

The BAAG Junk

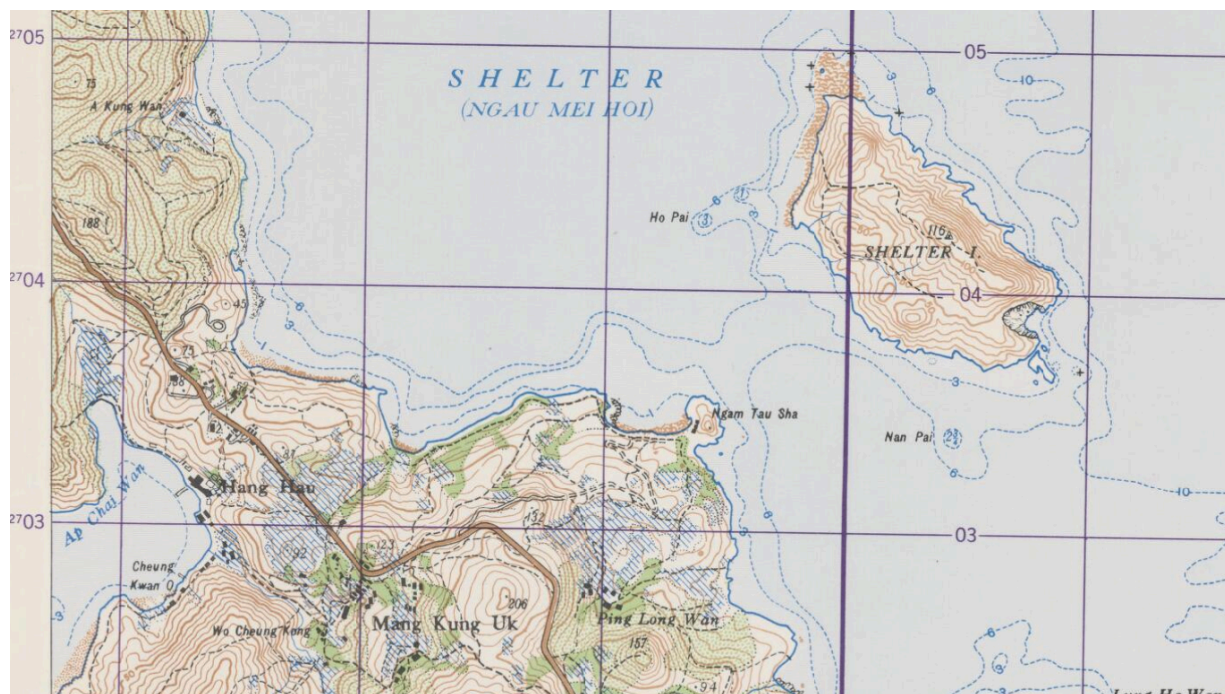
During the first few months of its activity, the BAAG planned several schemes which involved the use of a powered junk. For various reasons – not least of which must have been security – it was decided that the acquisition of a their own junk would be advantageous, and on the 26th September 1942, Clague sent the following message to “Rear Admiral L T Ride” (extract from AWM 4/1/17):

“Subject: His Majesty’s Fleet.

I am glad to inform you that the White Ensign again flies in China Waters. Numbers 19 [Joseph Tsang You Sang], 46 [William Wong] and 48 [Tsang Tak Hing] have purchased a small junk and it is now at the disposal of the FIGS to help contraband literature and bodies when necessary. The crew consists of the above men and two relations of 19. ...

The boat is permanently based at Ngam Tau Sha (map ref 325584). They have a line of communication from Devil’s Peak and take a sampan across the Harbor or approach from the land. ...

P.S. if I can get hold of a bottle of beer I shall first empty it then Christen the vessel
H. M. S. Ride“



Map showing Ngam Tau Sha bay where the BAAG junk was moored.



Ngam Tau Sha bay in 2016. Photo T.H. Wong



Ngam Tau Sha bay in 1988, visited by Guerillas. L to R: Leung Fook, Miss Fan Lam (Guerilla leader) , and on the far right 'Little Devil' ('Siu Gwai") Lam On.

The advantages of this mooring site are explained by Mr Wong Tai Hang: "HMS Ride" was inconspicuous here as it mingled with the fishing junks which filled the bay, and;

- "The headland protected [the bay] from the strong north-east wind in winter and southern wind in summer.
- It is close to the open sea east of Port Shelter. The junk could sail directly northeast to Mirs Bay in China and south to Shaikiwan on HK Island.
- For safety reason this bay was much better than Sai Kung town which was infested with Wang Ching Wei agents and frequently patrolled by Japanese.
- The agents could walk within an hour to Hang Hau bay behind the hills to the west. From Hang Hau they could mix with the other passengers on the regular rides to Shaikiwan."

An escape by junk

Before the war, A Russian-born Radio Engineer, William Vallessuk, had offered his military invention – a Light Beam Controlled Anti-aircraft Aerial Torpedo – to the Hongkong government. This was intended for installation in the Colony's motor torpedo boats. After the fall of the Colony it was considered desirable to prevent this device falling into the hands of the enemy, so BAAG agents successfully smuggled Vallessuk and his invention out through their underground network, and he arrived safely at AHQ, Waichow in February 1943.

Joining Vallessuk were two Norwegians, Ragnar Brodersen and Capt Halfdan Kwamsø, who had long been looking for a chance to escape. Brodersen wrote in 1982:

"The Japanese attacked Hongkong only a few hours after the attack on Pearl Harbour, the first Jap planes dropping bombs on Kai Tak Airport about 8 o'clock in the morning of the 8th December 1941, Hongkong time. I was then working for the Norwegian firm Thoresen & Co in Hongkong, and during the 18 days before the surrender I put myself and my car at the service of the civil defence, acting as a driver for Capt Clark of the Volunteers. He was the manager of the Hongkong Telephone Co. When the Japs marched in on Boxing Day morning. Capt Clark and the other British officers were sent to a military camp, and the British civilians were sent to the Stanley camp. The Norwegians were then officially neutral as far as the Japs were concerned, so we were allowed to "go home" as the Japs put it. ... A fellow Norwegian, Capt Halfdan Kwamsø, and I knew Mr Monaghan, who was a Canadian of Irish descent, claiming Irish neutrality so that he could accomplish the work as a go-between to help people who wanted to escape, and he certainly did a magnificent job. He told me that at that stage he could not give us exact details, as it was all hush-hush, but that he could arranged for our escape the following week, and were to be joined by a White Russian radio engineer whose name I cannot recall but we called him Bill. He had apparently made some kind of invention which the Japanese were anxious to get hold of."



T C Monaghan

Monaghan was later arrested and executed by the Japanese.
BAAG Roll of Honour.

Upon their arrival at BAAG AHQ in Waichow, the three escapees submitted the following report (here abridged) on 16th February 1943, written by Ragnar Brodersen:

“Captain H. Kvamsø and the undersigned had for some time been discussing the possibilities of getting away from Hong Kong. I was fortunate enough to contact Mr. Monaghan, who is carrying on his own broker business. As Captain Kvamsø and myself approached Mr. Monaghan on 3 February 1943, he told us that he was making arrangements for a Russian radio engineer, Mr. W Vallessuk, who intended to get away on or about 10 February, as arrangements for his escape had already been made from Waichow, and that another two people might be included in the same scheme. From that moment everything went according to plan, without a hitch.

On Wednesday, the 10th of February, 1943, all three of us arranged to meet at some Norwegian friend's house, 226, Prince Edward Rd., Kowloon. At 5 PM two Chinese turned up. We left the house and followed the Chinese up to a certain house on Tai Po Road. [Additional comment by Ragnar Brodersen in 1982: The plan was then that we should be taken, after dark, along a route overland across the border, which had been used in previous escapes. We had to wait for the dark and the tension was high. At that stage we had no idea of the existence of the BAAG, and simply had to trust our unknown Chinese friends. However, while we were waiting for it to become dark enough a Chinese, who had been sent to out to see that everything would be clear rushed in, telling us that the Japs had put up double guards near the planned crossing, possibly caused by a tip-off. Well, we thought this would be the end to our escape, but we were told to sit tight as other plans would be made. And lo and behold, after a couple of hours of nail-biting anticipation, we were told that the route had been changed. All we had to do was to follow a Chinese guide and go where he went. Thinking back on the events of the

evening, I remember feeling impressed by the on-the-spot decisions taken by these young men - obviously the BAAG must have trained their men extremely well for them to be able to organize such a sudden and effective change of plans.] From there, one Chinese took us back to Hong Kong by the Star Ferry, caught the tram car down to Shaukiwan.

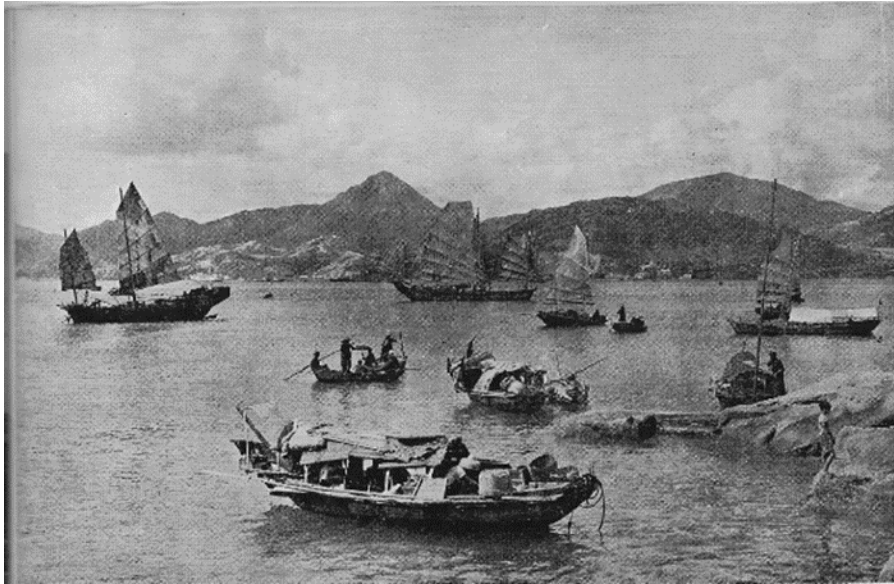


Photo from *This is Hong Kong*, published by SCMP, undated but early post-war.

[Brodersen 1982: Our guide signaled us to get off the tram, and in order to be seen in the dark he lit a cigarette. We walked in pitch darkness behind our Chinese guide, and all we could see was the glow of the cigarette in his mouth. He led us down to the water's edge where we could just glimpse two sampans. We were ordered to lie flat in the bottom of one of the boats, our two guides got into the other, and Chinese coolie women paddled us across the harbour. The journey took 29 minutes, but it seemed to last a lifetime. Searchlights from Japanese ships in the harbour picked up the sampans as we glided by, sometimes dangerously close, but we had black rags pulled over us and were not detected.]

After 28 minutes of intense anxiety, we reached the shore on the other side of Choi Ki Len. Shortly afterwards, a group of armed Chinese turned up. After half an hour's march along the shore and up through a valley, we arrived at a small village, Mah Lau Tong, where a nice Chinese meal was prepared for us. There we were introduced to Kong Shui, the Guerilla Chief. After the meal, we proceeded to another village half an hour further along. There we were put up for the night and spent the whole of the next day inside the house. At dusk, our guide, Kong Chun Hon, turned up with our baggage. He had been walking overland with it. On we went from there down to the beach. Got a sampan across Junk Bay to Hang How, where we had a cup of hot coffee to cheer us up. Walking over the hills of the peninsula we eventually came to another boat, this time a bigger junk, sailing

between the islands along the shore, and at 2 am we stepped ashore. Had half an hour's walk up to a small village where we were put up for the night. Spent the next day inside or in the immediate vicinity of the house. Were introduced to Henry Tam, the local Guerilla Chief. At about 8 PM we started off on the toughest part of the journey, a 2 hours' walk over some high mountains down to a village on Mirs Bay. Armed sentries met us, and an escort of six went with us on to the junk. Got past the dangerous point of Kun Moon, but no Japanese vessels were to be seen. A few miles from the other shore, we were transferred to a small sailing sampan, and after nearly 2 hours in penetrating cold and pitch darkness, we anchored up in the bay on the Free China side of Mirs Bay. Stayed on board until daybreak. Got ashore, passed through the Chinese fort, and walked up along to Shayuchung, where we were met by a couple of runners sent down from Waichow. Thence by chair to Tamshui, where we stayed overnight in a Chinese hotel. The next morning we started shortly after breakfast on bicycles, and arrived at our destination, Waichow, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. [Brodersen 1982: It was here that I met Major Clague and his team. I gave him a secret letter which Monaghan had asked me to hand over upon arrival]

The trip has been successful in every respect and the assistance and protection with which we were met at every stage of our journey highly surprised and impressed us. Now it is my sincere hope that some more of my countrymen, a complete list of whom has been submitted to Major Clague, will be able to make their getaway as successfully and safely as we did, as their wish to get back to normal work and activity in the interest of the Allied war efforts, are just as great as ours."



Hang Hau Village in 1951, showing the jetty used by BAAG agents for contact by water with Shaukiwan. Junk Bay Peak is at top left corner of picture. Photo provided by Mr T H Wong.

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