

M. R. Lupant : Departmental Flags of Hong Kong, Col. Plate I



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5a



Fig. 5b



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

DEPARTMENTAL FLAGS of HONGKONG¹

Michel R. Lupant

Abstract :

In this article you will find information about little known flags of Hong Kong. The author describes the aims, flags and badges of the different Departments of Hong Kong as a Colony and in the present day, such as the Auxiliary Medical Service, the Civil Air Service, the Correctional Services Department, the Customs and Excise Department, the Fire Services Department, the Government Flying Services, the Immigration Department, the Police Force.

These emblems are very symbolic of the British era and the Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

The author has added the emblems of some political parties and a veteran group's flag.

1) Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS)

The Auxiliary Medical Service, formerly known as the Medical Civil Defence Unit, was established on December 22, 1950. Its members come from all walks of life. They include professional doctors, nurses and trained volunteer members. Their role is to augment the regular medical and health service in times of emergency.

The services of AMS can be classified into emergency and general duties. In times of emergency and natural disaster, AMS will supplement the medical and health services by providing treatment to the injured on the spot, evacuating casualties, caring for patients at both acute hospitals and convalescent hospitals. AMS also provides a wide variety of general services for the community, such as first aid coverage at public functions, country parks and manning of methadone treatment centres/refugee camp clinics. The teaching and validating of first aid skills for civil servants and other employees in large organizations also fall within the duties of AMS².

The Old Emblem and Flag of AMS

At the top, the St Edward Crown signifies that Hong Kong was ruled by the British Empire during the colonial period. The 'cross' diagram beneath the Crown is a symbol of medical care and services. In the middle a ring of wheat encircling the English characters (AMS) implies that AMS will get good results in its work and contribute much to the community. At the bottom a ribbon at the lower portion allows space for the words "Hong Kong" which were also a part of the artwork design of the emblem. The red colour of the letters "AMS", the initials of Auxiliary Medical Service signifies that all members provide service with "care and enthusiasm". The deep blue colour of the field means that members are "calm and determined" when carrying out their duties. The yellow colour of the ring of wheat reflects the 'warmth' of the services provided.

The emblem is seen in the middle of the flag. The deep blue colour of the field of the flag reiterates that AMS members are 'calm and determined' when providing their services (fig. 1). The emblem and flag were adopted on 22 December 1950, the date AMS was established.

New Emblem and Flag of AMS

At the top is a five-petal Bauhinia in swaying motion; each petal bears a five-pointed star. This symbol indicates that Hong Kong is the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the Government of China. In the middle: the ring of wheat (but in fact laurels!) encircling AMS in Chinese characters implies that AMS will get good results in its work and contribute to the community. The switch to Chinese in the name of the Service underlines that fact that Chinese is the official language of SAR. The ribbon in the lower portion allows space for the full English name of AMS which is also a part of the artwork design of the emblem.

The red colour of the Chinese characters AMS signifies that all members provide service with

'care and enthusiasm'. The blue colour (light blue in the upper and deep blue in the lower) at the background of the Chinese characters again means that AMS members are 'calm and determined' when carrying out their duties. It also represents the power and strength generated by groups of volunteers in the community. The yellow colour of the ring of wheat represents the 'warmth' of the services provided. The deep colour of the ribbon emphasizes again calmness and determination in the pursuit of duty. The deep blue background of the flag reiterates that AMS members are 'calm and determined' when providing their services - in the middle, the AMS emblem (fig. 2).

2) The Civil Aid Service (CAS)

The Civil Aid Service was formed in 1952 as a wartime-oriented civil defence unit. Since then, it has grown into a broad-based volunteer Organization capable of performing a wide range of emergency duties and helping to relieve the pressures on KG's full-time emergency forces. CAS is now a uniformed and disciplined, government-financed and volunteer emergency measures Organisation. The CAS emblem and flag were adopted after its formation in 1952. The crown is a symbol of British Sovereignty which was widely adopted in the then Hong Kong Government before 1.7.97. Blue is the service colour for CAS uniform and badges. The emblem appears in white on a blue background. The flag has a size of 2:3 (fig. 3). The new emblem and flag were adopted on 1 July 1997. The emblem, drawn in white on a blue field, bears the Bauhinia flower, the new symbol of Hong Kong, and the name of the Organization in Chinese and English. The flag's size is 0.91 x 1.82 m (fig 4).

3) The Correctional Services Department (CSD)

Having been a British colony for a century and a half, Hong Kong has a prison system developed under strong British influence. When a British naval party under Captain Charles Elliot took formal possession of Hong Kong Island in 1841, one of the first two buildings to be constructed of durable material was a prison. Captain William Caine was appointed as the Chief Magistrate and was also in charge of the Police and the Gaol (or Jail). In 1879, the prison system was formally separated from the police division. Previously known as 'Prisons Department', the department changed to its present name in 1982, to reflect the department's expanded programme of activities and emphasis on offenders' rehabilitation relative to the primary custodial function.

On 1 July 1997, Hong Kong rejoined China with the concept of 'one country, two systems' and under the provisions of the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, the penal system continues on the same basis after the reunion. The Correctional Services Department aims at providing safe and humane custody to all persons sentenced by the courts and facilitating the reintegration of prisoners and inmates into the community as law-abiding citizens. At present, the department is responsible for the administration of 23 correctional institutions, including prisons, reception centres, a psychiatric centre, drug addiction treatment centres, training centres, a detention centre, and half-way houses.

Departmental emblems

The emblem was adopted in 1982 when the Department changed the name from 'Prisons Department' to 'Correctional Services Department'. The departmental title surrounding the round badge was amended consequentially. The round badge was surmounted by a symbol of British Crown and was decorated at its centre with the text 'E.I.I.R' which denoted 'Elizabeth II Regina' (fig. 5b). The emblem is in gold and blue, the crown in gold, red and blue. The flag has two vertical stripes of blue and yellow with the emblem in the middle (fig. 5a). The new emblem was adopted on 1.7.1997. The design does not contain any connotation of colonial reference like the previous one.

The crest is designed with a round badge which is surrounded by a laurel wreath and surmounted by the Bauhinia, the emblem of the Special Administrative Region. At the centre of the round badge is a compass which signifies that the Department has clear objectives and direction. The emblem is in gold and blue. The flag has two vertical stripes of blue and yellow with the new emblem in the middle (fig. 6).

4) Customs and Excise Department (CED)

The Customs and Excise Department has its roots in the Preventive Service, founded in September 1909. The Department was formed to enforce the Liquor Ordinance and its five officers and 20 searchers were answerable to the superintendent of the then Import and Export Department, of which they were a part. Names and organizational structures changed over the years with the old Import and Export Department becoming first the Commerce and Industry Department and then the Trade, Industry and Customs Department. In 1982, Customs and Excise became a department in its own right. The Department is responsible for the collection and protection of revenue under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance. The objectives of the Department are: to protect and collect revenue on dutiable goods, to detect and deter narcotics trafficking and abuse of narcotic drugs, to protect intellectual property rights, to protect consumer interests, to detect and deter smuggling, to protect and facilitate legitimate trade and industry, to uphold Hong Kong's trading integrity, and to fulfil international obligations.

Old Departmental Emblems

The Crown has traditionally been used as an important symbol in all disciplined forces in HK. The Crown is drawn in gold, white and red with red, green and blue stones. The centre of the badge is a silver diamond bearing the Chinese name of the service, surrounded by a golden ring with the service's English name on it, thus making the design appear three-dimensional. The outermost silver rays around the golden ring stand for continuous progress, achievements and a bright future, a goal the service is constantly striving for. The flag was in use until 1. 7.97, no date of adoption available (fig. 7).

New Departmental emblems

The bauhinia design on top is the regional emblem. It appears in dark yellow with red stars. A dark yellow crossed Chinese sword and key in the centre represents the Customs and Excise Department's traditional role in revenue protection and law enforcement. A grey circle fimbriated dark yellow bears the name of the Department in English. The green colour used inside the central circle is the departmental colour. The surrounding dark yellow laurel wreath is a symbol of glory, achievement and praise. The ribbon dark yellow fimbriated grey bears the Chinese name of the Department. Adopted after 1.7.97. (fig 8)

5) The Fire Services Department (FSD)

With the financial support of some Chinese corporations (hongs) the first Volunteer Fire Brigade made up of European residents was formed in January, 1856. The establishment of Hong Kong Fire Brigade (HKFB) was announced by the Government Gazette of 9 May 1868. At this stage it was only a small organization. During 1921, the HKFB expanded to a regular force. An Auxiliary Fire Services was founded in 1938. Because most of the buildings were wooden structures, squatter fires were very frequent. After the War, massive influx of refugees from Mainland China had made a huge impact upon the economy of Hong Kong. Although a number of new fire stations were put into operation between 1946 and 1956, the establishment still could not adequately cope with the increased demand. In 1960 the Brigade was reorganized and changed its name to the Hong Kong Fire Services Department (FSD). More small stations were opened.

In the early 70s, the tasks of fire-fighting and rescue operations required expertise, professionalism and experience, the jobs performed by the Auxiliaries were considered inadequate to meet these ends. The Auxiliary Force was disbanded in March 1975. At present the FSD has an establishment of 8,365 staff. There are 66 fire stations, 29 ambulance depots, and five fireboat stations strategically located throughout the territory. In 1992 all uniformed posts were occupied by Chinese.

The flag used at the time of the Colony had a size of 1 :2; it is red with the badge of the Fire Service in the centre. The badge has at the top a St Edward's Crown in proper colours. In the centre of a red disc surrounded by a gold ring is a golden lion with a pearl between its front paws - Hong Kong is known as the Pearl of the Orient. The lion, for courage, recalls the colonial image of the

Territory. The gold circle has a red inscription "Fire Services". A green garland of olive leaves symbolize peace and beneath it is a ribbon in gold with the name of the territory in red. The flag had been used for almost 40 years and the date of adoption could not be traced (fig. 9).

The new departmental flag adopted on 1 July 1997 has proportions of 2 :3. The new emblem appears in the centre: the bauhinia is the city flower of HKSAR, symbolizing that the FSD is serving its people. The brown and yellow torch symbolizes leadership; a pair of fire axes in saltire symbolizes the incumbent duties, i. e. fire-fighting and rescue operations. The addition of the Chinese characters (Hong Kong Fire Services) recognizes the beginning of an epoch for the HKSAR on the transfer of sovereignty to People's Republic of China. The olive leaves symbolize peace in the community of the HKSAR; the banner is a piece of artwork and the red colour is a tradition of the FSD (fig. 10).

6) The Government Flying Service (GFS)

The GFS began operating on 1 April 1993 following the disbandment of its predecessor, the Royal Hong Kong Auxiliary Air Force. The GFS is headed by the Controller who reports directly to the Secretary for Security. The GFS operates in accordance with civil aviation rules. It provides services to support the work of Government departments and maintains a round-the-clock emergency air ambulance and search and rescue (SAR) coverage.⁷

The Unit Crest of the Royal Hong Kong Auxiliary Force

It consists of a four-bladed propeller behind a winged red dragon on a blue field and with the motto '*Semper Paratus*', literally translated as 'Always Prepared'. The motto implies a readiness to respond to Hong Kong's ever changing and expanding needs. Close inspection of the dragon reveals a fine hybrid of the oriental and occidental varieties; the head and body are definitely Chinese, but rather Welsh-looking wings have been added (fig.11).

Departmental Logo of Government Flying Service before 1 July 1997

This is an evolution of the design established by the Royal Hong Kong Auxiliary Air Force with the winged dragon at the centre replaced by a Chinese Dragon. The logo was used when the Royal Hong Kong Auxiliary Air Force disbanded on 31 March 1993 and re-established itself as the Government Flying Service on 1 April 1993 to become a full-time civilian Disciplined Force providing flying services to the Hong Kong Government under Civil Aviation Legislation (fig. 12). The Department did not use a flag before 1 July 1997.

New Departmental Logo of Government Flying Service

This is an evolution of the logo used before 1 July 1997 with the GFS on the top replaced by the Bauhinia, the new emblem of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region: the four-bladed propeller in dark yellow, the dragon and Bauhinia in gold; stars on the Bauhinia in white; central circle, wings and ribbon in very light blue; letters GFS in white on a violet circle, the Chinese inscriptions in black (fig. 13).

I have found two versions of the flag. The first version (fig. 14) has a light blue field darker than the colour used in the badge. The badge appears in the centre of a white field. Gold has changed into yellow and the circle with letters GFS is dark blue. Its size is 1.29 x 2 m.

The second version (fig. 15) differs from the previous in that there is no white background for the badge. Its size is 1.31 x 1.76 m. I don't know which flag is the correct design. Perhaps it's a question for the manufacturer.

7) The Immigration Department

Hong Kong has established itself as one of the world's major destinations for tourists and business visitors. In 1996, passenger arrivals and departures totalled 99.8 million. The Immigration Department is responsible for two main areas: for control of people moving in and out of Hong Kong by land, sea and air; and the documentation of local residents, including naturalization, the issue of travel documents and identity cards, and the registration of births, deaths and marriages.

Hong Kong has all along adopted a liberal and open immigration policy. Nationals of more than 170 countries and territories are allowed visa-free visits to Hong Kong for periods ranging from seven days to six months. Immigration controls are designed and operated to keep increases in population from immigration within acceptable limits. Hong Kong remains a separate travel area after reunification. The departmental flag with the design of a coloured departmental crest on a deep blue background had been put into use during the period from 1 March 1988 to 30 June 1997, before reunification (fig. 16).

The departmental crest in the centre of the flag shows the Crown of St Edward's in colour representing Crown service. Immigration Service in blue on yellow is the name of this department. HK in blue on yellow stands for Hong Kong. Dark and light green laurel in arc shape is a design generally adopted by disciplined forces. The laurels are attached by a red ribbon on a blue background. Blue is the departmental colour. The flag's proportions are 1 :2.

The new crest adopted in July 1997 is different. It depicts a modern vision of travel showing in black, grey and white, an airplane, a bridge with cars, trucks and a ship - the different ways used by people to reach Hong Kong. The background of the central disc is white and light blue. The Bauhinia appears on the top in violet with white stars. The laurels are green with a red ribbon. The name of the Department, in Chinese and English appear in white on a medium blue ribbon. The flag newly adopted is dark blue with the crest in colour, all fimbriated in white. Its size is 2 :3 (fig 17).

8) The Police Force

Established in 1842 the Hong Kong Police were granted the title 'Royal' in 1969 in appreciation for its loyalty during the Chinese cultural revolution which spilled over into Hong Kong. The Force evolved from an extremely broad-based role, embracing such matters as firefighting, prisons and immigration, to that of a traditional police service. Before 1934 the cap badge consisted of the letters G R I surmounted by a crown. The badge was not used solely by the Police. In 1934, Mr. K.A. Bidmead, later Deputy Commissioner of Police, suggested that the Police should have its own distinctive badge.

Despite its "Victorian" appearance the old crest was adopted in the 1930s (or even possibly in 1940, the records are unclear). The crest in white, yellow and light blue depicted Hong Kong as an entrepôt, with Chinese and European traders on the shore and Chinese and Western shipping in the harbour, signifying a meeting of east and west. The laurels are in dark yellow with red flowers and ribbon. The crest is surmounted by the Royal Crown in colour. The name of the Police appears in white on a medium blue ribbon fimbriated white. The crest is on a medium blue background. The dark blue field of the flag was probably chosen to match the blue field of the colonial flag but that colour is traditional in the world of Police (fig. 18). The size of the flag is 1 :2.

Upon the Reunification with Mainland China in 1997, the Hong Kong Police flag was revised to include the new Force crest. The crest depicts an abstract representation of the Hong Kong Shoreline, projecting the image of Hong Kong as a modern and prosperous city. The landscape is drawn in dark yellow, white and light blue. The laurels in dark yellow with white shades, red flowers, veins and ribbon. The Bauhinia emblem appears in orange with white shades and red stars. The name of the Police in Chinese and English is written in white on a dark blue ribbon fimbriated white. The flag is dark blue with the crest in colour on a medium blue background. There are some small changes in the crest - there is no shade in the Bauhinia and laurels. The laurels are white with red flowers, veins and ribbon. Its size is 2:3 (fig. 19).

POLITICAL PARTIES

The first free and pluralistic general elections since the creation of the communist empire fifty years ago were held on Sunday 23 May 1998. Only one-third of the 60 councillors of the Legislative Council (Legco) were elected by universal suffrage. The golden rule of democracy 'one man, one vote' will be perhaps used in the future in the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong. 30 members will come from corporative constituencies, a suffrage based on property qualifications inherited from the colonial regime where in some cases managers vote in place of their employees!

The ten remaining members will be elected by an 'election committee' of 800 members controlled by the Beijing supporters.¹⁰

The Democratic Party (DP)

DP is the largest political party in Hong Kong with 13 legislative councillors. The major aim of the DP - their Manifesto - is to unite the democratic forces in Hong Kong to shoulder the responsibility for the future of Hong Kong. They ask the citizens of Hong Kong to unite and to support the DP in its pursuit of a high degree of autonomy and an open and democratic government. The party does not have a flag of its own but uses a logo. It is a flying pigeon in white on a green background, representing the belief that democracy, freedom and justice shall prevail and spread throughout the world¹¹ (fig. 20).

Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB)

The idea of establishing a political organization came into the mind of the conveners of the DAB early in 1990. The election of the Legislative Council in 1991 realized this wish. On 10 July 1992 the DAB formally announced its establishment. DAB's first batch of members consisted of 56 Founding Members. Tsang Yok Sing was elected Chairman. In 1994 and 1995, DAB strove to participate in the three-tier elections and succeeded in gaining more seats in councils. The Alliance's logo is made up of the letters 'D' and 'B'. 'D' symbolizes China and her resumption of the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong through democratic means. The 'B' inside stands for Hong Kong, presently constructing a better and more democratic society. The logo gives expression to their determination of staying and working at a better Hong Kong. The two loops symbolize the interactive and interdependent relationship between Hong Kong and China. The logo looks like a Chinese character, meaning "return" symbolizing the motherland and being under her sovereignty (fig. 21).

The second, third and fourth Chinese ideograms the same shown on the flag are a short name for the party in Chinese. The colour should be blue as the logo. The form of the letters is also fixed in a particular style of Chinese writing. The ideograms, in red, which are at the bottom of the flag, form a slogan of their party. It is handwritten and means "devoted to Hong Kong". However it is not necessary to use it on the flag design. The background colour should be in yellow (Pantone colour : 149C) if printed on paper, but they always choose a brighter yellow when printed on cloth. Up and down a small red stripe.¹² (fig. 22).

The Frontier

In fact this is not a party but a political group. Their vision of Hong Kong is that it should be a vibrant and dynamic cosmopolitan city with respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The key points of their platform include fighting for universal and equal suffrage, human rights and the rule of law. They also demand the right to draft their own constitution for SAR. They want the people to participate more in the political process and promote the pro-democracy movement. Their major principle is that Hong Kong people should have the right to elect their own government¹³. The flag is yellow with a black logo (fig. 23).

MISCELLANEOUS

Hong Kong Veterans of Canada ¹⁴

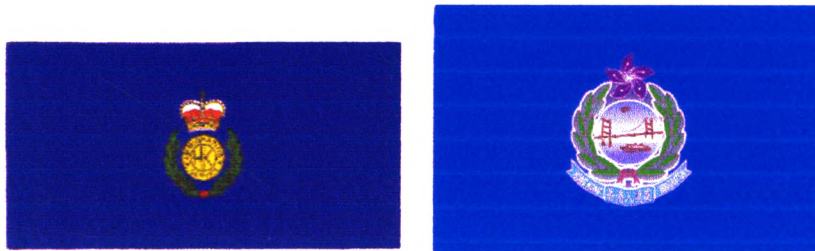
In 1940 the British regarded their Crown Colony of Hong Kong and its 20,000-man garrison as expendable and decided against reinforcing it. But in September 1941 the Canadian government agreed to send the Royal Rifles of Canada, a Quebec unit, and the Winnipeg Grenadiers, although they were not considered fit for action. They arrived on 16 November 1941 - 22 days later the Japanese attacked the Colony's New Territories on the mainland. On December 18 the Japanese crossed to the island of Hong Kong and on Christmas Day the Governor surrendered. Of 1,975 Canadians, 557 were killed or died in prison camps¹⁵

The flag of the Hong Kong Veterans of Canada has a field of dark green with a red sun in the middle. Above and below the sun are words printed in a pseudo-Chinese fashion - 'Hong Kong' at the top, 'Veterans' at the bottom in white capital letters. The letters HK, fused together appear on the red sun. The red disc is for courage under Japanese fire, for blood sacrificed, and for the sun of the occupying power, Japan. The green field may represent the youth and inexperience of the two Canadian battalions with the hope of remembrance of their travails. The flag is fringed white (Fig. 24).

M. R. Lupant : Department Flags of Hong Kong, Col. Plate II
with Flags and Banners of Local Political Groups; Veterans' Flag



figs. 12-14



figs. 16-17



fig. 18 flag and badge

fig. 19



figs. 20-23



fig. 24

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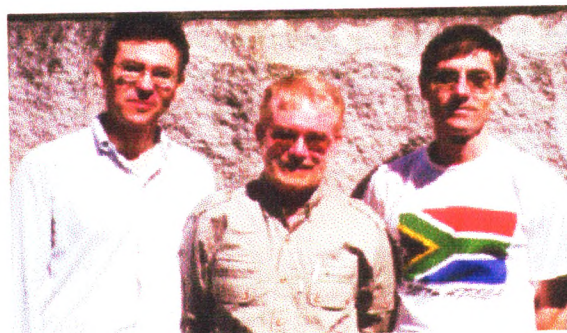
Notes

- 1 Information provided through the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Brussels. Letters from Mr Bassanio So, Assistant Representative, Miss Janice Lee, M. Mark Neyrinck, 6 October 1997, 19 December 1997, 15 January 1998, 18 September 1998, 17 March 1999.
- 2 'Auxiliary Medical Service', *Hong Kong: The Facts*, Information Services Department, 1997.
- 3 'Civil Air Service', *ib.*
- 4 'Correctional services', *ib.*
- 5 'Customs and Excise', *ib.*
- 6 'Fire Service', *ib.*
- 7 'Government Flying Service', *ib.*
- 8 'Immigration', *ib.*
- 9 'The Police', *ib.*
- 10 'Aux urnes, dans un petit coin de Chine' in *La Libre Belgique*, 23 mai 1998.
- 11 Communication from Mr. Martin Lee, Chairman of the Democratic Party, 5 November 1998.
- 12 Communications from Ms Lee Siu-wai, Director of Communications Department, Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong, 27 October 1998, 7 December 1998.
- 13 Communication from Mr. Apple Chan, Campaign Manager of *The Frontier*, 3 November 3, 1998.
- 14 Letter from Kevin Harrington, 31 January 1999, *Flagscan*, Vol. 13 No. 4, Christmas 1998, p.17
- 15 'Hong Kong', *Canadian Encyclopedia.*, Edmonton, 1988, p. 1005

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Michel Lupant, born 1 August 1944, lives in Ottignies (Belgium) with his wife. They have three daughters and a son. A teacher of Geography, he worked in Guinea and Congo/Zaire from 1964/1968, now he is teaching in Genvat in a High School. He has travelled in 88 countries! In 1990 he founded the "Centre Belgo-Européen d'Etudes des Drapeaux" in 1990. Books he has written include: *Drapeaux des Nouvelles-Hébrides/Vanuatu*; *Drapeaux et Insignes de Police et de Gendarmerie à travers le monde* (vol. 1 & 2); *Drapeaux royaux et militaires du Népal*; *Flags and coat of arms of the Isle of Man*; *Flags and coat of arms of the Kingdom of Belgium*; et *Drapeaux de l'État du Koweït*.

Michel is the editor of the vexillological bulletin *Gaceta de Banderas* in collaboration with the Spanish Vexillological Society. He has published a few articles on flags of Belgium and other countries in *Vexilla Belgica*. In August, 1997 in Cape Town, Professeur Lupant was elected President of FIAV.



Michel Lupant, author and FIAV President, left, and centre, with Charles A. Spain, Jr., FIAV Secretary, and Bruce Berry, Secretary for Congresses. Below in Cape Town, ICV 17, with John Lowe (USA) and Emil Dreyer (Switzerland).

