

Brian Finch

Brian was a war-time baby, born in 1941. He went to Sandhurst and was commissioned into The Middlesex Regiment at the age of 19. He joined the 1st Battalion where he learned about the *Lisbon Maru* incident and discovered that the Battalion Quartermaster, Major Frank Waldren, had been one of the prisoners on the ship. Brian had a variety of overseas postings and saw active service in Malaysia and Northern Ireland and retired from the Army in 1978 with the rank of Major. In the 1960s he went to Hong Kong where he learned Chinese and began his strong connections with the place he now regards as his second home.

Brian's second career was in the Diplomatic Service where he specialised in Chinese affairs and spent the bulk of his career in Hong Kong. He is proud of the role he played supporting the negotiating team which helped Hong Kong preserve its essential freedoms and way of life after sovereignty reverted to China in 1997.

Throughout his time in Hong Kong Brian kept up the links with his former regiment, which was part of the force which had valiantly tried to defend Hong Kong against the Japanese onslaught in December 1941, and whose members were on the ill-fated *Lisbon Maru*. Every November when in Hong Kong he laid a wreath on behalf of the regiment at the cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday, in a ceremony which still takes place to this day, even after Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997.

Brian has forged strong links with the Lisbon Maru Association and is keen to support their efforts in any way he can; in particular to help raise money to help in their efforts to support the few surviving Chinese fishermen who saved the prisoners' lives.

As an infantryman Brian did a fair amount of walking or marching when in the Army. Since becoming a civilian he has done the occasional hill climb: in 2004 on a visit to China he climbed around 2,000 feet to the top of Tai Shan (Mount Tai) in Shandong Province, the most important of China's holy mountains which every emperor had to climb soon after ascending to the Dragon Throne; in 2009 he climbed 2,000 feet to the top of Lantau Peak, Hong Kong's second highest mountain, and in January 2011 he celebrated his 70th birthday with a 15 mile walk taking in an ascent of 3,000 feet over Hong Kong's highest mountain, Tai Mo Shan.

Brian took up serious walking in Devon in 2010, and has completed in stages of between about 15 and 25 miles a number of well-known walks there including the Two Moors Way, The Tarka Trail, the Devonshire Heartlands Way and the Dartmoor Way as well as other walks around Dartmoor. He started walking every week in preparation for the Two Moors Way sponsored walk and has continued with this regime since. He has also become a volunteer with the North Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team.

Brian now runs a consultancy helping business with China. Apart from walking, his other main hobby is playing the piano.