

War graves in Hong Kong left riddled with spelling errors

Colonial-era war graves in Hong Kong have been left riddled with schoolboy spelling errors, including China spelt Cihna and Hong Kong spelt Honc Honc, after a renovation project, a news report said.

The tombstones in the Hong Kong Cemetery for 40 British sailors killed during the 19th century opium wars have been renovated to counter the effects of 150 years of weathering, the South China Morning Post reported.

But the individual graves and a large monument to the sailors have been crudely filled in with concrete and the inscriptions riddled with spelling errors such as 'grew' for 'crew' and HMS 'Calcftta' instead of 'Calcutta'.

Antiquities Advisory Board member Patrick Lau told the newspaper: 'The mistakes are obviously made by contracted workers who do not know English well.'

'Although the opium war is not a glorious part of Hong Kong history... it deserves more attention from the government.'

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, which tends the cemetery, said it had sent workers to maintain the tombs early this year but said the inscriptions may have been carried out by an ex-servicemen's association.

The tombs mark the deaths of British sailors during the second opium war from 1856 to 1859, when Hong Kong was already a British colony. It ended with further parts of the territory being ceded to Britain.

The standard of spoken and written English in Hong Kong has deteriorated sharply, according to many observers and overseas businesses, since the city of 6.9 million reverted to Chinese rule in 1997.

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