

Report on the October HKNHS Boat Outing (Or What Happens When Plan “B” fails?) 21st October 2007

Attendances on this year’s boat trips had been sadly scarce until Andrew Olson’s well-subscribed outing to the Soko’s last month – thankfully for this month’s Outing we were blessed with another good attendance with more than thirty members and guests assembled on Pier 9 expecting an enjoyable day on the beach at High Island. The weather was sunny, warm but a bit hazy. Once we had all boarded the well-appointed launch and started to head eastwards in Victoria Harbour, the Coxswain wanted to know where we intended sailing to. When told, he uttered the immortal words “Big wind – no go!” Now being the ex-boy scout that I am, I did have a Plan “B” (which was to sail to the Clearwater Bay area) but on being told this, our cautious coxswain repeated those same words – “Big wind – no go!” - so much for Plan “B”! He made it clear that Lamma was a better option! Well, I did not want to go to a location that is so well served with ferry transport, so desperately started pulling out the little hair six months of chemotherapy has left me with, trying to work out an alternative location, made more difficult by the coxswain’s insistence it must have a pier to allow for easy passenger alighting/boarding.

Eventually, after consulting the maps I had brought with me, a location appeared that looked suitable - an old favourite from NHS trips in the early 1990’s, the beach at Tai Long Wan on the Chi Ma Wan peninsula of Lantau. So we slowly pottered westwards, negotiating the wake of several larger boats and the Macau ferries, finally to arrive at a concrete pier at the beach. After a couple of attempts to successfully tie up alongside the pier, we all disembarked and walked onto the beach. The beach was in absolutely pristine condition – very clean with no flotsam or jetsam visible at the high water mark – with only four other people on the entire beach! The majority of our travelers enjoyed a relaxing couple of hours on the beach and a refreshing swim in the sea. This beach used to be much frequented at weekends before 1997 when “The Frog and Toad” pub used to be open in the village a few hundred metres from the beach, especially during the annual “Mud Olympics”



The Pristine Tai Long Wan Beach

A few of our group wandered on the paths that surround this very tranquil area. The old paddy fields that used to be the scene for the rather grotesque sports of the Mud Olympics have now been reclaimed for the growing of vegetables, particularly the semi-aquatic water spinach (*ipomoea aquatica*) with its white trumpet-shaped flowers still present or have become completely overgrown with Ginger Lily plants (*hedychium coronarium*). With the other plants and herbs located along the path, this makes this location the most superb site for the variety of butterflies to be seen. On my short stroll, I counted more than twenty different species of butterfly alone, with the Dark Veined Tiger (*danaus genutia*) probably the most abundant.



A Dark-Veined Tiger at rest

After a couple of hours, we re-boarded the boat and set sail for Cheung Chau for a late seafood lunch. This being a Sunday, Cheung Chau was quite crowded and of course, our reservation for lunch had been booked for a restaurant on High Island. However, the intrepid Chan family managed to locate a restaurant that could accommodate all of our group (just) and we enjoyed a seafood meal, not of maybe the finest standard but we were all hungry and so tucked in with enthusiasm, especially that well-known dish Tsing Tao!



The Chan Clan preparing the November NHS Outing

It was soon time to rejoin our launch and to sail against the strong easterly wind into Victoria Harbour and Pier 9 in Central. For a disaster, it really had turned out to be a very pleasant day!

Dave England

HKNHS Chairman