



WONG HOW MAN CENTRE FOR **EXPLORATION** THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

Founder Director's Message:

The University of Hong Kong is thrilled to have created the new Wong How Man Centre for Exploration (WHMCfE) in partnership with CERS. The Centre, as its namesake suggests, will embody the explorer's spirit, continue the work and steward the legacy of Dr. Wong How Man. We hope to engender the values of exploration, research-driven curiosity, and the urgent need for conservation of natural and cultural heritage to the next generation through transformative experiences in China, southeast Asia, and beyond.

Over half a century Dr. Wong How Man has built a trail-blazing record of discovery of important Asian river sources, collected an extensive amount of material on the wildlife and ethnic minority groups that populate the border regions of China, and developed many heritage conservation and community preservation projects throughout Southeast Asia. His humanitarian concern shines through each and every one of his many projects, and these are documented in his numerous published books and private archive of films and material artifacts. As a world-class university, HKU has the faculty and student resources to organize and preserve this material for generations of scholars and students to come. Much of this archival material has never been seen by the public.

But what should be most exciting to our students today is the WHMCfE will offer them research-intensive outbound trips, sometimes to remote locations to which they would otherwise not have access—creating ridge-to-reef, terrestrial and marine research opportunities—to key sites in China, the Philippines, Myanmar, Taiwan and Hainan, and soon even in Bhutan. These trips will fire students' curiosity, expand their horizons and challenge their prejudices; they will also deepen their understanding of natural and human ecosystems. And it doesn't matter whether a student's major is chemistry, law, business, biology, dentistry, or arts—in fact, HKU professors from all these disciplines have already taken trips with CERS to help develop the WHMCfE. All that matters are a student's willingness to be open to new experiences, to have a taste for adventure, and to learn things in the field that can never be learned in a classroom.

On May 3 we held a Super Film Night, during which we showed several CERS films and made some announcements about our Professors' trip to Zhongdian, Yunnan, which we have just concluded, and student trip plans for the Fall. Professors and students from several Faculties, representatives from the Common Core program, and several distinguished guests were in attendance. The responses were enthusiastic and there were wide expressions of interest.

Looking ahead, we anticipate launching a Distinguished Lecture Series, featuring pioneering scientists, explorers and adventurers from many different disciplines starting in the Fall. These will be larger format events and open to the public.

Professor Derek Collins
Founding Director, WHMCfE

"Jingzhe" Cultural Exploration Day Causeway Bay, 5 March, 2024

Why did "jingzhe" (the awakening of hibernating insects) evolve into "daxiaoren" (villain hitting)?

"Jingzhe" is the third among the twenty-four solar terms. The character "蟄" refers to hiding or insects, and the traditional Chinese phrase "蟄伏" describes people hiding themselves and waiting for opportunities. In ancient texts, it was written as "啟蟄" to avoid using the name of Emperor Jing of Han Dynasty. The former ancient term, however, is still used in Japan. In terms of customs, people in the northern regions often eat pears on the day of "jingzhe" because the pronunciation of "梨" is similar to that of "離" (meaning "away" or "separate"), hoping that insects and pests will stay away from crops and ensure a good harvest. In Shanxi, there is also a saying, "eating pears on 'jingzhe' keeps one spirited throughout the year." Hakka people would cook foods such as taro and edamame that resemble insects, symbolizing the killing and driving away of insects. Why did "jingzhe" evolve into "daxiaoren" (villain hitting)? In ancient times, people often burned mugwort and other plants to fumigate the corners of their homes to drive away insects. This later evolved into the common custom of "baisijiao" (worshipping the four corners[拜四角]), commonly seen among Hong Kong people when they move into a new home. It also evolved into the custom of "daxiaoren" which drives away enemies and bad luck, and welcomes auspiciousness.

The custom of "daxiaoren" is nearly lost in mainland China, but it is well preserved in Hong Kong. Causeway Bay is a popular place for "daxiaoren" and it gets extremely crowded every year during "jingzhe." There is a fixed chant for "daxiaoren" which rhymes and is easy to understand. The content is to "hit the villain from head to toe", aiming to bring misfortune to enemies. Some people have also shown creativity by creating English versions, such as "beat your little head, your work never go ahead", "beat your little hand, your luck will come to an end". Instead of secretly harming others, maybe it is better to bless them and do good deeds to accumulate blessings.

Dr. Hayson Liu
Deputy Director, WHMCfE

■ On March 5, I visited Bowrington Bridge in Causeway Bay with a group of schoolmates because I was curious about the legend of “Villain Hitting” (Da Siu Yan) and its connection to the solar term “Jingzhe”. “Jingzhe” represents the awakening of yang energy and the arrival of spring, as the earth begins to warm up and hibernating creatures gradually awaken. On this day, it is believed that hitting or beating an effigy representing a villain can ward off bad luck or misfortune. Bowrington Bridge in Causeway Bay is popular among people in Hong Kong to participate in the practice of “Villain Hitting,” symbolizing the expulsion of negative energies from bad people and people whom they dislike in life to embrace new beginnings this year.

I think this cultural tradition highlights people’s desire to overcome misfortune and to prepare for the new start of year. It reminded me that despite the advancements of modern society, people still respect and practice traditional beliefs and customs. These beliefs and rituals present the pursuit of happiness and the human desire for peace and harmony in life. Through this visit, I gained a deeper understanding of the cultural diversity and richness of Hong Kong. It provided me with insights into the traditional values and customs of the pursuit of good luck by the Cantonese. Additionally, it has sparked my interest in exploring other cultural traditions and experiencing the unique customs and beliefs of different regions of the world. ~ **Ashley Tsz Yuet So (Faculty of Arts)**

■春天來臨，大地回暖，萬物復蘇，迎來了二十四節氣中的驚蟄。今年驚蟄的下午，探險家黃效文先生和廖舜禧老師帶領我們來到銅鑼灣鵝頸橋，見證驚蟄打小人的盛況。老師向我們深入淺出地講解驚蟄的由來，「蟄」有潛藏的意思，所謂「驚蟄」，就是此時節雷鳴開始多，把土裏的蟲子都驚醒而鑽出來，象徵萬物更新，生機盎然。相傳民間以燒香和祭白虎來驅趕蛇蟲鼠蟻，後來演變為借白虎之力鎮壓小人，並漸漸發展出驚蟄當日祭白虎、「打小人」的習俗。晚飯時，師生共聚一堂，探險家暢談著他一生的心路歷程以及他探險的發現。我們不僅了解到探險背後的辛苦與付出，更感受到了他對於探索未知的執著與熱愛。原來，探險是來自對未知的好奇、對知識的渴望、對文化的欣賞、對人文的關懷，所以，無論高山深海、還是鳥獸蟲魚，都能探索、悉皆學問，期待未來能夠有更多機會參與類似的活動，有機會認識更多傳統文化，探索更多民間風俗！

~ **Florence Mei Yi Ng (Faculty of Education)**

■從小到大，我對二十四節氣只有片面的認識，如其中每年一家人齊齊整整吃冬至飯、清明祭祖等。驚蟄對我而言只是略有耳聞，但又不明所以。對驚蟄最大印象可能是近年來除粉絲塞滿銅鑼灣偶像慶祝生日外，還能令鵝頸橋一帶人頭湧湧的僅有原因。難得是次活動既有Hayson老師的實地文化導賞能一解我的好奇心，又有機會與探險家Howman博士共進晚膳，從獨有見聞中認識冒險精神和世界之大。一石多鳥的活動我又怎能錯過呢？當然，晚膳席間亦與各人天南地北，帶著知識和更開闊的視野，讓我收穫滿滿的回家。雖然港大絕對不乏課外活動，但我有幸從大一開始就參與由Hayson老師舉辦各種各樣港大最特色的「體驗學習」交流活動，今天更可以參加新成立「黃效文探險中心」所舉辦別出心裁的「本地探索」。我發現，各種體驗學習均不局限於單一學科專業，黃先生和廖老師的探索活動重點是啟發我們的內在好奇心，再引領我們以獨到的視野去了解歷史文化、古今中外，社會人情，從而見自己、見天地。是次活動不但從銅鑼灣鵝頸橋出發，更是由心出發的學習，帶來的益處遠比書中的知識更彌足珍貴。謝謝是次的活動讓我渡過了一個小小的探索旅程，期望未來能繼續帶著不同的人生學習踏上更廣闊的冒險之旅。

~ **Alex Li (Faculty of Social Sciences)**



Short Film
Solar Terms & Customs
Jingzhe



Scan me!

Super Film Night with Dr. Wong How Man



On 3 May 2024, WHM Centre for Exploration hosted a captivating film night featuring Dr. Wong How Man. The event welcomed HKU students, faculty members, and teaching staffs, aiming to highlight the significance of exploration and documentation. Dr. Wong How Man shared insightful documentation films covering a range of topics, including exploring river sources, documenting the Ewenki and Hainan tribes, utilizing space technology, and the endeavors of caving teams. This engaging evening underscored the vital role of documentation in preserving cultural and environmental heritage.

MUDDY DAY OUT

On 7 June 2024, 7 students from HKU explored Tai O, and learnt about the story of a traditional travel device on mudflats, the mud scooter.

■ Mud Scooter Mastery Unlocked: Discover the Native Secrets to Effortless Gliding !

If you have tried the mud scooter then you're no stranger to the frustration of getting your mud scooter stuck in the mud. And yes, you've tried everything - pushing harder, applying more force - only to find yourself sinking deeper into the muddy trap. But fear not, adventurer! The solution is in fact an obvious and straightforward one: step off your scooter and pull it out of the mud.

And don't be frustrated yet because you have a brand new start! A great start is crucial. The trick here is to glide the scooter forward and backward a few times before stepping onto it can help you build momentum and get a feel for the scooter's movement on the mud. To reduce the likelihood of getting stuck, choose paths with less muddy or firmer sections. With these native secrets up your sleeve, you'll be gliding through the mud like a pro in no time!

Congratulations, you're halfway there! But remember, a great posture is just as crucial. When gliding on your mud scooter, keep your back straight, your eyes focused ahead, and centre your weight over the scooter. Treat your mud scooter just like a wheeled scooter and keep the board parallel to the mud as much as possible. Be mindful not to put too much weight on one side, as this can cause the board to tilt and potentially lead to tipping over. Safety is paramount, so, stay balanced and ride with confidence!

Now that you've mastered manoeuvring your scooter around the muddy terrain, it's time for the final secret to increase your speed. The key is to minimize the contact time between your foot and the mud. By reducing the contact time, you can decrease the amount of friction and allow the scooter to glide more smoothly. To achieve higher speeds, push against the mud with a quick and forceful motion, generating more momentum that propels the scooter forward. With this technique, you'll be flying through the mud in no time!

Ultimately, the secret to mastering any craft is practice and experimentation! So, gear up, adventurer, and unlock the mysteries of mud scooter mastery! The mud is waiting, and your journey awaits! ~ **Cheung Wai Man (BA – English)**



■在玩物壯志大澳一天游的活動中，我對所見所聞留下了深刻的印象。我有機會欣賞到光緒年間的廟鐘和清朝時期的廟宇，這讓我對當地的歷史文化有了更深入的了解。同時我也學到了關於大澳居民和漁民文化的豐富歷史。在所有的活動中，我最喜歡的是滑泥板環節！這種看似簡單的泥上滑板活動實際上充滿了挑戰性。雖然泥地表面看起來很平滑，但實際上在木板上滑行是非常困難的。參與者需要具備一定的平衡能力，同時還需要足夠的肌力將泥板推到比較平滑的泥地上，才能成功地滑行。這讓我在短時間內體驗了蜑家人的日常生活，十分有趣！

~ **蘇梓月 (美洲研究及中國研究)**

■我很高興能參與這次玩物壯志大澳遊的活動，能藉此增加對大澳文化與歷史的認識。當中令我最深刻的是人們對文化保育工作的積極，在 solo cafe 看過紀錄片後，我才知道我們將要玩的泥滑板是以前人們用來採蠔的工具，保育團體為使泥滑板的歷史讓更多人認識，特意請人參考傳統的泥滑板並稍作改良製作成方便人們玩的泥滑板，如果沒有他們的執着，也許今天的我們只能在相片中認識泥滑板，沒法親身體驗、感受到這傳統歷史文化了。因此，很感恩有一班人對文化保育的熱誠，同時讓我反思我們日常生活的社區也有不少快被遺忘的文化，我們又是否有責任使它讓更多人認識，以免它失傳呢？

~ **陳恩言 (內外全科醫學士)**

■ 生活在香港

就像坐在一輛駛得很快的車上
景物都變得很快，快得有點模糊了
有時候，不妨嘗試放慢腳步
感受一下這城的另一面

走進大澳，看見棚屋、舢舨
彷彿回到那個樸實無華的年代
漁民出身的志泉，在舢舨上教我們搖櫓
只靠一雙手推出拉入，便可穿梭河涌兩岸
當中蘊藏着百年的生活智慧

往時，大澳人還會到泥灘採蠔
所謂泥足深陷，在泥上其實很難行走
於是上一代人便自製泥板，在泥上滑行
但自從蠔不再盛產，泥板的實用價值也漸失
或許可把泥板變成新興運動，傳承下去

舢舨與泥板，承載着前人的智慧
大澳的小店，則蘊含着店主的心思
隨意走進一間糖水鋪，一臉選擇困難
這時姨姨熱情地推介她最愛的薑汁撞奶
薑味撞上即煮鮮奶，口感輕滑、味道濃郁

我想，這座城是被動的存在
她不像主動談起陳年往事的老人
唯有我們放慢腳步、用心了解
主動探尋傳統技藝和店舖的故事
才會在繁華背後，找到這城的底蘊
~ **林皓弘 (建築學院—測量及城市規劃)**

■記得有個老師問 文化是什麼？我認為文化，是人和人，人和自然及周圍環境先經歷磨合最後融合的最終模式。同是香港，港島港大附近的文化，和大澳的文化就有天壤之別。核心在於人，這裡的人對自我的更包容更接洽。有空氣有陽光有水有山有草有信仰有網路，還有許多小吃，該有的都有了，在這裡呆久了，實在不明白人為什麼要活得那麼累。

~ **鍾曉玲 (機械工程)**

■大澳山明水秀，初次的到來讓我感到與自然交融的體驗，清澈的河水配合山谷，使我心境格外平靜，逃離城市的繁囂，回到開荒時期的世界，見證香港生活文化的轉變。在這次活動中最有趣的是求籤，感謝天后指引我未來的道路，使我不再迷網。~ **楊智免 (理學系)**





Dead stag beetle on the fresh soil, waiting to be decomposed



Wood consumed by larvae of longhorn beetle



Firefly entering the house

A village girl from the downtown, with her buddies

By Lor Shan

When we first arrived at Tapangu village, I thought, Ok, it's urban enough. All of a sudden, the car turned to a side road and drove for another 20 minutes. And there came the CERS Alishan project site.

The place was so remote that you can hardly believe it's in Taiwan. Animals roared in the forest nearby. Without streetlight, night was pitch-dark. Water heaters relied on firewood. These reminded me of what my 60-year-old father told me about his childhood, as a village kid.

As the daughter of a village man living in Shatin, formerly a part of rural Hong Kong, most people expect me to live as a village girl. What disappointed them was that I grew up surrounded by concrete and my home was a 5-minute walk from the railway station. Other expectations like catching insects in the hills and playing with natural waterslides in the river, are something that only exist in my father's memory. I always find his childhood way more exciting and interesting than mine. However, forests and streams were long gone due to urbanization, and I permanently lost the chance to experience what my father did in my own village.

Although not being as "village" as my father who caught grasshoppers and jumping spiders for fun, I still admire insects and reptiles. During my time on the site, I had fun chasing toads in the rain while my colleague Yida didn't and tried to stop me, and poking a dead stag beetle with a wood stick to look at the structure of its abdomen.

Another day in the house we lived, we found some patterns on a beam, similar to a craving but looked nothing like a Tsou pattern, more like the Nazca Lines in Peru. "Oh? This?" I took a picture of it and brought it to Mo'o, a local Tsou minority spending most of his life in the hills. He gave me an unexpected answer, "You know the longhorn beetle? The central strip is where they laid eggs, and the radial lines are the pathway their larvae moved and consumed the surface wood." He was explaining it casually, but the information was very exciting to me.

How Man said the area we stayed housed a bunch of fireflies, I was thrilled when I saw them for the first time in my life on our last night in Alishan. Knowing that there were more outside, I ran out to the alley nearby. They were so abundant and sparkling like the festive lighting in the mall, and I recalled what my father told me when we were talking about the fireflies in Hong Kong. "You know, we got them near the stream in the village. But now they are gone, after the stream turned into land right under our house." Even the bugs knew I got no chance to see them back in my place, so one of them flew into our houses at midnight to let us have a good look at it. It finally disappeared when the sunshine was out.

In these unfamiliar places in Alishan, I managed to become more familiar with the childhood playmates of my father, so as the environment alike to my home village in the early days, which I've never witnessed.

OTHER NEWS



Palawan Scouting Trip



Kaohsiung & Alishan Scouting Trip



Dr. Hayson Liu being interviewed by RTHK Radio 1 on "Education, Exchange, Exploration & Innovation"



Dr. Hayson Liu being interviewed by CJTV at the CERS Hainan site



Calligraphy Class