

# 6TH MINE COUNTERMEASURES SQUADRON

H.M.S. MAXTON

H.M.S. HUBBERSTON

H.M.S. KIRKLISTON

H.M.S. SHERATON

H.M.S. BOSSINGTON



JAPAN

KOREA

PHILIPPINE IS.

OKINAWA

SINGAPORE

MALAYSIA

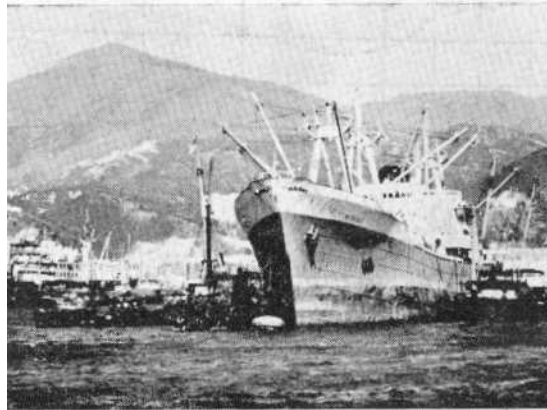
THAILAND - HONG KONG - BRUNEI

## HONG KONG

OCTOBER 1969 - SEPTEMBER 1971

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*A lovely Chinese model wearing a mink coat presented for the Raffle at  
Naval wives Fashion Show - August 1971.*

## **ABOUT THE COVER**

The red dragon in the centre of the design is the Squadron badge, worn on the funnels since its adoption in February 1970. The dragon, chosen because of its local significance to Chinese people, seemed an appropriate identifying symbol for our ships combining the dragons mythological mastery of the sea, his strength and aggressive attitude and relative simplicity of design. A stunning bright red colour was chosen solely for effect.

The white wavy lines represent the sea and beneath the dragon are shown the countries visited by the Squadron between October 1969 and September 1971.

The cover was designed by Commander J.F. Glennie.

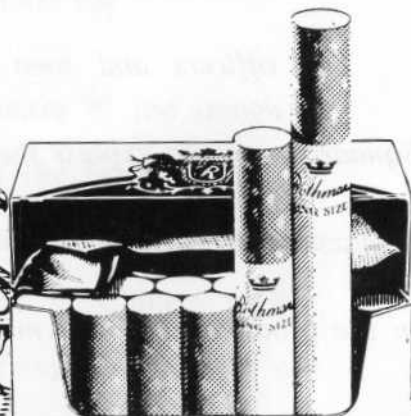
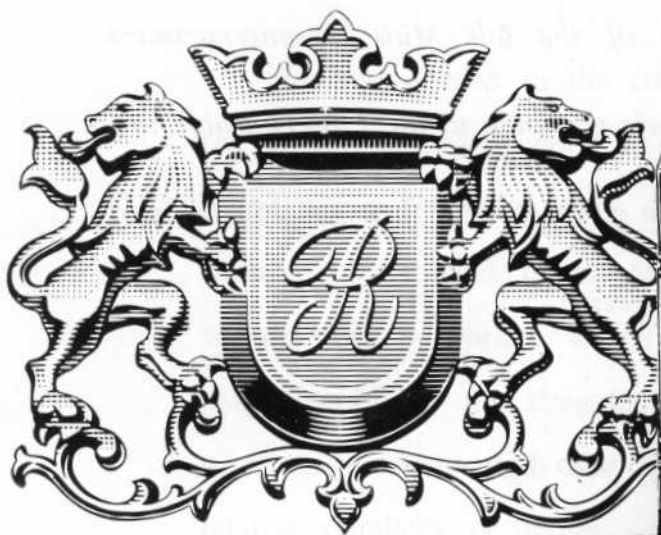
*The officers and men of the 6th Mine Countermeasures Squadron wish to express their gratitude to the Eastern Publishing Company, and to Miss Lee in particular, for their generous support in the production of this magazine.*



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attributed to Gaius Petronius, AD 66

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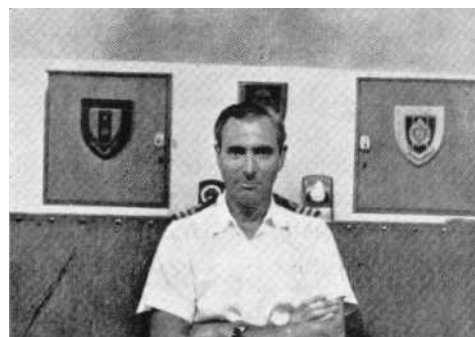
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## INTRODUCTION

By the Senior Officer,  
6th Minecountermeasures Squadron, Commander  
J. F. GLENNIE, Royal Navy.

As the Senior Officer of the 6th MCM Squadron for the entire period covered by this magazine -- and also having the double (if doubtful) distinction of being (I think!) the oldest inhabitant and just about the most ancient mariner in the outfit -- (standfast my faithful Leading Steward Chang who is 50 next year) -- welcome to these pages as a reader of our doings.



*Commander J. F. Glennie, Commanding Officer of H.M.S. Maxton and Squadron Senior Officer*

Some of you readers are presently serving in the Squadron, some are veterans of the Dragon Squadron of former days. Some will be veterans of the old Blackfoot Squadron and some of you are Mums and Dads, wives, relatives, sweethearts, friends or perhaps even children of the above august company. But, whoever you are, I hope you will enjoy this magazine, which was first conceived as a result of a decision to replace the present ships of the Squadron with five other similar ships to continue our important task in Hong Kong. The latter part of 1971 thus marks the end of an era for MAXTON, HUBBERSTON, KIRKLISTON, SHERATON and BOSSINGTON who will soon find themselves in the rather less congenial waters of the United Kingdom.



*All ships of the Squadron exercising off Hongkong - October 1969.*

I should like to take up the story in 1969. The Squadron at that time comprised the ships I have already named as well as HOUGHTON, WILKIESTON and DARTINGTON. The 6th Squadron was then part of the Naval forces in the Far East at a time when we stood eyeball to eyeball with Indonesia. When the so called 'confrontation' ended, WILKIESTON and HOUGHTON steamed home to UK across the Pacific to California, thence via the Panama Canal and across the Atlantic to England, a distance of over 16000 miles. No mean achievement when you consider that this class of ship was originally built for operations in coastal waters - hence their name "Coastal Minesweepers". The hapless DARTINGTON never went further than the beach at Singapore, suffering from a severe and incurable attack of "HAO". Anyone who has served in these ships will be intimately acquainted, with H.A.O. - for the uninitiated, the onset of this condition occurs when aluminium, with which our vessels are largely built, meets sea water face to face. The resulting corrosion is a cross between toothpaste and rock salt and following a really nasty attack the ship is best sold for firewood.

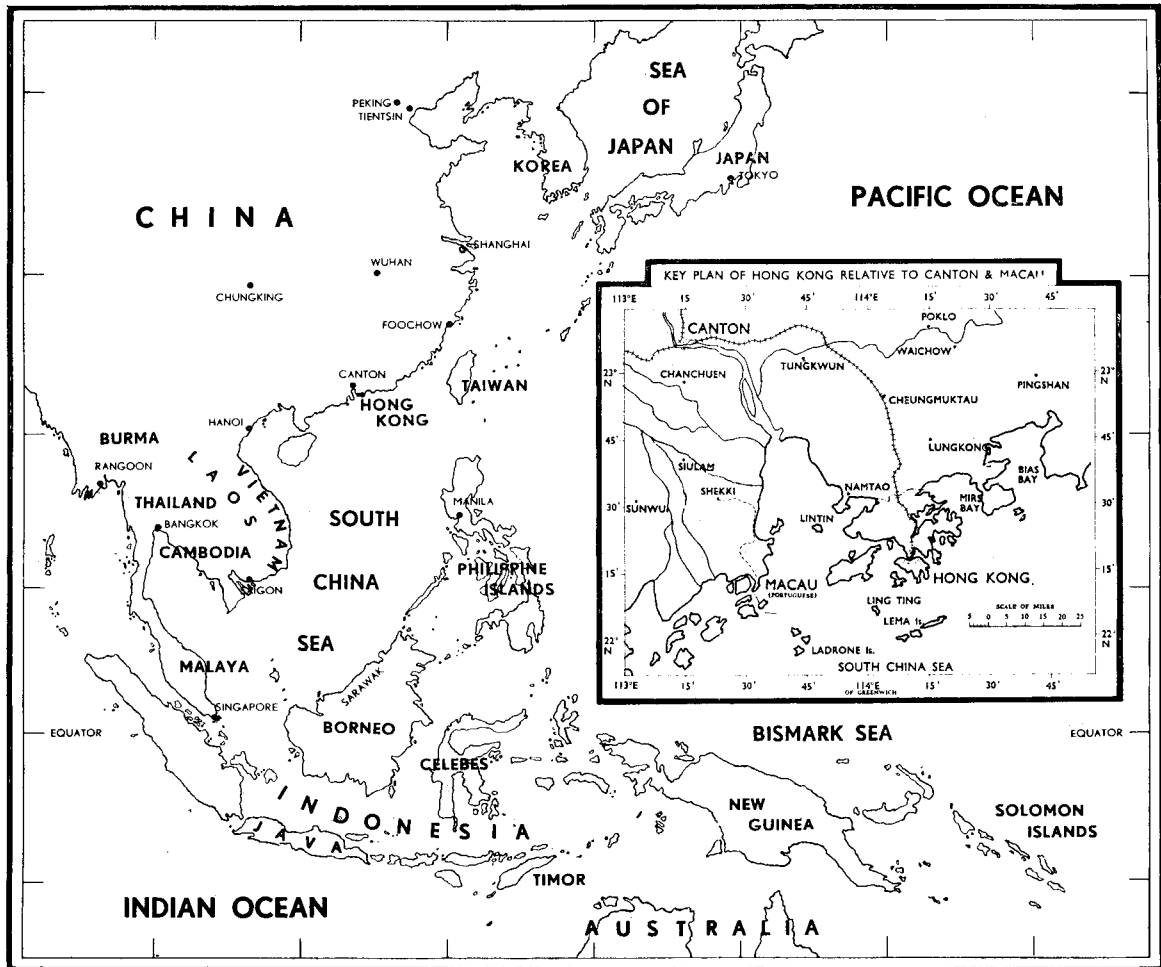
An added commitment of the Squadron then was to help to garrison Hong Kong which was done by detaching two ships from Singapore for several weeks; but, as confrontation drew to an end, Hong Kong's requirement was provided by sending the remaining five ships of the Squadron to Hong Kong on a permanent basis. This simple sounding manoeuvre was complicated by the need to find accommodation for all the ships companies' families. This in itself was a formidable task requiring the provision of about 100 married quarters in one of the most densely populated cities in the world where house prices and rents, already high, were roaring upwards and already vastly in excess of what our government was normally inclined to pay. However, bearing in mind that there is nothing the Navy cannot do except solder without fluxite, the problem was overcome and we were all finally settled into our new base in early October 1969 and we took stock of our position.

Before going on, you may be interested in a brief look at Hong Kong's history,

Hong Kong is a British Crown Colony, a dependency of the United Kingdom, and as such is within the British Commonwealth of Nations. The island of Hong Kong, comprising 29 square miles of land with the city of Victoria -- the nucleus of the Colony - was ceded by China to the British Crown in perpetuity by the Treaty of Nanking in August 1842. Kowloon and Stonecutters Island - together  $3\frac{3}{4}$  square miles --- were similarly ceded by the Convention of Peking in October 1860. Finally, in 1898, the district called the New Territories - comprising a large area on the mainland, the big island of Lantau and many small islands --was leased from



*A view of Hong Kong Central District*



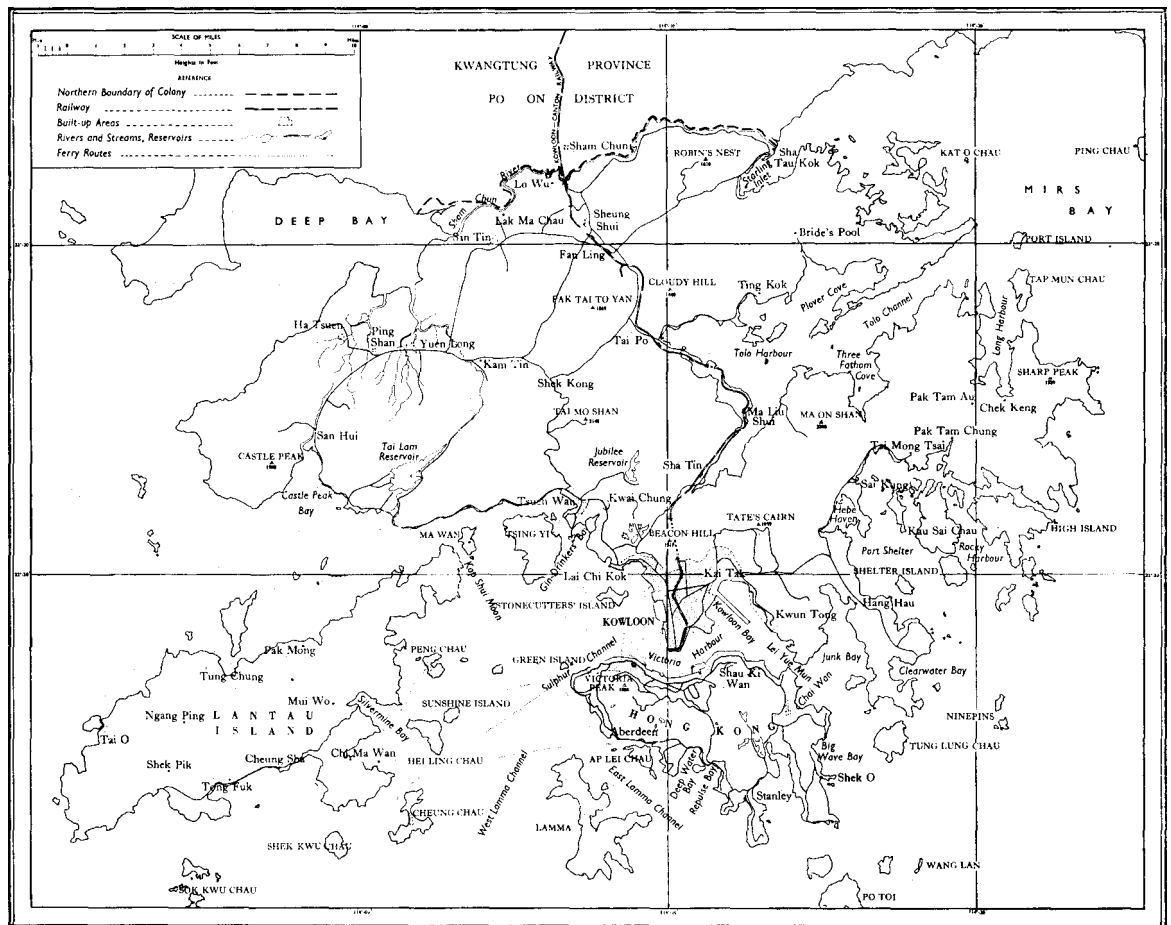
China for ninety-nine years, bringing the Colony's total land area up to three hundred and eighty nine and a quarter square miles

Like several other British Colonies, Hong Kong was originally a creation of the early Victorian Free Trade movement, subsequently shaped in great part by the spirit of adventure and the missionary zeal that carried Britons overseas during the rest of the nineteenth century and after. Hong Kong's character of a free port -- a port where law abiding men are free to come and go at will, carrying and exchanging goods without tariff or quota - has remained unchanged since its occupation by Britain in 1841, down to the present day, and has secured its growth and greatness as a commercial city.

It all began because the Manchu rulers of China would not agree to free trade with foreign countries. Foreign merchants - of all nations - were bottled up in 'factories' in the single port of Canton for half the year and banished to sea or to the Portuguese settlement at Macau for the summer. Moreover, they were allowed to trade only through monopoly Chinese "hongs" or agencies. Foreign governments were treated as vassals and their embassies as bearers of tribute to the Emperors of the 'Middle Kingdom'. The East India Company repeatedly tried to secure diplomatic equality for England from the Chinese authorities and had also mooted the establishment of a British trading post on one of the islands off the coast; but, even when rebuffed, being itself a monopoly, 'John Company' put up with the old

system of trade. But when Free Trade in England cancelled the Company's monopoly in 1834, the new merchants and their Superintendent of Trade, Captain Charles Elliot, RN accepted less readily the exactions of the hongts and what they regarded as the chauvinistic arrogance of China's officials in those days. Naval skirmishing actually broke out through disagreement, leading to exasperation on both sides, about the means it was proper for the Chinese authorities to use in order to control, or prevent, the importation of opium. It was this that later on was to earn the two Anglo-Chinese wars of 1839-42 and 1858-60 the misnomer of "Opium Wars", although in reality both were about much wider issues.

Hong Kong quickly became a depot for merchants of all the nations of Europe and America trading through the Treaty Ports, which also were opened up through British initiative in the Treaty of Nanking. In the new Colony, in the words of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Chinese Republic much later, "orderly calm" prevailed - and also, might be added, the certain commercial law of Europe. At the same time, Hong Kong became a base from which the Royal Navy could keep the eastern seas open, in an age of piracy, for the passage of merchantmen of all flags. In an insecure age the new Colony, previously little more than a barren rock inhabited by about 5000 fisherfolk, offered Chinese and foreigners alike the benefits of security.



To it there quickly flocked merchants and artisans from China, their numbers repeatedly swollen by refugees from political upheavals like the Tai Ping Rebellion. Many moved on as emigrants to South East Asia, America or Africa; some made fortunes in trade - moderate or immoderate - and then retired to their villages in China, as the Europeans did to theirs in England; a few remained to found what are now old and respected Hong Kong families. The population rose quite quickly, past the quarter and half million marks, until by 1940 it was believed to be over a million and a half; but only a minority at any time regarded themselves as permanently settled in the colony. Europeans have scarcely exceeded 20,000 at any time in Hong Kong's history.

The outbreak of the Pacific War and the surrender of Hong Kong on Christmas Day 1941 heralded a series of external events over which the Colony has had no control but which have made it increasingly difficult to live by the old philosophy of free trade. Since the Japanese surrender in 1945, the rapid replacement of colonial empires in South East Asia by new nationalisms and new frontiers has meant for the Chinese people of Hong Kong unaccustomed obstacles to the free movement of themselves of their money and of their goods. Civil war and social revolution in China itself have driven over a million refugees out and into Hong Kong in 15 years, with nowhere to move on to, and have lowered yet another frontier barrier across the road of those who might otherwise have continued to come and go in the old, free way. The economic policies of the new regime there, together with the United Nations embargo on trade with China at the time of the Korean War, similarly brought new barriers to Hong Kong's commerce. The population of Hong Kong was henceforward to be no longer transient but locally domiciled and increasingly dependent on its own local resources for a livelihood.

Geographically Hong Kong is isolated from friendly territory. Although the successes of the 1971 so called 'Ping Pong' diplomacy give rise to cautious hopes that perhaps by 1980 we may be touring China with the same ease and unconcern as you can now go to Blackpool, during our time here such is not the case and we do not visit China at all. Taiwan is not currently recognised politically by Great Britain so we are not allowed to go there either, which means that the nearest friendly havens to the north are in Japan - some 1400 miles from Hong Kong - roughly an equivalent distance is Moscow from Wigan. Looking southward and westward we first find a great deal of China, then Vietnam where they are still rather too busy massacring one another to take kindly to visiting Minesweepers of the Royal Navy. So Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore are really our nearest ports of call in that direction and they also are some 1200 to 1500 miles away. To the south east we have the Philippines. Apart from the city of Manila, frequently in turmoil with excited students locked in mortal combat with the police, or even each other, (and an expensive run ashore at that) and the huge US Naval Base at Subic Bay there is not much to offer there. Finally Brunei on the island of Borneo is a place we regularly visit and has always provided us with a diverting visit - unusual for its jungle remoteness and practically unique in the unstinted generosity and the warmth of its peoples' welcome to the Royal Navy.

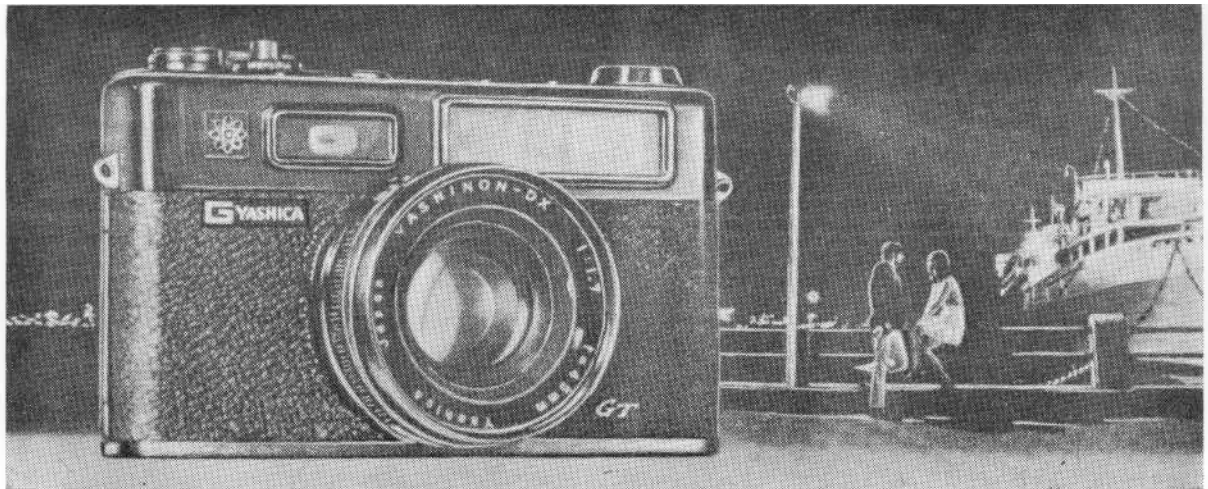
Hong Kong itself is unique in many ways. The first impression of the visitor is usually of its beautiful harbour. The city from an aeroplane or from a distance looks clean (which it isn't), enormous (which it is) and impressive either by day or by night when the glow from millions of lights may be seen by an inbound ship at upwards of 60 miles distant in clear weather.

The next impression is of a vast antheap of people driving (recklessly) running, pushing, carrying, walking but almost invariably working in hungry pursuit of the dollar (worth one shilling and four pence halfpenny, oops! 7 new pence). Not that this implies that the people are starving. Far from it and the standard of living is high by Asian standards. A tram driver for example earns about \$500 (£35) a month which is slightly -- but only slightly above the average industrial wage. There is no unemployment to speak of and nearly everyone is directly or indirectly involved in light industry or the business of removing as much money as possible from the innumerable tourists. This they do with commendable skill (About 75 jet airliners arrive daily by some 25 different airlines serving almost every major country), There are about 12,000 hotel rooms available in the colony -- a number which is rapidly increasing.

So much for a brief look at Hong Kong. Elsewhere in the magazine you will find an article on Typhoons whose fickle behaviour and ugly temperament restrict our movement for part of the year -- actually between mid July and the end of September -- although the official Typhoon season lasts five months from May to October,

Before concluding I would like to congratulate and thank all those who have contributed to these pages without whose literary or photographic endeavours there would have been no magazine to publish.





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# 恒生

(hang)

(seng)

*These two Chinese characters mean*

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