

## February 28 to March 1

### An interlude in Paraparaumu and Wellington

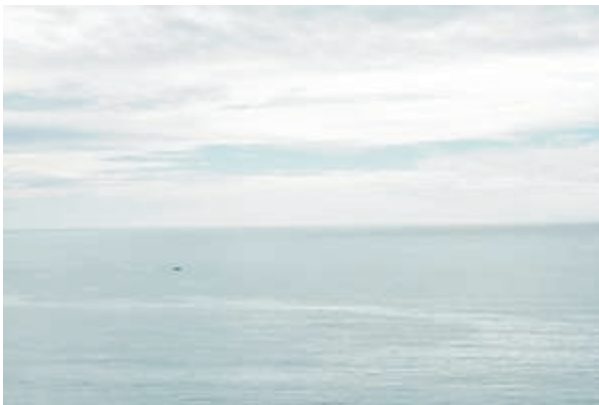
#### February 28 Paraparaumu

Rain overnight so it was dull, damp and chilly in the morning. I pottered, reorganising my bag and trying to separate the things I would need in Australia from the rest.



*The car park was full*

Valerie went to the hairdresser and I had a snooze on the sofa. As soon as she returned, we drove to the station, found a place in the crowded car park and abandoned the car. The train took us into Wellington with the dull weather not helping the sea views for most of the way.



*A dull day across the ocean*

Once in Wellington, we had a coffee in the Astoria, one of my favourite Wellington cafes, not to mention a piece of cake, my second in three days. My diet is under threat.

The wine auction kept me entertained for a couple of hours. Steve was even more entertained and spent much more than I did. I was very pleased to make some very good (cheap) purchases. One of them was a very expensive bottle of Barossa shiraz which I



*How to wreck a diet*

bought for a fraction of its real value. I will take it to Sue & Wayne's and just hope that it hasn't gone off. Valerie and Sue sat at the back among the antiques awaiting the next auction and tried to conceal their boredom.



*The auction progressed*

We walked to the waterfront and sat outside the Crab Shack. The food was very good but the service was desperately slow. It took a couple of hours to complete two courses - a breakdown in the electronic communication between the waiting staff and the kitchen. Not good.



*We waited a L O N G time*



*The food was good when it arrived*

While we were there, the new Prime Minister and her entourage walked past. They had been attending the arrival of a new waka (Maori war canoe) built of fibreglass but a cultural icon. We walked over and had a look after the main party had completed their tour of inspection.



*The new waka*

We arrived back at the station to find no trains, only replacement buses, and the next one was 55 minutes away. Not a good end to the evening. We finally reached home just before midnight.

## **March 1 Paraparaumu to Wellington**

Lots of sunshine and a gentle breeze. Valerie departed to the charity shop, leaving me to do more packing and to make arrangements for my final week in New Zealand.

At 11.00, I set off into warm sunshine and blue skies with only a hint of cloud. It is the nicest weather I have seen for a fortnight. The path follows the airport perimeter fence, passing lots of flowers. There were a few people out walking but it was pretty quiet. With lots of streams around, I was able to photograph some Paradise Ducks sitting in the sun.

Once I had reached the mall, having walked a bit less than four kilometres, I bought some post cards and then went to the bank to ask for some Chinese currency. The lady said that they no longer sold it and that I should try at the airport. For a country trying hard to do business with China, this seemed a strange move on the part of one of the major banks.



*The sun shone over the airport*

I had a coffee and read the paper before crossing the road to the charity shop. Valerie drove me home for lunch and some heavy lifting in preparation for her forthcoming move. She then drove me to the station, the train took me into Wellington and a bus took me to Jane & Robert's, all roughly on time.



*Wild flowers along the route*

I spent the evening eating, drinking and chatting before having an early night.



*Sunbathing duck*

## March 31 to April 4

### Hong Kong

#### March 31 Shanghai to Hong Kong



*Less mist than yesterday*

As ever, I woke before the alarm, completed packing and went for breakfast. Through the window I could see that whilst it was slightly misty, it was nothing like as bad as yesterday.



*Plenty of variety for breakfast*

I returned to my room, watched TV for a few minutes and went down to Reception fifteen minutes earlier than necessary. I checked out, then spotted a man brandishing a board with my name on it so I climbed into his car.



*Light traffic - by Shanghai standards!*

Being a Saturday, the traffic was relatively light so we made rapid progress, slowed briefly and then travelled at speed again, arriving in 50 minutes rather than the 90 it had taken to do the opposite journey the day that I arrived.

At the airport, the lady at the check-in desk asked if I would like to catch the earlier flight. I bit her hand off, rushed through Immigration (a little over ten minutes) and found my way down two escalators to the gate lounge. There, I boarded a bus and waited with loads of others for something to happen.



*Our plane was parked & waiting*

Ten or fifteen minutes later, we set off, eventually spotted a Cathay plane at the edge of the airport, across the main taxi way. We waited for another ten minutes while half a dozen other planes crossed our bows, before finally arriving at the foot of the steps. We boarded and finally took off about two and a half hours earlier than I was scheduled to. I will have to plan what to do with my extra time in Hong Kong.

### Shanghai

I was apprehensive when I set off, fearing that my complete lack of knowledge of both the place and the language would make things difficult. If there had been a major catastrophe, that would probably still have been the case. There wasn't, however, and all went well. Quite a number of people spoke a little English and nods, waves and smiles did the rest - mostly!

What do I remember of the city?

1) The size. 25 million people means that it is huge. I only saw a tiny fraction of it. I have no idea how or where the majority of the people live.

2) The traffic. Horrific congestion and an almost total disregard for traffic signals, particularly on the part of the electric motorbikes and the pedal bikes. In spite of this, it seems to work. The electric bikes weave their way along the pavements without hitting people. The cars jostle gently for position. There is minimal hooting and the drivers seem very phlegmatic. Given the huge congestion, that it just as well.

3) The flowers. They adorn the city quite brilliantly. Colours everywhere. It is worth coming here just for those.

Everything else fades into a blur. I had a good time, ate well and only spent just over half of my money. I will try to come back next year - I have to get value out of my horrifically expensive visa.

The flight was smooth enough and I had some perfectly acceptable dim sum for brunch. It probably wasn't worth paying for a business class ticket on a two and a half hour flight but it did save having to worry about baggage allowances etc.



*The train swept me onto the island*

Everything went according to plan at Hong Kong. It tends to out here. I was through the formalities and on the train within 30 minutes of touchdown. There is a spectacular new road crossing the sea near the railway line but I screwed up my efforts to take a photo. The only delay was of fifteen minutes waiting for the shuttle bus to take me from the train station to the hotel. Even with the 200 metre walk from the bus stop, I was checked in to the hotel within 90 minutes of touchdown.



*Construction work everywhere*

I did a quick turn round, fought my way through the ever present construction work and caught the ferry to Tsim Tsa Tsui. The sun was shining brightly and the harbour looked beautiful.



*The harbour looked good*

On the other side of the harbour, it was heaving. Quite normal for a Saturday afternoon. A nice lady in the Information Office gave me some maps and suggested a remote island for me to visit. I will have to check the ferry times as there's only one in each direction (that proved to be incorrect as they seemed to have run extra ones for the Easter holiday). There would also be a shortage of restaurants on the island.



*Sunshine over Kowloon*



*They advertised Swiss watches!*

I was mystified to find a group of "English" guardsmen promoting Swatch watches. As they are Swiss, I can't quite see the connection. The display of plastic polar bears also seemed out of place on such a hot day.



*Not what you expect to find in Hong Kong*

The Old Marine Police HQ (1881 Centre) always has an outlandish display outside. This time's seemed tame, with greyhounds guarding flowers. One of them was very like Axel. I bought some money at HSBC and caught the train to Yau Ma Tei. Shanghai Street, just round the corner from the station, is home to the nation's cook shops. I made a couple of purchases and then sat in a "sitting out area" for a rest and to write my diary.



*A fine guard dog*



*Shanghai Street cook shops*



*I rested in the sitting out area*

The Temple Night Market is famous but it was only just opening up. I'm not a particular fan of it - loads of rubbish and very pushy stall holders - but it lay on my route to the train station so I walked through.



*Yardley Brothers brew good beer*

I got off the train again at Tsim Tsa Tsui and fought my way to Ashley Road still home to the Kowloon Taproom. I sat on a high chair, listened to the rock music and drank a Yardley Brothers Machine Men Pale Ale. Very good and very hoppy. A quick visit to a small supermarket supplied some basic provisions - mainly for the island walk tomorrow. Biscuits, cheese and oranges were the main menu items.



*Szechuan prawns*

I then walked the short distance to Hing Fat. I have visited this restaurant many times before, mainly because it is very convenient. It is quite good but not cheap. This time I had two spicy dishes, Singapore noodles with lots of prawns and Szechuan prawns with lots of green beans. Both had a fair kick and lots of flavour. Following my earlier beer, I restricted myself to a lemon tea.



*Tasteful street displays*

There were large displays outside the iSquare mall. The Easter one provided lots of opportunities for photography. Most were of children but this sweet little person was also doing some modelling.

I caught the train back to Wan Chai and walked home via the Pacific Coffee Co so that I could ask about their opening hours tomorrow. The bad news was that they wouldn't be opening until 08.00 so that I will have to carry breakfast as well as lunch.

Back at the hotel I did my usual evening chores and researched the ferry schedules. It looks as if I will have another early morning.

## April 1 Hong Kong

It was an early morning. This time the alarm did wake me. I was out of my room by 07.15 and made good haste through a remarkably quiet city to the MTR. The trains, all four of them, played very nicely and I arrived at University Station in the time forecast by the transport web site.



*I joined a throng ...*

I found signs pointing to the ferry and followed these. I also joined a throng of people with back packs, picnic baskets and walking poles looking as if they were off for a day in the wilderness. Not too wild, however, as there were quite a number of small children in tow.



*... which became a queue outside the loo*

I found a lengthy queue and also a public loo, which I patronised. When I emerged from it, the queue had almost doubled in length.

I stood in line, for 40 minutes, watched two ferries depart and finally boarded the third. There appeared to be a couple more waiting in reserve. I boarded at about 09.10 and waited for the boat to sail.

As I paid, I was offered two return boats, one at 14.45 and one at 18.00. I chose the earlier



*Lots of boats awaited*

one as I had wondered how to spend so many hours on a five kilometre walk. With so many people heading to the island, a leisurely walk and lunch might not be an option.



*We were almost full*

We sailed at 09.20, almost full. The sea was calm, there was a gentle breeze and I was glad I was wearing my best New Zealand merino. The scenery was very pretty but not exciting.

We passed some other boats, saw a huge statue in the distance and also what looked like a large dam. I nibbled my biscuits and some nuts as we sailed as lunch might not be a happening thing and there had been no breakfast.



*Lots of other boats in the mist*



*We passed the inner islands*



*The pointy end was good for selfies*



*Saw a huge statue ...*

I made a brief foray to the pointy end and discovered that the view was obscured by people but that it was considered a good spot for selfies.



*We tied up at the wharf*



*... a large dam ...*

After about an hour and a half we arrived at the island, Tung Ping Chau, to give it its full name. The nice lady at the Information Office had said that I should wait until everyone had disembarked and that I should go in the opposite direction round the island. As there were so many people and they went in every conceivable direction, this wasn't particularly helpful advice.



*... and lots more boats*



*We disembarked*

I followed the guidebook, instead, and turned left off the wharf and along the beach.



*Tilted sedimentary rocks*

The rocks are tilted sedimentary ones, at a sharp angle to the sand. They aren't that exciting and not dissimilar to the formations in Plimmerton. The waves rippled gently onto the shore and, even with so many people around, it was almost tranquil.



*The landing stage in the background*

Behind the beach were signs of an old, now uninhabited, village. One of the properties seemed to be functioning as a café. The guidebook suggested that the island had been abandoned by the residents. The banner attached to the trees, however, (I saw several of them) intimated that they had been thrown off in order to make way for the UNESCO Geopark.



*The disused village*

I didn't feel it politic to ask anyone. There was also a public toilet, in which I changed from jeans into shorts. It was quite warm outside.



*This suggests a sad story of forced removal*

The top end of the island featured two large rocky outcrops, which had attracted large crowds. There were also rock pools, featuring lots of small fish. I sat on a rock for a bit and looked at the waves.



*Back to the beach*

The path moved slightly inland and climbed up lots of steps. According to the guide book, it was only about 40 metres but it seemed steep in the heat. The waves could be heard to the left but couldn't be seen through the trees.



*Lots of rock pools*



*Butterflies*



*The outcrops were popular*

The path through the trees continued for a couple of kilometres, during which time I heard some birds and saw some butterflies. It eventually reached a gap in the undergrowth, through which I could see a steep path leading to a rather fine beach. There were lots of people playing on it but I decided not to risk life and limb by scrambling down to join them so continued on my way.



*Up the steps from the beach*



*A fine beach*

There was another small hill and then a gentle descent onto the beach and more rocks. I had a sit on a convenient rock, listened to the waves and watched some brightly coloured people in brightly coloured boats.



*Back to the beach ...*



*... and the pretty boats*



*Too much food but what a view!*

The largest café was a little further along the beach so I found a table, sat down and read the menu. The Chinese couple at the next table asked if I would like to have some of their salt & pepper fish (rabbit fish, I think) as they had been given far too much. I thanked them and had a small bowl.

Feeling full, I paid my bill and waddled the last few hundred metres back to the wharf. A ferry was parked and a second one had just arrived so I climbed aboard the first. When it was only about half full, it departed, twenty minutes early.



*Luncheon on the beach*

I ordered a small Singapore noodles and waited until a huge bowl - it would have fed three with ease - arrived. It tasted excellent but I only managed to eat about one third of it. What a waste! My friends on the next table said that the chef was new and had recently returned from cheffing in the Netherlands. I assume he must have bankrupted his restaurant over there by serving excessive portions.



*Back to where I started*

The boat, newer than the one I had arrived on, had very few seats in the open air. I was sat by a window but it was well above my shoulder so couldn't take photos. Taking the obvious way out, I had a snooze.

We took slightly longer to return than we did to go out, so it was about 16.00 when we tied up back on the mainland.



*The ferry returned to the island*

We disembarked and I could immediately hear a low flying helicopter. I finally spotted it, trailing a monsoon bucket beneath. I then spotted smoke rising from the hills behind some tall buildings. The helicopter swooped over the smoke, dropped its water and then returned to the sea for a refill. Unfortunately, this was being done just out of sight.



*Smoke was rising from the hills*



*The fire service was already in action*

I walked back to the station, played on four trains and walked back to the hotel, arriving at about 17.15, ten hours after I had departed. I needed a shower and a rest. Just after 18.00 I left the hotel and walked round the corner to Sabah, a Malaysian restaurant I always visit when I am in Hong Kong. As ever, it was busy but I was found a table.

Beef rendang and the beans in shrimp paste were very good. The roti, as usual, was as good as I have ever eaten anywhere. Almost all food here is designed to be eaten by a group, and eating for one - particularly a one who is on a diet - is difficult. My decision to arrive early was justified as, by the time I departed, they were queuing out onto the street.



*Beef rendang ...*

I walked a couple of blocks to The Devil's Advocate, for my first beer there on this trip. The Carlsberg wasn't nearly as good as the IPA at the Kowloon Taproom but it was a lot cheaper.



*... and beer*

## April 2 Hong Kong

The first leisurely start in days, although I still woke early. Outside, it looked cloudy but pleasant enough. The forecast suggested only a two or three percent chance of rain so I believed it.

Breakfast was some of the cheese and biscuits purchased for yesterday's lunch. I fought a problem on my computer but it seemed to be playing properly when I put it back in the safe.

I left the hotel at about 09.00 and walked the few minutes to Pacific Coffee Co for a tea. I very seldom drink coffee out here. It's the wrong drink for the heat. It was reasonably quiet outside - but it is a Bank Holiday.

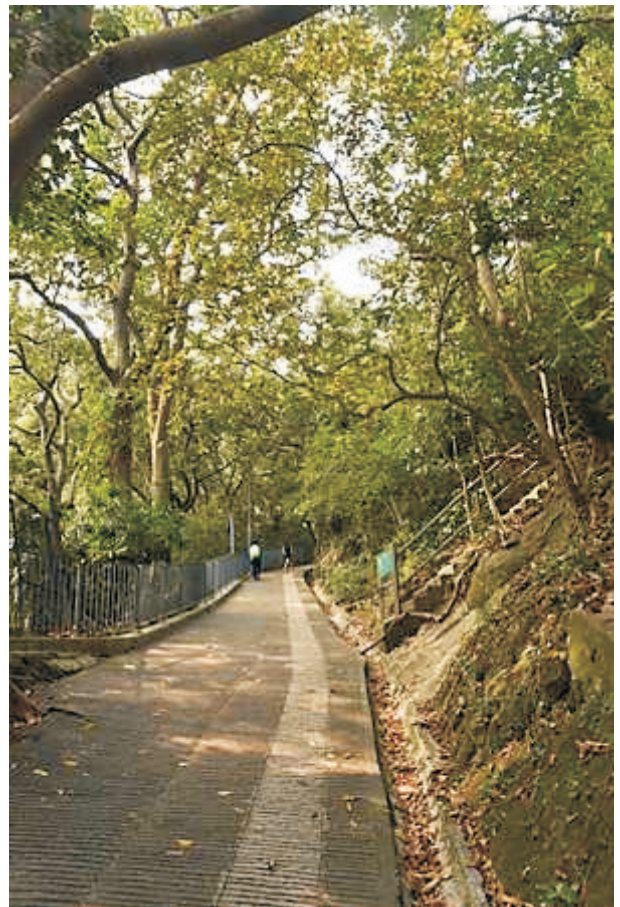


*Lee Tung Avenue*

I crossed a couple of main streets then reached the start of my walk, Lee Tung Avenue. This used to be industrial but is now trendy with posh shops and decorations. I walked through the shops, along the next road a couple of blocks and then reached Wan Chai Gap Road.



*Uphill all the way*



*Out of the city and into the trees*

From here on, it was a steep uphill path for at least fifteen minutes, rapidly moving from buildings to trees, with lots of notice boards describing the local environment.



*Into jogging territory*



*What a view to run with*

The first section of the climb comes to a halt at Bowen Road, commissioned by Governor Bowen in the 1880's and was the third East West road on the island. It now serves as a fitness trail and there were many runners and a few dogs in evidence.



*Exercise for everybody*

I missed the steps to Lovers Rock at the first attempt, went half a kilometre past and then returned. I staggered up a flight of steep steps, past an assortment of shrines, and admired the rocks.



*Lovers Rock*

The promised views were not available as they were hidden by the undergrowth. I climbed down again and sat at the public rest area, watching a local family with several small dogs and writing my diary.



*A good place for a rest*

The next climb was probably the steepest. It only took fifteen minutes, however, with lots of stops. For the latter half I was sustained by the traffic noises from above, which meant the road, the bus stop and a café. Wan Chai Gap Park had seats and a cold water shop so I was able to relax and congratulate myself on another mission accomplished. The climb might have helped to alleviate the damage caused by yesterday's over eating.



*The uphill path continued*



*A strange creature in Wan Chai Gap Park*



*Back to the main road*

The Police Museum was a disappointment. It was closed on Mondays and Public Holidays. Today being both, it was doubly closed. As I walked back to the main road, I saw a bus approaching but couldn't be bothered to chase it as they come every ten minutes or so. I then realised that another couple were in hot pursuit and it was waiting for them, so I joined the chase and leapt aboard.

We descended the hill carefully - just as well, it always scares me - and I got off again at the bottom of the steps on Queen's Road, where I had started the morning's walk. I have to admit that it was much easier coming down than going up!



*A much needed bottle*



*Back to ground level*

Not having any particular plan, I walked through the market and then found myself outside the MTR. I decided that a beer would be a good idea so took a couple of trains to Tsim Tsa Tsui. Haiphong Road was reasonably quiet and I was soon outside the Taproom, which was closed. Delicious Kitchen wasn't so I ordered wanton soup. That shouldn't be too big.



*Wanton soup*

It was a reasonable size, plenty of flavour and I managed not to squirt any of the wantons out of my chopsticks and onto the floor. With a couple of cups of tea, it was a refreshing lunch.

As I walked past the Taproom, it was opening up so an afternoon beer might be possible. I continued to the end of Ashley Road, at least 50 yards, and crossed over Haiphong Road and into Kowloon Park.

The Architectural Heritage Centre was open so I ventured inside. I have toured the permanent exhibition a couple of times so only visited the temporary exhibition on Guangzhou's growth and importance as a trading centre. It wasn't exciting but it did get me thinking about next year. Perhaps I should go there rather than returning to Shanghai. It would make the flying easier.



*The flamingoes were on form*

The flamingos, as ever, were fine but there appeared to be lots of "midges" or perhaps "malarial mosquitoes" attracted by the water so I beat a hasty retreat.



*Small birdies having a shower*

I did find some other birdies frolicking atop the waterfall so I tried to photograph them and also one which I found fossicking in the leaves.



*A popular place for Tai Chi*

I sheltered from the sun for a few minutes in a large covered area, watched a man do Tai Chi and rested my legs. After this morning, they were tired.



*The Turtles "Happy Together"*

The small fountain looked good and seemed to keep the turtles happy.



*The sculptures were "interesting"*

The sculpture court was "interesting" and the flowers were brightly coloured. As I have said before, this is a beautiful place, so different to the hustle and bustle which surrounds it.

With the sun now completely over the yardarm - it is in New Zealand! - I returned to the Taproom and enjoyed a Lion Rock Icy Lotus, a cross between a wheat beer and an APA. I only had a small one and it was good.



*The Kowloon Taproom*

I toyed with the idea of returning to Wan Chai on the ferry but couldn't face the thought of all the road works round the ferry terminal. I opted for the easy solution of the train.

Back at the hotel, the exercise of the last two days caught up with me and I had a snooze. I did some repacking, watched TV and made some phone calls. I then showered, changed and prepared to go out to dinner.

My plan had been to go to the American Restaurant, just up the road. Unfortunately, it was locked, barred and bolted.

Back towards the hotel, on the second floor of an office block, is the Majesty, a fairly posh place. I arrived, discovered that I was the only person there, and was ushered to a large table. Last time I came here, I commented that the decor was what I thought one would find in a tart's boudoir. It hasn't changed. As I sat, several large parties arrived. It is a place for celebrations.

I ordered beef and vegetables with flat noodles. This was excellent, tender beef, crunchy vegetables and beautiful sauce. There were far too many noodles but that probably goes without saying.



*A dumpling to die for*

The piece(s) de resistance, however, were the siu mai, pork and prawn dumplings. There were four large ones. They didn't look much neater than the ones that I make but the flavours .... Quite brilliant. I'm sure they were the best I have ever tasted. I might come here again and have them with just a simple dish of greens. That would be a wonderful meal.

This was all washed down with tea. I was given a pot of tea and a pot of boiling water, which I mixed at intervals throughout the meal.

In normal Chinese fashion, the waitresses alternated between serving food and playing with some of the toddlers who were part of the large parties. It was a very good meal.

### April 3 Hong Kong

A nice day again over the harbour. I still woke early but ate the remainder of my food and fiddled around until 09.00, when I set out to catch the bus to Stanley.

I returned to my room immediately, having convinced myself that I had forgotten to lock the safe. I had locked it, of course. I set out again, noticing that I was surrounded by very tall, very slim girls all wearing tee shirts from the Royal Ballet School.



*I looked at the views ...*



*One shot from the bus worked*



*... and at the empty stalls*

I walked to the bus stop, caught a Number 6 and was soon bouncing my way to Stanley. The road goes up and down and round and round, is narrow and is busy. I tried to take a few photos through the window and probably failed with all of them.

There were lots of empty stalls which were for sale, some that had not yet opened for the day, nothing much that I wanted and polo shirts that I could have got cheaper on Oxford Street.



*Everything a doggie could need*



*Stanley - Main Beach*

At Stanley Plaza, I looked at the view, entertained myself with the dog parks and descended to promenade level. It was reasonably quiet and very sunny.

The Main Beach is pretty and full of wind surfers and the like, all learning their trade. I took photos of the pretty colours, watched for a bit and enjoyed the sun.

I would normally have gone straight to the Smugglers Inn for a beer but, under my new dietary regime, I passed by on the other side and entered the market.

I returned to the market, found a dressing gown which was probably the wrong shape, size and colour but, at £12, who cares.



*Lots of wind surfers*

The cafes on the front are a lovely place from which to watch the world go by. I drank a jasmine tea, watched the sea and relaxed. This is far easier than either of the last two mornings.

I caught the bus back to the city, enjoyed views and tried not to be scared when we got too close to precipitous drops.



*Back through the market*

I disembarked at what has become my usual stop, next to Wan Chai Gap Road, and meandered through the crowds and a street market towards Causeway Bay.



*Very pretty colours*



*Café with a view*



*Times Square - just like Shanghai*

There is a Times Square there, just like the one in Shanghai but many times larger. I was sure that it would contain a book shop. After cruising every floor up to the tenth, I found one. Unfortunately, the young lady assistant looked very blank when I mentioned Tai Chi. She certainly didn't have a book on it.

I decided to use the underground as a route across Causeway Bay but discovered that I had got myself into a place from which I had no option but to go through the ticket barrier. I bowed to the inevitable and caught the train back to Wan Chai.

Tsui Wah is a strange but always crowded restaurant, not too far from the pub and the hotel. I asked for a seat and was taken to one, sharing a table with two others. The shrimp and spinach wan tons in fish soup made it all worth while. It was ever so good.



*To Central - in search of a book*

I decided that the solution to the book problem would be to return to the hotel and do a search on the WWW. I did this and found several possibilities, two of which were in Central. I hopped on a bus and was there within about five minutes. The first one drew a blank but I emerged from the second clutching a book on Tai Chi. Even better, it was on special offer!



*Lots to see...*



*... Around the harbour*

The next decision was how to return to Wan Chai. The tram is very historic and very cheap but very uncomfortable, so I took the ferry to Tsim Tsa Tsui, which is free for geriatrics, and then the ferry back to Wan Chai, which is also free for .... The weather was glorious and I took loads of photos from the ferries.



*It's Rugby 7s time*

Back at Wan Chai, I found a notice describing what all the road works were about. They are part of a new rail line which will link Admiralty with China. As that the work has been under way for years, it must be a huge project.

I walked through the crowds to the computer mall, visited a few stalls and found the cable that I required for quite a lot less than I could buy it for in the UK.



*A major construction project*

Mission accomplished, I found my way to the Devil's Advocate and had a much needed cold beer. En route, I had looked at the American Restaurant, which still appeared to be closed.

Back at the hotel, I completed my diary, had a ten minute rest and tried to decide on a venue for dinner.

I selected Che's, a posh place on the fourth floor of a block next to the Devil's Advocate, where I last ate about three years ago.



*Beans with chillies*

They had room for me in a corner and they fed me green beans with lots of chillies and Szechuan pepper. These gave both heat and the lip tingling which is meant to characterize Szechuan cuisine. The beans were accompanied by beautifully tender fillet steak in a sweet sauce. An excellent meal. The waitress even complimented me on my chop stick technique and she wasn't taking the \*\*\*\*.

I resisted the temptation to call in at Pacific Coffee Co for a cake and a coffee and returned to the hotel to organise my photos and pack my bags.

## **April 4 Hong Kong**

Right at the end of the production process, I realised that I had failed to move the images of the last day from my camera onto the computer. As I reformat my camera card every time that I use it, no photos. At least it was only the last day. A shame, though, as the museum was particularly photogenic.

Definitely the last day feeling. The problem with flying at midnight as that there is a lot of time to kill but I seldom feel like doing too much. I had made contact with John last night and we had agreed to meet at the Devil's

Advocate after which I would go to the rugby with him. That takes care of this afternoon, What do I do this morning?

I checked out of my room, handed over my keys and walked to the Pacific Coffee Co. There, I started my return to a Western diet with corned beef and sauerkraut in rye bread. I did stick to black Chinese tea rather than having a coffee.

A study of my Lonely Planet gave me the idea of visiting the Civil Defence Museum, which is along the train line to the East of the Island. If nothing else, it was supposed to have amazing views of the harbour.

I caught the train to Shau Kei Wan, emerged from the station and found no direction signs. I decided to walk towards the waterfront on the basis that it would offer interesting views if nothing else. I did then find a series of signs to the museum and was able to follow them, whilst taking lots of photos of the harbour and the typhoon shelter.

I eventually came face to face with a large hill with a building at the bottom. I entered, collected a map, then exited and started to walk up the steep road, past some guns and around the edge of the hill.

At various stages there were great views of the harbour, interspersed with guns and military buildings. I passed the entrance to the lift and vowed to descend the hill that way.

The main building is an interesting structure atop the main redoubt. Inside the old corridors are exhibitions of the history of coastal defence in South China, including our rather nasty role in the Opium Wars.

There was a temporary exhibition on war correspondents and photographers from the Crimea to Vietnam. Powerful and moving stuff.

I sat in the main building, enjoyed the air conditioning as it was hot outside, and did my usual diary writing.

The journey back to Wan Chai was quick and simple and I arrived at the Devil's Advocate to find John already sitting there. We had beers and waited for Pauline to join us.

After a while, we de-camped to Tsui Wah for lunch. As ever, it was busy but we had some good food, although we failed to make the waiter understand that we also wanted tea. We rectified this at Pacific Coffee Co.

down. Best of all, it was a bright and sunny day.

John and I then left on a tram and arrived at Happy Valley about fifteen minutes later. We paid lots to get into the Rugby Tens, then watched and gossiped for three hours. As ever, it was entertaining enough. The weather, as it had done all day, remained perfect.

At about 18.00 I departed, caught a tram back to Wan Chai, survived the discomfort of the wooden seats and the absent springs, and walked the short distance back to the hotel.

I changed, collected my bags and adjusted my packing. Once everything was in order, a taxi took me to the Airport Express station, where I checked in without any problems.

The train took me to the airport, I passed through Immigration without incident and I ensconced myself in the Virgin lounge to await my flight and to have some food. Lunch had been a long time ago!

I ate quite a few nibbles, mainly small but tasty morsels, and restricted myself to one glass of wine. I boarded when told to, we sat for fifteen minutes while a technical problem was resolved, and pushed back slightly late.

## **April 5 Hong Kong to Bourne End**

The flight was comfortable and uneventful. The food and service were good and Virgin performed very well. We landed twenty minutes late and then things moved at speed. I seem to have said that about a lot of airports on this trip. Either I have been very lucky or they are all becoming more efficient. I had a fifteen minute walk to Immigration but I was through the electronic passport system in about one minute. My bags arrived on the carousel while I was still looking for a trolley and I passed through Customs with no problems. I did have to wait about fifteen minutes for a train at Heathrow but the wait at Hayes & Harlington was only one minute and at Maidenhead it was about 3 minutes.

I completed the walk from the station at Bourne End with my bags but without straining myself and was inside the house in an hour and three quarters after touching