

The Rotary Club of Kowloon Projects  
Arran Street Trachoma Clinic in 1951  
Arran Street Child Assessment Center in 1977

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*The No.9 Arran Street single-storey premises erected by Kowloon Rotary Club in 1951*

In the April 1952 Issue of *《The Rotarian》* magazine, there is a one-page report on “Rotary in Hong Kong” describing the Rotary activities in the then British Crown Colony Hong Kong after the Pacific War (1941-1945). During those years, there were in the Colony only 2 Rotary clubs “Hong Kong” and “Kowloon”. One of the features mentioned in the article was that both of the clubs had launched their own community service projects by establishment and operating of their own “trachoma treatment” clinics in both sides of the Victoria Harbour (維多利亞港).

### Trachoma Endemic in China

Trachoma (砂眼) is an infectious disease caused by bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*. The infection causes a roughening of the inner surface of the eyelids. This roughening can lead to pain in the eyes, breakdown of the outer surface or cornea of the eyes, and eventual blindness. Untreated, repeated trachoma infections can result in a form of permanent blindness when the eyelids turn inward.

The bacteria that cause the disease can be spread by both direct and indirect contact with an affected person’s eyes or nose. Indirect contact includes through clothing or flies that have come into contact with an affected person’s eyes or nose. Children spread the disease more

often than adults. Poor sanitation, crowded living conditions, and not enough clean water and toilets also increase spread. Efforts to prevent the disease include improving access to clean water and treatment with antibiotics to decrease the number of people infected with the bacterium. This may include treating, all at once, whole groups of people in whom the disease is known to be common.

During the 1930s to the 1950s in the Chinese mainland, trachoma was quite common in many of the highly populated cities with poorest populations who lived in rural and remote areas. Hence, Rotary clubs in China were encouraged to launch anti-trachoma projects, from Shanghai (上海) in the eastern coast far to Chungking (*Chongqing*) (重慶), Lanchow (*Lanzhou*) (蘭州) in the western inland. The national leader of Rotary in China, then, during and after the Pacific War, was Dr. Chengting T. Wang (王正廷博士) (*Chungking*), and who was also the President of the National Society of China Red Cross (中華民國紅十字總會會長). He later moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong in 1949 and joined the Hong Kong Rotary Club (香港扶輪社).

## Trachoma Clinic launched in Kowloon Peninsula

《*The Rotarian*》 magazine reported in March 1951 that a trachoma clinic was built at the cost of HK\$80,000 and was operated by the Rotary Club of Kowloon (九龍扶輪社) (newly chartered on 28 June 1948). The building is, still standing today, single-storey with an area of 30 X 98 ft. (see photo at top), and featured an air-conditioned consultation office and operating room. Before the Clinic was completed, the Club made it possible for patients to be treated at doctors' offices free of charge. During a 19-month period, 55,000 patients received medical care through the Rotary Club at a cost to the Club of HK\$7,300.



*Members of the Kowloon Rotary Club stand before their trachoma clinic. 《The Rotarian》 April 1952*

## Pioneer of Child Assessment Service

Upon the change of community needs in the later years, the Rotary Club of Kowloon transformed the Arran Street premises into a child assessment center. Back in 1973, the then Government Medical and Health Department (醫務衛生署) invited Professor Kenneth Holt of

the University of London to report on the feasibility of a child assessment service in Hong Kong. He recommended setting up a specialist team to provide assessment and remedial services for children with developmental problems so as to increase their chance of success in rehabilitation. Addressing to these needs, the Rotary Club of Kowloon came into operation with its first child assessment center in 1977 at the former trachoma clinic premises located at No.9 Arran Street, Mongkok, Kowloon (九龍旺角鴉蘭街9號). In this Arran Street Child Assessment Centre (鴉蘭街兒童體能智力測驗中心), the assessment team comprised various professional disciplines, providing comprehensive assessment to children with special needs.

In order to learn more about the back-side stories of the above-mentioned 2 projects, it is better to read the chapter written by the Club's historian, of which the text is excerpted below:



### Arran Street: A Permanent Fixture

Perhaps the single most impressive community project undertaken by the Rotary Club of Kowloon has been the Arran Street Child Assessment Center; a project which continues to play a significant role in the Club's activities today. "The thing that impresses me most", comments Ira Kaye, "is to think of the foresight (Club) people had in 1948 to put up this building". He also expresses the hope that: "We too will be remembered for contributions to the community that are so advanced in thinking and would enable a project to last through three, four and five decades".

In fact, the Arran Street clinic did not start life in Arran Street, but rather in a loaned building in Yaumatei. The original intention was to commemorate the inauguration of the Rotary Club of Kowloon with a solid piece of community work, and the Club's board of directors recommended to its members that a clinic be established for the treatment of local fishermen suffering from the eye disease, trachoma.

The clinic was administered, as Bill Grimsdale's letter to Ira Kaye indicated, "by Captain J. Macfarlane, then manager of Holts Wharf, who attended to the clerical work, principally maintenance of patients' cards, while the doctors who gave their services entirely free were Dr. T. J. Hua, his partner (who was not a Rotarian) Dr. K. T. Lui and Rotarians Dr. Olinto de Souza, Dr. Y. S. Lam and Dr. C. W. Lam". The Club financed the purchase of drugs, enabling patients to be treated for the magnificent sum of fifty cents each. The incidence of trachoma was apparently so severe that, had it not been for the clinic, many of the patients could have lost their sight completely.

Evidently on to something that was proving tremendously successful, the Club then, under the guidance of Fred Clemo, applied to the Government to deed a site on Arran Street in Mongkok. Such a site was granted --- the Club continues to hold a deed of trust on the property for which it pays HK\$1 per year --- and in 1950 the Club held a gala ball to raise HK\$75,000 to cover the cost of building a multi-storey clinic.

While one might imagine shining pairs of scissors cutting brightly coloured ribbons to the sound of popping corks, all that is remembered of the official opening is the recollection passed on by Grimsdale. He simply wrote that the opening ceremony was “performed by Fred Clemo on a rather miserable day, weather-wise”, and that “shortly afterwards an approach was made to Government to take over the running of the clinic under the management of Dr. Dancet Browning, the Senior Government Ophthalmic Surgeon. The Club carried the burden of operating costs during the early years.

During the presidency of Jimmy Keir (1975/76), when the need for a trachoma clinic was less pressing, the Club was approached by the Government with a special plan. The Government wished to set up a child assessment center as a pilot scheme to see if comprehensive assessment of children with physical, mental and emotional disabilities would prove worthwhile. Club members were asked to raise money for the refurbishment of the clinic’s interior and for the provision of necessary equipment. The government-appointed consultant paediatrician for the center, Dr. Lillian Ko, was invited to address a meeting of the Rotary Club of Kowloon. Her address apparently touched Rotarians to such an extent that a sum close to HK\$238,000 was subsequently invested in equipment. When Ko left the clinic, she was awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship. Her place was taken by paediatrician Dr. Rose Mak.

The clinic opened its doors in October 1977. It was the first clinic of its kind in the Far East, and many similar centers have since been set up. More than three thousand children were assessed for birth defects, retardation and psychological problems, and over the years the Club has continued to expand the level of its service by, for example, financing a visit by the Clinic’s paediatricians to the Wolfson Centre London to further their training in speech therapy. The Club also equipped the Center with Reynell Developmental Language Scales in Cantonese, the first in the world outside English-speaking countries.

In 1983, Club members established the Hong Kong Society for Child Health and Development, the financial support arm for the clinic. Up to this point all requests for funds had been met by the Club itself, but the Society was established to facilitate the raising of funds in the community. Since that time fifty percent of the executive committee membership has comprised Rotary Club of Kowloon members, allowing the clinic to be “closely observed”. Annual donations have continued to be made by the Club to the Society. Explains Kaye: “The Society provides funds for Hong Kong professionals engaged in child assessment to go abroad, to learn new techniques and to return to Hong Kong to disseminate those new techniques to the professional community and in particular for use in the Child Assessment Centre”. Part of the cost of such development would probably emanate from the Rotary Club of Kowloon Endowment Fund. The fund, set up in 1948 with around HK\$18,000, has become a major part of the Club’s service to the community. It was originally established to assist the assimilation back into the community of young people discharged from detention centers, at a time when funds were not available from social welfare.

## Ira Dan Kaye, M.B.E. (1917-1999)



The Arran Street Child Assessment Center was opened in October 1977 during the year that Ira Dan Kaye was elected to serve as the 18th Governor of Rotary International District 345 (Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan). Though the Arran Street Center ceased operation with effect from 1 April 2007, there are now 7 child assessment centers located in different regions of Hong Kong under the Government's Child Assessment Service, Department of Health.

Ira Dan Kaye (紀艾華/紀愛華), President 1973-1974 of Kowloon Rotary Club, was an American Jewish businessman who brought with him a strong, Junior Chamber of Commerce (JCI) background that culminated in his appointment as World President 1957 of the organization. He was invited to a Club meeting by Run Run Shaw (邵逸夫) and recalled that: "*It was very easy to become active then,*" since senior members did not have sufficient time to devote to the range of new projects under discussion. Kaye's first project was Rotaract --- the Rotaract Club of Hong Kong Baptist College (香港浸會學院扶輪青年服務團) was chartered on 19 March 1969 by the Rotary Club of Kowloon --- before becoming Secretary for two years which was, "*when I really got to know what Rotary is all about.*" His tireless work for the Club, and his unrivalled commitment to community service in Macao (澳門), have long since gone down in history.

Kaye described his presidency in 1973-1974 as a "real fun year". His style was to keep the meetings light and enjoyable: "*I have always believed, as Fred Clemo did, that Rotary provides a diversion during the afternoon where you meet with other Rotarians and forget problems you had that morning.*"

"*I made a point of finding out which artistes were in town, and invited them to come along.*" Thus one lunch-time saw members entertained until an unprecedented three o'clock by Sammy Cahn, pianist and lyricist for Frank Sinatra. On another occasion, British baritone and ex-Goon Harry Secombe, who was staying at The Peninsula Hotel, was even persuaded, with a little general-manager-style influence from Gautschi, to sing for half an hour.

That was not an easy year for Kaye as Club President, but determination and commitment made it at least a successful one. "*If there is a quality called Rotaryness (and if there is not, there ought to be)*" recorded the Club bulletin that marked the end of Kaye's year, "*Then it is certain that everybody would agree that President Ira personifies this quality.*"

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《APPENDIX》

Shanghai Rotary Club Mobile Anti-Trachoma Clinic in 1947



*Supplementary to the 2 Rotary Anti-Trachoma clinics in fixed premises in the Shanghai International Settlement, the 3rd one was a vehicle to provide such treatment to 2,100 youngsters living in a settlement of former street urchins in an old jail. Shanghai Rotary Club President 1947-48, George J. McCarthy (right 1), and his fellow Rotarians posed beside the Club's Mobile Anti-Trachoma Clinic (上海扶輪社主辦—防治砂眼診療車)*



## Hong Kong Rotary Club Trachoma Clinic in 1950



Adults and children queued up for free treatment at the Hong Kong Rotary Club's Trachoma Clinic. The door plaque with Rotary wheel read: 香港扶輪社—砂眼免費診療所



Patients filed into the clinic for registration first, then for free modern treatment. The Clinic treated some 800 patients per month.



Outside the Trachoma Clinic stood the 2 Hong Kong Rotarian ophthalmic surgeons who served the project free, Dr. Goh Kok-Chuan (吳國全) and Dr. Goh Kok-Aun (吳國安), identical twins.