achievements in his tenure were the fully electrified Kowloon-Canton Railway launched in July 1983, and the Light Rail Transit (LRT) system launched in September 1988 serving the northwestern New Territories (新界), within Tuen Mun District (屯門區) and Yuen Long District (元朗區). His reign also oversaw the Corporation's transformation from a government body to a public enterprise based on commercial principles, even to include real estate development.

H.M.G. Forsgate, affectionately called “Gerry”, was a British-born businessman, administrator, and sports pioneer in the British Hong Kong who served the Urban Council (市政局) from 1965 to 1991, including five years as its chairman. Educated in Scotland and a Merchant Navy officer during World War II, Gerry settled in Hong Kong after 1947, contributing to its growth as a global port through roles in shipping, cargo handling, and The “Star” Ferry Co., Ltd. (天星小輪有限公司). He captained the Hong Kong Football Club (香港足球會) rugby team in the early 1950s and later served as president of the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union (香港欖球總會), earning recognition as the founding father of organized rugby in the Colony and a driving force behind the establishment of the Hong Kong Sevens tournament.

Gerry first joined Rotary in 1958, when the Rotary Club of Kowloon (九龍扶輪社) celebrated its 10th anniversary, membership was up to 60, including 7 charter members. Gerry was inducted an Active Member of the Club when he was Director and General Manager of The Hong Kong and Kowloon Wharf and Godown Co., Ltd. (香港九龍碼頭及貨倉有限公司), where he was to work for 32 years since 1951. Gerry was initiated by Jim Moody, then the Secretary of the Kowloon Residents Association (九龍居民協會)---a civil organization of multi-nationalities with which a number of Rotarians of various Clubs worked. These were reflecting his commitment to civic networking and community service through the organizations.



First Chairman of Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation

The Kowloon-Canton Railway Department (九廣鐵路局) was a Government Department and had operated the first railway line in the British Hong Kong since 1910. It had witnessed the transformation from steam to diesel trains in the 1960s. It has been part of the railway network in Hong Kong, and later was owned and operated by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation until 2007. Rapid transit services, a Light Rail system, feeder bus routes within Hong Kong, and intercity passenger and freight train services to the Chinese mainland on the KCR network, have been operated by the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) Corporation since 2007.

Origin of the Kowloon-Canton Railway (British Section)

The idea of connecting the British Crown Colony Hong Kong and Canton (*Guangzhou*), capital city of the Kwangtung (*Guangdong*) Province of the Ch'ing Empire (大清國廣東省廣州), with a railway was first proposed to prominent Hong Kong businessmen in March 1864 by a British railway engineer, Sir Rowland MacDonal Stephens, who had considerable experience of developing railways in India. Unfortunately he found little support from either the Imperial Ch'ing Government in Peking (*Beijing*) (北京) or most of the prominent businessmen in Hong Kong, and the idea was not given further serious consideration for about the next 30 years.

The idea re-emerged in the 1890s as a result of the various European powers competing to extend their influence in the Ch'ing Empire. The British Government was particularly concerned, and obtained a number of railway concessions from the Imperial Ch'ing Government for the British & Chinese Corporation (中英銀公司), a joint venture formed in 1898 between the trading company of Jardine, Matheson & Co., Ltd. (怡和洋行) and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (香港上海滙豐銀行). These concessions included the right to construct and operate a railway from Kowloon to Canton.

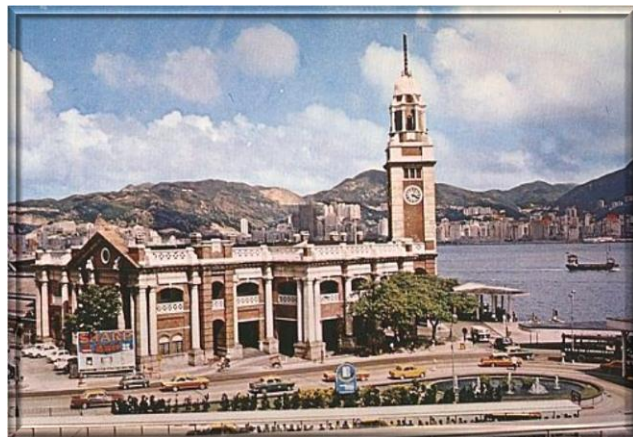
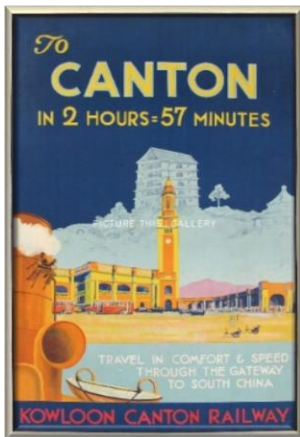
While some preliminary survey work was undertaken, discussions between the Colonial Office in London, the Hong Kong Government and the British & Chinese Corporation, led to an agreement in late 1904 that the Hong Kong Government would undertake the financing, construction and operation of the section of the line within Hong Kong, from Tsim Sha Tsui (尖沙咀) to Lo Wu (羅湖). The remaining section to Canton would be financed through a loan raised by the British & Chinese Corporation on behalf of the Imperial Ch'ing Government, which would operate the section after its construction by the Corporation.

Following detailed surveys to decide the final route of the railway, the Public Works Department of the Hong Kong Government started construction of earthworks on the section from Tai Po Market (大埔墟) to Fan Ling (粉嶺) in December 1905. Construction of the railway proved more difficult than first thought due to obstacles such as shortages of skilled labour, a high rate of sickness in the workforce from malaria, beri beri and dysentery, and the difficult

ground conditions encountered in building the Beacon Hill Tunnel (筆架山隧道). The Kowloon-Canton Railway (KCR) finally came into service on 1 October 1910 as a single track system.

At that time, KCR trains could run only on the British Section. It would not be until one year later on 5 October 1911 that the Chinese Section to Canton was completed, only 5 days before the outbreak of the 1911 Revolution (辛亥革命) that ultimately led to the abdication of the last Ch'ing Emperor, and the establishment of the Republic of China (中華民國) in January 1912.

When KCR British Section was opened in 1910, there were only 7 stations, i.e. Kowloon (九龍) (temporary), Hung Hom (紅磡) (until 1921), Yau Ma Tei (油麻地), Sha Tin (沙田), Tai Po Kau (大埔滘), Tai Po Market (大埔墟) (a flag station before November 1910) and Fan Ling (粉嶺). In 1912, the narrow-gauge Sha Tau Kok (沙頭角) branch line was opened to link up Fan Ling and Sha Tau Kok. In 1913, Tai Po Market Station was turned into a station of classical Chinese architectural style, and a halt at Sheung Shui (上水) was added. In 1916, a permanent Kowloon Terminus at Tsim Sha Tsui, which commenced construction in 1911, was completed. Until the opening of the Chinese Section, traffic on the KCR was limited, as there was little demand for passenger and freight services by the inhabitants of the then undeveloped New Territories (新界). After 1911 traffic increased over the years as people took advantage of the fast journey time of only 3 hours 40 minutes from Kowloon to Canton. However, in 1928, the Sha Tau Kok branch line was closed due to competition



(L) Kowloon-Canton Express Train Advertisement (R) Kowloon Terminus located at Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront



General Motors diesel electric locomotive train running on the Kowloon-Canton Railway in 1960s and 1970s



Former Tai Po Market Railway Station -- in its classical Chinese architecture built in 1913



On 1 January 1967, Ma Liu Shui Station was renamed University Station.

In 1956 due to the establishment of Chung Chi College (崇基學院) at Ma Liu Shui (馬料水), alongside opened a KCR station also named [Ma Liu Shui Station] for the traffic convenience of the staff and students. Since then, passenger stations along the Kowloon-Canton Railway (British Section) from south to north were like this: Kowloon---Yau Ma Tei---Sha Tin---Ma Liu Shui---Tai Po Kau---Tai Po Market---Fan Ling---Sheung Shui---Lo Wu. At the Fan Ling Station, there was a branch line leading to Wo Hop Shek (和合石) where the public cemetery is.

On 1 January 1967, Ma Liu Shui Station was renamed University Station (大學站) after The Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學) established its main campus there.

From government body to public enterprise



In 1974 a 10-year investment programme was started to electrify and double-track the railway from Hung Hom to Lo Wu, requiring the building of a second Beacon Hill tunnel together with the construction and upgrading of stations and other facilities.

During the electrification of the KCR in the 1970s and early 1980s, thought had been given by the Government as to the future management of the Railway. Before 1982, the Kowloon–Canton Railway had been run as a department of the Government, and was subject to the normal civil service rules and requirements. This made it difficult to take a commercial approach to operating what was increasingly becoming a major business in investment and revenue terms. Corporatization of public services as a means to permit government-owned public utilities to operate more along the lines of private sector business was an approach that was beginning to gather interest at the time from several governments---the United States and the United Kingdom governments under Reagan and Thatcher being prime movers. The object of corporatization was to allow the public service providers to make a commercial return on their assets, thus reducing the need for investment of public funds raised predominantly from taxes, while still remaining under government control.

On 24 December 1982, the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation Ordinance (Cap 372) was enacted and the KCR ceased to be a government department, although it remained wholly owned by the Government. Under the Ordinance a managing board, comprising 10 members appointed by the Governor (Chairman, managing director and not less than 4 nor more than 8 other members), became responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Corporation. The Corporation was required to “perform its functions with a view to achieving a rate of return on the assets employed in its undertaking, and in accordance with ordinary commercial criteria, is satisfactory.”

On 24 December 1982, Hugh Moss Gerald Forsgate was appointed the inaugural Chairman of the Managing Board, Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation.

The early 1980s saw the full electrification and double-tracking of the KCR railway line and the modernization of railway stations. The first stage was opened on 6 May 1982, with the start of an inner suburban service between Kowloon and Sha Tin and a new station at Kowloon Tong (九龍塘). The second stage between Sha Tin and Tai Po Market was opened on 2 May 1983. Tai Po Kau and old Tai Po Market stations ceased operation, the latter being replaced by a new station further south. On 15 July 1983 electrification and double tracking of the full line to Lo Wu was completed, and the use of diesel trains then ceased for domestic passenger services. In August 1983, a temporary station at Tai Wai (大圍) was added.

Since 1982 KCRC has greatly expanded its rail network. In 1984 the Corporation accepted the Government's invitation to build and operate a light rail system in the northwest New Territories. Feeder bus services were first introduced in 1986. The Light Rail Transit (LRT, known later as the KCR Light Rail and currently simply as the Light Rail) came into service in September 1988, initially serving the new towns of Tuen Mun (屯門) and Yuen Long (元朗), and later extended to serve the Tin Shui Wai (天水圍) new town. Although the system was generally successful in meeting passenger demand, it was never a commercial success. According to the Corporation's annual reports, the system showed an annual cash-operating loss up to 2003.

The KCRC started to participate in property development and management at around the same time as constructing Light Rail. The first joint-venture property development, Pierhead Garden (海翠花園), located above a light rail and bus terminus in Tuen Mun, was completed in 1988. While profits generated from property and commercial services were useful to fund new railway projects, they were never regarded as essential, being generally treated as a useful windfall.

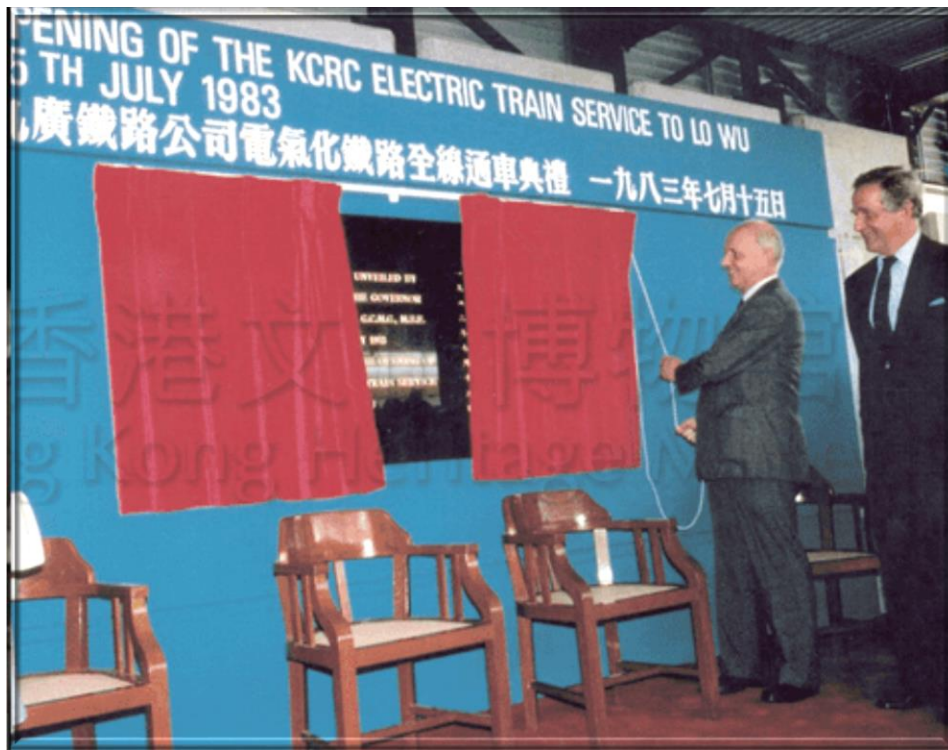
On 23 December 1990, "Gerry" Hugh Moss Gerald Forsgate completed his mission with Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation.



G. M. Model G16 Diesel Electric Locomotive No.59 was named "Gerry Forsgate" (霍士傑號) in commemorating the first Chairman of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation.



Hong Kong Governor Sir Edward Youde (left) and Hugh Moss Gerald Forsgate, Chairman of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation, at Kowloon Station, on 15 July 1983. (Photo: South China Morning Post)



15 July 1983 -- Governor Sir Edward Youde performed the official opening ceremony to mark the completion of the HK\$3,500 million modernization programme of the full 34 kilometre route and the end of the 21 years of diesel passenger train operation. H. M. G. Forsgate, Chairman of the KCR Corporation was accompanying.



1975 Kowloon / Hung Hom Station

1975 – Land reclamation at the coast of Hung Hom provided the site for the new KCR Kowloon Terminus.



1982 - The first generation Electric Multiple Unit of electric train running on the Kowloon-Canton Railway



1988 -- Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation operating Light Rail in Tuen Mun District



1986 -- Feeder Bus service provided by Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation at various stations

The Story of Hugh Moss Gerald Forsgate

Early Life and Education

Hugh Moss Gerald Forsgate was born in 1919 in the United Kingdom. He received his secondary education at the Royal High School in Edinburgh, followed by training at Leith Nautical College, Edinburgh, Scotland, which equipped him for maritime service. Details regarding his family background, including parents or siblings, are not publicly documented in available records. His early education in Scottish institutions indicates a connection to that region during his formative years, though specifics of his childhood remain sparse.

Military Service and Wartime Experience

Gerry was enlisted as an officer in the British Merchant Navy during the Second World War (1939-1945). The Merchant Navy played a vital role in wartime logistics, transporting essential supplies across perilous Atlantic and other convoys amid threats from German U-boats and surface raiders, with crews facing casualty rates exceeding those of many combat branches. Gerry's service contributed to these efforts, though specific voyages or incidents involving him remain undocumented in available records.

Gerry qualified as a master mariner during or shortly after his wartime duties, attaining the highest certification for commanding merchant vessels. This experience equipped him with expertise in navigation and seamanship that later informed his transition to shore-based maritime commerce in Hong Kong. No records indicate Gerry's involvement in combat theaters beyond standard Merchant Navy operations, distinguishing his service from frontline military engagements.

Business Career

Leadership at Kowloon Wharf

Gerry first arrived in Hong Kong from Britain in 1941 but established permanent residence there in 1947 after the conclusion of World War II hostilities. Drawing on his maritime training at Leith Nautical College and prior experience as a master mariner with the Blue Funnel Line shipping company, he transitioned into Hong Kong's commercial sector by joining the Hong Kong and Kowloon Wharf & Godown Company Limited in 1947 and served there for 32 years until 1979. This role initiated his involvement in the Colony's port and logistics operations, amid post-War reconstruction and the onset of regional trade growth, including managing wharf activities during the Korean War era starting in 1950.

He rose to the role of Director and General Manager from 1959 to 1979, where he directed operations of the Company's extensive wharves and godowns in Kowloon, facilities central to Hong Kong's handling of import, export, and trans-shipment cargo during the Colony's post-War economic expansion.

Gerry's leadership spanned a period of rapid trade growth, with the Company managing key infrastructure that supported Hong Kong's position as a global entrepôt, though specific operational metrics under his direct oversight remain documented primarily through his positional tenure rather than quantified outputs in available records.

By the early 1990s, following his primary tenure at the Wharf, Gerry maintained connections to related entities, serving as a non-executive director at Herald Holdings Ltd. (興利集團有限公司) from 1992, reflecting his enduring influence in Hong Kong's commercial logistics sector.

Other Commercial Roles and Contributions

Gerry served as Chairman of Eralda Industries Limited (宏達洋行), a position that extended his influence in Hong Kong's industrial sector beyond wharf operations. He also provided advisory services to the Jardine Pacific Group, leveraging his expertise in logistics and commerce to guide strategic decisions in property, shipping, and development.

As a Non-Executive Director of Herald Holdings Limited from 1992 onward, Gerry contributed to the governance of this diversified company involved in manufacturing and trading, drawing on his extensive business acumen until his passing in 2001.

In port-related initiatives, Gerry chaired the Container Handling committee of the Hong Kong Port Development Board (香港港口發展局貨櫃處理委員會), advocating for expanded container terminal facilities to meet growing trade demands and enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness as a maritime hub in the 1990s.

Public Service and Civic Engagement

The 3rd Elected-Chairman of the Urban Council

On 1 April 1965, Gerry was first appointed by the Hong Kong Governor Sir David Clive Crosbie Trench (香港總督戴麟趾爵士) an Unofficial Member to sit in the Urban Council of Hong Kong (香港市政局), and later was elected Vice-Chairman in 1981-1986. Then, he served to be the 3rd Elected-Chairman of the Council in 1986 until 1991.

Under Gerry's chairmanship, the Urban Council advanced initiatives in public recreation and environmental features. After his 26-years' service with the Council, the name "Hugh Moss Gerald Forsgate" is commemorated with a Forsgate Conservatory in the Hong Kong Park (香港公園霍士傑溫室). The Forsgate Conservatory, which occupies an area of 1,400 Sq.M., comprises three sections, namely the Display Plant House, the Dry Plant House and the Humid Plant House. An adjustable environmental control equipment has been installed in the Conservatory to simulate different climatic conditions for the display of plants from arid region and tropical area.

Gerry was the second Rotarian to chair the Urban Council. The first Elected-Chairman in 1973-1981 was Dr. The Honourable Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales (沙利士博士), GCIH, GBM, CBE, HonDSocSc (HKBU), JP, President 1965-1966 of The Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社).

The Urban Council in Hong Kong was responsible for municipal services on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula (including New Kowloon). These services were provided by the Council's executive arm, the Urban Services Department.

The Council was founded as the Sanitary Board (潔淨局) in 1883. It was renamed the Urban Council when new legislation was passed in 1936 expanding its mandate. In 1973 the Council was reorganized under non-government control and became financially autonomous, which meant the budget could be planned without the approval of the Legislative Council. Originally composed mainly of ex officio and appointed members, by the time the Urban Council was disbanded following the Handover it was composed entirely of members elected by universal suffrage. It was also no longer primarily in charge of housing. From then onwards, there were no government officials on the Council and both the chairman and vice-chairman were elected among the 24 members. At the time, the Council was unique in consisting solely of members of the public. The Council Chamber was located at the City Hall complex in Central District.

The Urban Council provided many services to the Hong Kong people over the years. The Urban Services Department was the executive branch of the Council to implement policies and services. In 1997, it had about 16,000 employees, according to its published leaflet of "service promises". The Council's services included: recreational venues and activities, libraries, museums, cultural and entertainment venues, ticketing, wet markets, hawker registration and control, cremation, street cleansing, issuing licenses, and operating abattoirs.

After the transfer of sovereignty in 1997 to the People's Republic of China (中華人民共和國), the Urban Council was dissolved on 31 December 1999 under the plan of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Chief Executive Tung Chee-Hwa (香港特別行政區行政長官董建華), to streamline and to centralize municipal services as part of his government policy reforms.





Legislative Council and other public services

In 1965, Gerry was appointed by Hong Kong Governor Sir David Clive Crosbie Trench (香港總督戴麟趾爵士) Unofficial Justice of the Peace for Hong Kong (非官守太平紳士) (JP). This lifelong appointment was a role typically bestowed on prominent community figures to assist in minor judicial and administrative functions, such as witnessing documents and maintaining public order. The JP honorific underscored Gerry's status among Hong Kong's elite and extended his influence into community leadership, though it carried no salary and emphasized voluntary public contribution over partisan governance.

By appointment of the Hong Kong Governor Sir Crawford Murray MacLehose (香港總督麥理浩爵士), Gerry served the Hong Kong Legislative Council as an Unofficial Member (香港立法局非官守議員) from 19 July 1972 until 14 August 1974.

On the other hand, Gerry had also served as Chairman of the Hong Kong Government Transport Advisory Committee (交通諮詢委員會) from 1982 to 1986; A Member of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (香港房屋委員會) from 1965 to 1985.

In recognition to his remarkable services to the colonial Hong Kong community, Hugh Moss Gerald Forsgate had been appointed 2 times by Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom, the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire: (1) Officer (O.B.E.) 1974; (2) Commander (C.B.E.) 1985.

Involvement in Management Associations

Gerry served as Chairman of the Hong Kong Management Association (香港管理專業協會) from 1978 to 1982, where he addressed the organization's annual conference on topics pertinent to Hong Kong's business landscape and presented awards to contributors in export credit and related fields. He also held positions such as council member, contributing to management education and professional development initiatives in collaboration with bodies like the Independent Commission Against Corruption (總督特派廉政專員公署) in the late 1970s.

Sports and Community Involvement

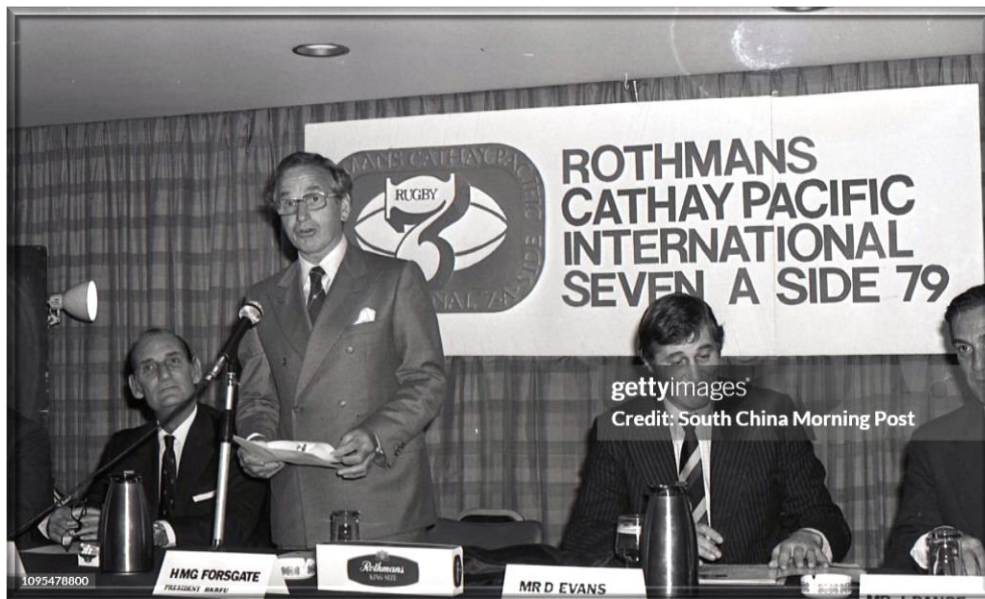
Founding Role in Hong Kong Rugby

Gerry is recognized as the founding father of organized rugby in Hong Kong, having driven its post-War development from club-level play to an established territorial sport with international reach. His involvement began as a player, captaining the Hong Kong Football Club (HKFC) rugby team from 1951 to 1952, during a period when rugby was primarily confined to expatriate and military circles.

In 1952, Gerry participated in early international efforts as part of the first Hong Kong representative team to tour Japan, marking one of the first attempts to position the Colony's rugby on a global stage amid limited local infrastructure. This initiative laid groundwork for broader organization, culminating in his long-term administrative leadership as President of the

Hong Kong Rugby Football Union (HKRFU) from 1977 to 2000---a 23-year tenure that solidified the sport's governance and growth.

Gerry's pivotal contribution extended to the creation of the Hong Kong Rugby Sevens Tournament, launched in 1976, which he helped establish as a premier annual event attracting top international teams and transforming Hong Kong into a rugby hub. The Gerry Forsgate Quaich (霍士傑銀盃), awarded in the Tournament's plate competition, commemorates his foundational influence. Under his presidency, the HKRFU expanded participation, secured affiliations with bodies like the International Rugby Board, and fostered local talent development, elevating rugby from a niche pursuit to a cornerstone of Hong Kong's sporting identity.



2 March 1979 -- Gerry Forsgate (standing), President of the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union (HKRFU), speaks at the draw of the Rothmans Cathay Pacific International Seven A Side 79 rugby tournament. With him are (from left) Mr. R. Oliver of Rothmans (Far East) Ltd, HKRFU Chairman Mr. D. Evans and Mr. J. Dance of Cathay Pacific Airways.

Broader Sporting and Social Contributions

As President (1978-2001) of the Hong Kong Football Club (HKFC), Gerry oversaw the administration of diverse sporting activities, including association football, cricket, tennis, and squash, fostering community participation and facilities development at the Club's Happy Valley (跑馬地) grounds from the 1970s onward.

Beyond direct sporting leadership, Gerry contributed to social welfare by chairing the China Coast Community (中華海岸老人院), a Kowloon-based residential care facility for the elderly, where he supported operations and resident services in the late 20th century. He also participated in charitable fundraising efforts tied to community and sports organizations, aiding initiatives for underprivileged groups and infrastructure in Hong Kong.

Family and Enduring Impact

Rotarian “Gerry” Hugh Moss Gerald Forsgate married “Betty” Elizabeth Stevenson, with whom he had one son Brian and two daughters Elaine (Marden) and Louise (Spurrier). Though the executive life was behind him after retirement from Kowloon Wharf, he remained pretty active. He was chairman of a company run by his son Brian, Eralda Industries Ltd., and director of half a dozen others.

Daughter Elaine Forsgate Marden, a film producer and philanthropist, involved in hospice work and social initiatives in Hong Kong.

In his private life, Gerry maintained a strong personal attachment to sports, particularly rugby, as evidenced by family office displays of photographs from key rugby events alongside family images. These interests underscored a balance between professional duties and personal leisure centered on community-oriented activities in Hong Kong’s expatriate circles.

Rotarian Gerry passed away on 21 October 2001 at age 82, after several months of illness.

His enduring impact stems primarily from pioneering Hong Kong rugby, including captaining the Colony’s first representative team on a 1952 tour to Japan and serving as President of the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union from 1977 to 2000, a 23-year tenure during which he helped establish the Hong Kong Sevens as a global event.

In 2014, he was posthumously inducted into the inaugural Hong Kong Rugby Football Union Hall of Fame as one of 10 icons, acknowledging his role in fostering competition, sportsmanship, and the sport’s growth over six decades.

