



## *Technical Webinar*

### **“The Waglan Island: The Lighthouse and the People”**

*by*

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#### **Date, Time & Venue**

**24 February 2021** (Wednesday): 6:30pm (Networking), 7:00pm (Start of Seminar) by WebEx

#### **Seminar Highlights**

Waglan is a small island at a distance of 5km South-east of Cape D' Aguilar or 12 km from Lei Yue Mun. It has the largest lighthouse compound and the largest number of staff working on the island before automation in 1989.

In 1860s Waglan Island was among the first choice of Hong Kong Government to build a lighthouse. However, the proposal was shelved due to its location within the Chinese territory. Eventually the lighthouse was built by Imperial Qing Maritime Customs Service and the light was lit on 9 May 1893. Because of the Nanking Treaty, it was transferred to Hong Kong Government in 1901.

Situated at such a frontier location, since 1907 weather observations were made on the Island by lighthouse staff and were telegraphed to the Observatory. After the Second World War, a new weather station was in operation by Observatory Staff until 1963. It is popular even today to be reminded by the wind speed recorded on the island as a signal to the severity of an approaching typhoon.

During the busy days, people resided on the island included the lighthouse keepers and attendants, the staff from the Observatory, the technician from Cable and Wireless Limited in maintaining the telecommunication equipment, and a small navy force for a short duration.

From 1989 the operation of the lighthouse as well as the weather station have become automated. Since then the island has become deserted with only the regular visits of technical staff in maintaining the installed equipment.

The research team has studied the archives, interviewed the personnel concerned and visited the island. This project is aimed to trace the full history of the Waglan Island which commenced its essential functions 127 years ago. The integral findings would not only rebuild the full history of the lighthouse compound initiated, designed and built by the China Imperial Maritime Customs Service; but also the intangible legacy of those involved in keeping the lights and recording the elements. It is hoped that the dissemination of the lonely men's stories will help reinstall the forgotten memory of the lighthouse-related work on this frontier Island, the collection and transmission of important weather information, as well as the unique lifestyle and culture over there.

#### **About the speaker**



Ir Dr. S.W. Poon, Adjunct Professor, Department of Real Estate and Construction, The University of Hong Kong

Currently Dr. Poon is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Real Estate and Construction, The University of Hong Kong. He is a Chartered Structural Engineer, a Corporate Member of the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers and a Member of Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management.

His research interests include temporary works design and construction, and investigation of accidents and failures during construction. In the last decade his research interest covers historic construction works such as the Centenary Tai Tam Tuk Reservoir Dam, History of Quarrying in Hong Kong, and Historic Lighthouses in Hong Kong and Nearby Places.