

The Observatory 'Under the Same Sky' Reunion Dinner

The Observatory Staff Association

A lot of changes and turnover of events could happen in a decade since the last major reunion activity in celebration of the 120th anniversary of the Observatory ten years ago.

The Observatory's 130th anniversary 'Under the Same Sky' reunion dinner on 3 November 2013 was a meaningful time-marker with current and former colleagues bringing their friends and relatives to the fun-filled occasion. Around 250 guests attended the dinner, including ex-Directors and retired staff living abroad who came all the way back to Hong Kong to renew acquaintance, sharing stories and memories of the good times at the big family.

The programmes for the evening offered a rare opportunity for all to appreciate the hidden talents not normally shown by our hard-working colleagues. We took a trip down memory lane looking at historical photos, tested our inside knowledge in a quiz about classic Observatory legends and myths, and sang our hearts out in the obligatory singing contest at the end!

*Through 130 years baptized with tumultuous storms, we have made great strides with you;
Through 130 years sustained with unflinching effort, we shall move further forward with you.*

Looking forward to the next reunion!



Along with guests attending the 130th anniversary 'Under the Same Sky' reunion dinner, Mr SHUN Chi-ming, Director of the Hong Kong Observatory (2nd from left standing at the front), toasting with Ms Veronica Heywood, daughter of ex-Director Mr Graham Heywood, and other former Directors.

25th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Meteorological Society

LI Ping-wah



The Observatory and the Hong Kong Meteorological Society, together with the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Chinese-American Oceanic and Atmospheric Association and World Green Organization jointly organized the 5th Conference on East Asia and Western Pacific Meteorology and Climate on from 2 to 4 November 2013 to celebrate the **25th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Meteorological Society**. More than 100 meteorologists from Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan and around the world, including renowned meteorologists who contributed to the establishment of the Hong Kong Meteorological Society, participated in this vibrant and, at times, nostalgic event. A wide range of topics was discussed at the Conference, including climate change and extreme weather. Representatives from a number of meteorological societies in Asia were also present to explore ways to promote education of meteorology and climate change in the communities in an effort to cultivate a better living environment on Earth.



My Childhood at the Observatory

Editorial Board

Among the guests at the reunion dinner was a lady coming all the way from Dublin, Ireland. She was Ms Veronica Heywood, daughter of the first post-war Director, Mr Graham Heywood.

Veronica talked about her childhood at the Observatory. Quarter No.1, the residence of the then Director and a cosy villa with living and dining rooms downstairs and bedrooms upstairs. The open ground of the Observatory was a dream playground for her and kids of other Observatory staff.

Among the many fond memories of the Observatory, she was most impressed by the diligence of Observatory staff working tirelessly in response to the threat of approaching typhoons. As vividly shown in a sketch (Figure 1) drawn by her father, the Director was busy on the phone, while other colleagues worked feverishly to collect and analyze data, hoist warning signals and despatch the latest weather forecast to various users.

During Veronica's talk, she shared some old photos taken by her father and also demonstrated her own artistic talent by showing her paintings on the scenery and landscape of Hong Kong when she returned for a visit in the 90s. Her feelings and sentiments for Hong Kong was plain for all to see.

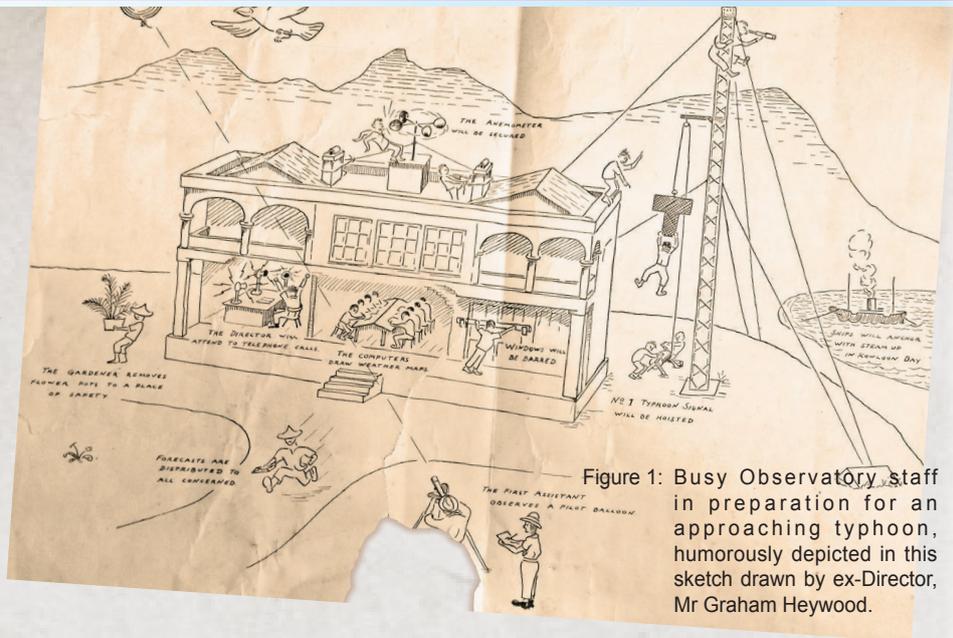


Figure 1: Busy Observatory staff in preparation for an approaching typhoon, humorously depicted in this sketch drawn by ex-Director, Mr Graham Heywood.

Somewhere in Time 60 Years Ago

Sandy SONG

On a rainy morning, I was not only busy in arranging Ms Veronica Heywood's talk at the Observatory, but also trying to get in touch with Mr LAU Tin-chi in a race against time to turn the clock back to 60 years ago.

Mr LAU Tin-chi, an experienced radio broadcaster and media expert, is the son of a former Observatory staff, Mr LAU Pak-wa (Figure 1), who started his long career of 33 years at the Observatory before World War II. LAU Tin-chi was taken to visit the Observatory grounds where Mr Graham Heywood, the then Director of the Observatory, and his family took up residence in Quarter No.1. LAU Tin-chi recalled the spacious lawn and small woods around the Observatory, a dream playground for him and Mr Heywood's younger daughter, Veronica. To him, Mr Heywood and his family were genuinely friendly and amiable people, showing none of the arrogance often associated with colonial officials towards their Chinese subordinates or colleagues.

After returning to Hong Kong from Ireland for the Observatory reunion in

Mr LAU Tin-chi wrote an article recalling his childhood memories at the Observatory for the Observatory's Blog (<http://www.hko.gov.hk/blog/en/archives/00000152.htm>). We would like to take this opportunity to say "thank you" for adding a colourful touch of warmth and nostalgia to the blog!



Figure 2: Ms Veronica Heywood and Mr LAU Tin-chi re-visiting Quarter No.1 hand-in-hand again after 60 years.

Figure 1: Group photo of the Observatory staff after World War II. Ms Veronica Heywood was the girl in braids sitting on the ground in the middle. Mr LAU Tin-chi's father, Mr LAU Pak-wa, was 4th from the right in the 2nd row.



early November, Veronica showed an interest in the whereabouts of a former staff, 'Mr LAU'. Piecing the information together, Mr SHUN Chi-ming, Director of the Hong Kong Observatory, identified the connections and with the help of ex-Director, Mr LAM Chiu-ying, LAU Tin-chi was located within the day. He immediately agreed to meet his childhood friend at the Observatory and, along with Veronica, re-visited Quarter No.1 (Figure 2) where they spent their childhood days some 60 years ago. Describing his feelings at the time, he said, "It was just like old time; nothing changed, nothing lost, and the fond affection of friendships from yesteryears still rippled through the air." It was also a perfect illustration of the theme for the 130th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Observatory, as indeed destiny had brought us together 'Under the Same Sky'.



Grooming the Rising Stars with RTHK

Sandy SONG

Professional staff of the Observatory have been hosting TV weather programmes as a paid 'outside job' for individual TV stations on a government-approved honorarium basis since 1987. This direct-to-home delivery of weather related information via television, a popular service much appreciated by the public, finally took its place in history as it entered a new phase after more than 25 years of operation.

A new era of TV weather programme production began on 30 December 2013. TV weather programmers produced in-house by the Observatory is now presented in a revamped, unified format and offered as a free public weather service for broadcast by all television stations. In addition, a new series called 'Cool Met Stuff' is also featured on Friday evenings. The programmes are also made directly available to members of the public via the mobile app 'MyObservatory' and the Observatory webpage (<http://www.hko.gov.hk/video/video.shtml>), meeting the long-standing demand for TV weather services to enhance the public's understanding on meteorology and to raise public awareness on natural disaster prevention.

Rising Stars

The re-launched TV weather programmes also come with fresh faces. The new presenters drawn from various divisions of the Observatory will take turn to make their appearances. So watch out for the rising stars!



Mr KONG Wai

Miss LEE Fung-ying

Mr SHUM Chi-tai

Mr TSOI Tze-shun

Dr LAM Hok-yin

While these young presenters are all experts in their own specialized fields, TV presentation skill is an entirely different matter. In collaboration with RTHK (TV), experienced media experts including Mr NGAI Ping-long, Mr LAW Kai-sun, Miss HAU Ka-ming and Ms HO Pui-yee held training sessions at the Observatory to pass on their experiences in various performance aspects such as the use of voice, pronunciation of words, pacing of delivery, as well as facial and body expression. Apart from the need to project a professional image, they also aim to create individual styles that will bring out the personality of each presenter so that the weather information can be communicated to the viewers in a confident and convincing manner.



Mr LAW Kai-sun (right) demonstrating different styles of expression.



Ms HO Pui-yee (2nd from left), experienced host of TV programmes, making a point during the training session.

The re-formed core team of TV weather presenters also include several veterans who through their experiences and knowledge will help the new members to grow into the team.



Mr YEUNG Hon-yin

Ms SONG Man-kuen

Dr YEUNG Kwok-chung

Partnership

A Stargazing Event

Dickson LAU

Comet ISON (C/2012 S1) was one of the most publicized astronomical events for stargazers in 2013. In view of this, the Observatory and the Hong Kong Space Museum met in mid 2013 to discuss ways to conduct a series of joint comet observation activities.

On 25 November, a few days before the perihelion of the

comet, an Observatory's stargazing team went to Cape D'Augilar with an 8" Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope and a 4" refractive telescope to prepare for the observation (Figure 1). On arrival, the sky was still clear and all team members were excited about the prospect of seeing a spectacular comet before dawn. However, soon after the telescopes were set up, easterly winds picked up with low clouds forming gradually. The number of observable stars in the sky became less and less, and ultimately there was not a single chance for even a glimpse of the comet.

Reaching perihelion on 28 November, Comet ISON disintegrated under the intense heat of the Sun and left behind only a trail of debris. An image of the comet was captured by the telescope of the Hong Kong Space Museum earlier in mid November (Figure 2). While the Observatory's stargazing team could not quite see the comet, they were nonetheless rewarded with some amazing astronomical photos of Orion Nebula(M42), Big Dipper and Jupiter with two of its satellites after the telescopes were set up at Cape D'Augilar.



Figure 1: The Observatory's stargazing team (from left: Mr Dickson LAU, Mr CHEE Shiu-Chung and Mr CHAN Wing-Hang) used an 8" Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope for the observation at Cape D'Augilar.



Figure 2: Comet ISON (taken on 18 November 2013 by the Hong Kong Space Museum).

HKO and SCHSA in Reminder to be Prepared for the Impact of Cold Spell

LEE Tsz-cheung

The Observatory and the Senior Citizen Home Safety Association (SCHSA) jointly held a press conference on 13 December to remind the public to be prepared for an upcoming cold spell. In particular, members of the public were encouraged to show their care to elderly people at home or in the neighbourhood, and to provide timely assistance to them when necessary.



Past and Present

40th Anniversary of Information Technology at the Observatory

LI Yuet-sim

The year 2013 marked the 40th anniversary of information technology at the Observatory. Back in 1973, the Observatory established a Computer Division and installed its first computer system (Figure1(a)). Running at 10 FLOPS with a memory of 64 kilobytes, the first computer was mainly used to decode meteorological telegrams and to assist in weather research. Computing capacity has been upgraded over the years and by late-2013, the processing power of the new computer system (Figure1(b)) at the Observatory has reached 12 Tera- FLOPS, in other words 1,200,000,000,000 times faster than the first computer 40 years ago.

Advancement in information technology has enabled the enhancement of weather prediction capabilities at the Observatory. In respect of public weather services, the Observatory first launched its 3-day weather forecast

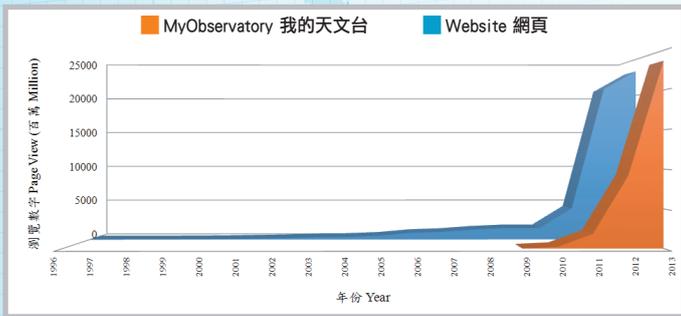


Figure 2: The Observatory's website and "MyObservatory" visitors' statistics

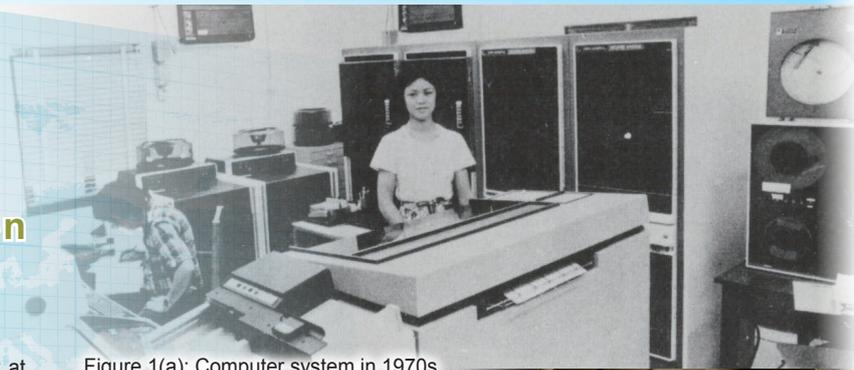


Figure 1(a): Computer system in 1970s

in 1983, since extended to 5 days in 2000, and then 7 days in 2003. Forecasts with finer resolution were also provided to the public in recent years (see the following article). The Observatory was one of the first government departments delivering services through the Internet and mobile platforms, with its website established as early as 1996 and the Observatory's mobile app, 'MyObservatory' launched in 2010. In particular, 'MyObservatory' has since grown in popularity and in the first three quarters of 2013, the total numbers of page views of the Observatory's website and 'MyObservatory' have reached 23.3 billions and 23.7 billions respectively, much higher than the annual figures in 2012 (Figure 2).



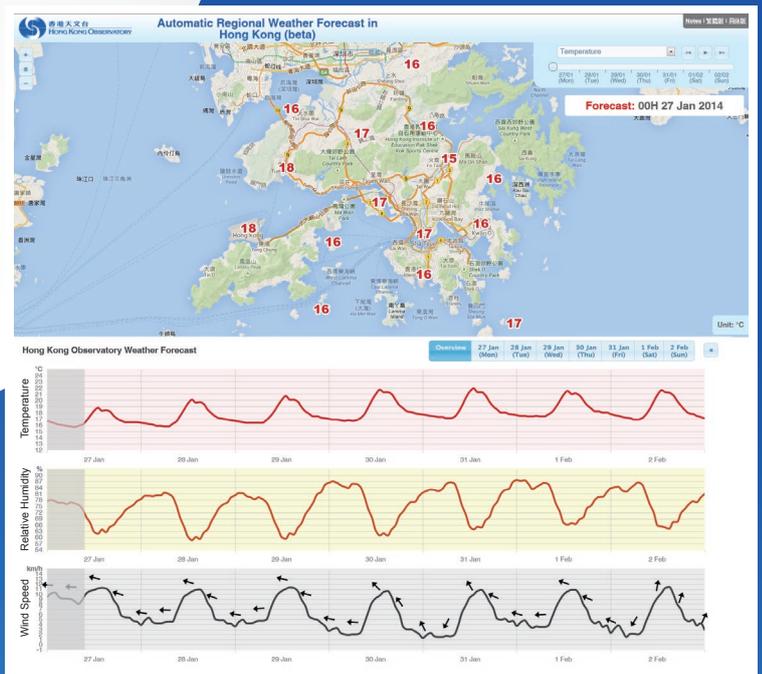
Figure 1(b): High performance computer system in 2013

Riding on the wave of information technology, the Observatory will endeavour to continue enhancing its weather services in the years to come.

Automatic Regional Weather Forecast

WONG Wai-kin

The Observatory launched the "Automatic Regional Weather Forecast" webpage which provides location-specific weather forecast of 15 selected locations in Hong Kong on a trial basis (http://maps.weather.gov.hk/ocf/index_e.html). The automatic forecasts are updated after midday and before midnight everyday. Forecast data are based on outputs from several global numerical weather prediction models and the Observatory's mesoscale model. The forecasts include hourly prediction of temperature, relative humidity, wind direction and wind speed, as well as daily probability of precipitation over Hong Kong for the next seven days so as to assist the public in planning their activities. The webpage integrates the geographical information system to display the weather condition over Hong Kong. When user clicks on a station forecast, a pop-up panel will show the time series charts of the aforementioned forecast elements.



Webpage of the Automatic Regional Weather Forecast and the panel showing forecast time series at the Hong Kong Observatory.

Side Lights

The Observatory launched a new mobile weather app 'MyAeroMET' that allows airlines and pilots to obtain timely weather information for major flight routes and airports at any time.



19 December

During a media lunch, the Director showed his collection of historical storm photos and pointed out the need to learn from the past. Against the background of global climate change and rising global mean temperature, Hong Kong would not be immune from the threat of more frequent extreme weather. To mitigate the impact of climate change, we should raise our awareness in disaster preparedness and change our wasteful lifestyle by making better use of natural resources.



HKO

21 November



HKO

21-29 October

Participants from Guangdong Meteorological Bureau (2nd from left to 2nd from right) and Malaysia Meteorological Department (1st on the right) attended a training session on aviation forecast organized by the Observatory.



HKO

8 November

Junior reporters from 'Build a Low Carbon Hong Kong' scheme interviewed the Director to understand the effect of carbon emission on climate change.



HKO

28 November

Mr Tony Kirkham (7th from left on the front row), Head Arboretum of Kew Gardens (Royal Botanic Gardens), conducted a tree walk and delivered a tree talk on ways to protect trees. The talk attracted more than 100 participants, including Sir David Akers-Jones and Mr LAM Chiu-ying, former Director of the Observatory (respectively 8th and 4th from left on the front row), as well as members from the Hong Kong Gardening Society.

"HKO Calendar 2014"

The calendar contains stunning images, all taken locally in Hong Kong, that reflect the changeable mood and colours associated with different weather phenomena.

Thanks to your support, the calendar proved extremely popular and was sold out within a week at the Publications Centre of Information Services Department and the Kowloon Map Publications Centre of the Lands Department.



Please visit the following webpages for more details:
<http://www.hko.gov.hk/wisnew.htm>
<http://www.hko.gov.hk/hkonews/indexe.htm>

People

Staff Up Close

A Wonderful Memory

Dickson LAU

It was indeed a great honour to be awarded the Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation 2013, and quite a memorable moment as I received the certificate from Mr Paul TANG, the Secretary for the Civil Service, on 28 November 2013. The award was a great encouragement to me as well as a recognition of all the effort I made in my work. It was really a big surprise when I knew I would get the award. I have always tried to perform my duties with a heart, just do my best and keep trying with a view to contributing to the community and serving members of the public, never expecting something like this in return.



Mr Paul TANG, Secretary for the Civil Service, presented the Commendation Certificate to Mr Dickson LAU (left).



3rd Quarter, 2013 25 October
Mr CHAN Sai-tick (left)

Best TV Weather Programme Presenters



Staff Promotion

10 September

Mr LI Sun-wai (left), Victor promoted to Senior Scientific Officer.

Staff of the Observatory who received words of thanks and commendation from the public or organizations during September to December 2013 :

- Ms Sandy SONG (Senior Scientific Officer);
- Mr David HUI (Scientific Officer);
- Mr YEUNG Hon-yin (Scientific Officer);
- Mr CHEN Yung (Scientific Assistant);
- Mr NG Chun-yuen (Scientific Assistant);
- Mr KEUNG Kwok-ye (Property Attendant)

Soccer Game

19 & 26 October



"Forecasting and Warning Services Branch" was the champion of the 130th Anniversary Soccer Game.

Planting Day

9 November



Mr SHUN Chi-ming (3rd from left), Director of the Observatory, in action on Planting Day 2013 with staff and their families.