



The term Market Economy Air Treatment (MEAT) is synonymous with air-conditioning in market complex. Mr KL Chan, Mr Eric Chu, Ms Polly Mui and Mr K.F. Chan of ACRA have the honour of talking with its inventor, Mr Ian AG Phillis.

Mr Phillis was born in a village near Trowbridge, Wiltshire, England. When he was 16, his father brought him to a Mr Earny requesting for an apprenticeship placement. Not only offering him a job in his ventilation and heating fabrication company, Mr Earny 'required' him to go to school 3 nights a week. Ian joined the Royal Air Force in 1953 working on Aircraft Identification - Friend or Foe - electronics. After his military service, he worked with various consultants and contractors in England while studying for his professional qualifications. He also worked in Jordan, Middle East, before arrival at Hong Kong on 1st April 1970. While working here, he established the CIBSE HK Branch and served as the founding chairman. He retired as Chief Engineer of Architectural Services Department on 30th Nov 1990 but has since been occupied by invitations to serve in a number of prominent projects including the United Christian Hospital, the Pamela Youde Eastern Hospital, the new airport, and Wellcome food processing centre in Tseung Kwan O.

Polly: What are your major achievements here?

Ian : *In the mid 1980's, the Urban Council had difficulties in removing hawkers off the streets into their new multi-storey market complexes. One of the reasons being the stuffy environment inside. As there was rental income limitation, full air-conditioning was not yet an option. I designed the MEAT system which cools the air to its dew point consuming minimal energy but helps improving the thermal environment. Hawkers were finally willing to move in. The first building of serious concern was the Centre Street Market. Subsequently, other multi-storey market complexes adopted the same concept.*

My other achievement was the Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui.

In 1970/71, I worked on the Education TV studio in Broadcast Drive which was inaugurated by Sir David Trench. My last job for Wellcome in Tseung Kwan O included an ammonia refrigeration plant having 5,000kg of refrigerant liquid.

As engineers, we leave behind a lot of things, tangible and visible.

When Ian was working for Mr Earny in the 1940's, they built an exhaust system in a kitchen of the Bristol University. The rooftop outlet was done in copper - that was 55 years ago. Today, the hoods and ducts underneath may have been modified, but the copper outlet is still there.

Eric : Anything you are particularly proud of?

Ian : *Even I am now retired, I like to see young people going into our industry. In particular I am also glad that many young people still regard me as a mentor(*)*

(*) Editor's note: Some of the "young" people Ian mentioned are actually very senior guys in the trade. Certainly Ian has inspired a lot of people to their successes.

Eric : What's the major difficulty you faced working here?

Ian : *The Wellcome project because we had lots of problems, in particular the FSI's. Basically, the red book then was not written for industrial application but people did not understand.*

Eric : Is there any problem regarding cultural difference?

Ian : *I am always happy living in Hong Kong, always feel respected and accepted.*



Eric : What about the Handover?

Ian : *In fact, I find China very accommodating to Hong Kong*

Polly: What's your advice to young practitioners?

Ian : *Building services engineering is a worthwhile profession involving several tiers of expertises, all of which are important and should be relatively seamless with no serious skill gaps. People in the top of the hierarchy should respect front line staff. Those who do not have a chance to go to university should not give up - study and practise - there are always opportunities by increments. New entrants with better academic qualifications should also not be afraid of getting hands dirty - in doing so they could learn something useful and expand their confidence.*

Finally, Ian remarked that contractors in his days could make a reasonable living but it would seem not so today, which is absurd given the boost in living standard. He also told us a very interesting story on domestic sub-contracting:

"Back in the late 1980's, ASD formed a committee looking at the coordination issues in building contracts. I was in that committee. Basically, no definitive conclusion had been agreed before the then Secretary for Works retired, at which point the new Acting Secretary decided not to discuss the matter further and that all BS contracts would henceforth be under ASD by domestic sub-contracting arrangement. Problems for E&M contractors will prevail as long as present day domestic sub-contracting arrangement is here"

Mr Phillis is going to make Malaysia his second home besides Hong Kong. We wish him and his family all the best in the years to come. ◉

Q & A



Mr Ian AG Phillis