

Yintong talks with...

Stephen Perry, Chairman of the 48 Group Club

In 1953, Lord Boyd-Orr took 16 representatives of British companies, including Jack Perry, Stephen's father, to China to discuss trade. This 'icebreaker' mission paved the way for a trade mission the following year which was undertaken by 48 British businessmen, hence the name for a club whose formation and subsequent activities have formed a significant part Anglo-Chinese trade.

'Icebreakers'

Today, the China Britain Business Council (CBBC) is the official agency promoting bilateral trade on behalf of UK Trade & Investment. This was formed in the late 1980s when the 48 Group 'Icebreakers' merged with the Si-



no-British Trade Council to form the China-Britain Trade Group, now known as the CBBC.

As a 48 Group Club member, I have met its Chairman, Stephen Perry, on a number of occasions. Now, in the year of its highly significant 60th anniversary (Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has sent a personal letter of congratulations) I was able to interview him on behalf of *London Business Matters*. I first asked him about his introduction to China. "The first time I recall being made aware of China was as a boy of four or five when my father was away regularly. I missed him terribly and I remember the waiting and then seeing his plane land at the airport field after his 2-3 month long trip to Beijing.

Letters

"There were no direct flights of course in those days and it took about a week to reach Beijing from London. My father used to write these wonderful letters describing the people who were wearing Mao suits and about life in general in China. So, from an early age I became very aware of the country, albeit not very consciously."

Later, as a student leader, Perry became actively involved in protests against the war in Vietnam.

At the same time, he said, the ten-year Cultural Revolution in China coincidentally became ten formative years for him to form his own opinions on China and the world.

Jack Perry's involvement with the 48 Group Club and his export business became less hands-on in the 1980s. Having graduated with a law degree at the London School of Economics, Stephen, aged 26, became more and more involved in the family trading business as

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managing director of London Export Limited as well as the Club's activities.

"China is now on every business executive's lips, but 15 years ago people didn't take much notice. It was an uphill struggle trying to convince people of China's emerging power and the importance of engaging with the country." He persevered though and grew the club to today's 500 active members who benefit from high profile lectures, missions and a renowned Chinese New Year party.

Understanding

What, I asked, is the future of the 48 Group Club? "While I am considering taking a backseat, letting younger people take over the future running of the club with a fresh vision, I don't think I will ever stop being active in thinking, observing and analysing." I can't see that happening either. I learnt that he and his associates have set up a new website – www.chinaglobalimpact.com – to produce information, research and analysis on Chinese policies. "The message I would like to get through is this: if you want to do business with China, no matter how small, the first thing is to understand the country and its people. China is not perfect; doing business with China has many challenges. Do your homework, obtain real knowledge of the country and its people, then go into it with a clear understanding and your eyes wide open."

Pictures at an exhibition

The work of Chinese photographer Qin Yuhai will be displayed next month at the Saatchi Gallery in London in an event organised by Yintong Betser's marketing consultancy ACTIVE Anglo Chinese Communications. The exhibition – titled *Ebb and Flow* – features new studies of water taken from the Chinese landscape over a period of many years.



All the images are based on Qin Yuhai's long engagement and relationship with Mount Yuntai in central China's Henan Province. The photographs, taken on a 10x8 camera, are the result of years of learning and understanding how best to represent the essence of water. At the same time, the exhibition is an exploration of the nature and language of photography. As Qin Yuhai comments, "Photography is my immutable way of life and water is the subject of a lifelong artistic pursuit."

The exhibition will be formally opened by Lord Heseltine, former Deputy Prime Minister.

Ebb and Flow is sponsored by Zen Elegance Jewellery and is presented by Fuhai Culture Development Saatchi Gallery, Duke of York's HQ, King's Road, London, SW3 4RY 11-15 June 2014

Admission is free
www.activeukchina.com/ebbandflow

Yintong Betser is a marketing and communications specialist in the Anglo-Chinese community and the author of a series of books on doing business in China and the UK. She is managing director of ACTIVE Anglo Chinese Communications

www.activeukchina.com

