

## Patrick Francis Boulger, HKP

Patrick Francis Boulger (b. 16.3.1864) came from Johnstown, Kill in Co. Kildare, Ireland, a famous horses breeding area where his father, Thomas Boulger, was a stud groomsmen, working for wealthy English horse-breeders. As such he soon moved with his family to England, settling finally in Liverpool. After a short time as a tobacconist, the middle son, Patrick Francis enlisted into the Royal Marines Artillery in October 1895.

Far away in Hongkong the recent accession of the New Territories - nearly ten times the size of the colony's original area, and with a huge increase in the coastal waters to be patrolled - was straining the resources of the Police Force, so in 1899 it petitioned for a secondment of men from the Royal Marines. Thus on 2nd February 1900, Patrick Francis Boulger (always known by his full name) was one of a party of forty who were employed for a fixed single-term contract of five years, at \$75 per month (25% higher than the existing European constables received), and were to be stationed mainly in the New Territories. In early 1902 all availed themselves of the option of transferring permanently into the Police Force, and were formally discharged by the Admiralty.

His first two terms passed without him receiving particular notice - he was promoted to Sergeant soon after returning from his first leave in 1906, and he arrived back in Liverpool at the outset of his second leave in time to appear in the 1911 census with his family there. From here, in October he married Josephine Kieran, who, at twenty-two, was some fifteen years his junior. Sergeant and Mrs. Boulger then travelled to London where they joined the *SS Moldavia*, which departed on 6th October. Josephine must have wondered what she had taken on when, on arrival in Hongkong, they were informed that Patrick was to take charge of the tiny Police Station on the equally diminutive Cheung Chau, or 'Dumbbell Island'. The daily steamer ferry took around 90 minutes to cross to Hongkong Island, but having had no time to learn her way round the town, Josephine would have to wait and accompany her husband, when he submitted his monthly report and collected his salary.

Nine months after their arrival, the station suffered a vicious attack by a huge gang of bandits, who arrived suddenly by launch, terrifying and scattering both the land and floating communities with repeated gunfire. A party of them shot, at point blank range, the Indian constable who was guarding the waterside entrance to the Police Station, and others shot two more of the station's four constables. Boulger and his wife were in their matshed at the time, just a hundred feet or so above the Station. Both came out at the sound of gunfire, with Boulger, rather fruitlessly, trying to halt the gunmen. Both he and Josephine became targets, although neither were hit. Meanwhile other

members of the gang had attacked the village, where they looted properties, including a pawnshop, before departing as suddenly as they had arrived. Without any means of communicating with Police Headquarters, it was some hours before help arrived.

Boulger stayed in charge of Cheung Chau only a short while after that, as the Captain Superintendent of Police himself came under fire from the Governor for allowing such an ill-defended Police Station to exist, and with accommodation in such a state that it was quite inappropriate to house a married man. Soon after the outbreak of the Great War, he was transferred to a station in Victoria, and was appointed monitor of the Police School, which brought in an additional \$120 to his salary of £165 p.a. He also managed the armoury of the Police Reserves, acted as an instructor and oversaw the formation of the Peak Division. He willingly gave many hours of his free time, for, as one of the married men he was not permitted to volunteer for service at the Front. At the conclusion of the war the Reserves presented him with a gold watch and Mrs. Boulger with a silver tea set and brooch in recognition of his valuable service to them.

The couple did not have children, but amongst their many friends in the Police there was a quite a rush of babies during these years. They became Godparents to Inspector Patrick and Ellen O'Sullivan's third daughter, Helen, who had been born in December 1917. It seems most likely that Josephine took care of her baby goddaughter and perhaps Helen's older sister, Julia, during the week towards the end of January 1918, when O'Sullivan's policeman brother was murdered on duty in Wanchai, and his second daughter died in the meningitis outbreak.

The arrival of the new year, of 1919, must have been so welcome to many in Hongkong, let alone Europe, was auspicious for the Boulgers, too, for Patrick's appointment to the Inspectorate came through for 1st January, albeit made possible by the compulsory retirement of the ill-fated George Sim. He was due leave in the ordinary course, but had to give way to more senior men, who had been unable to leave the colony during the conflict. However, the lack of leave did have compensations for Boulger, for aside from the three month bonus in lieu he received, he was given charge of the Northern New Territories, based at Tai Po station in September 1919. It was greatly to the newly promoted Inspector's credit that he was deemed capable of running such a large area, where aside from the regular arduous travel to collecting Crown rents from all properties, it was now very necessary to keep watch for heavily armed gangs smuggling weapons over the porous border into Hongkong. Alongside this, illness from fever ran at about 100% amongst all contingents of the police in the area, with many of the small team of Europeans having two or three severe bouts per year.

Boulger's success in this post was recognised when he was awarded the 3rd class medal "*for exceptional services whilst in charge of the northern district of the New Territories*".<sup>1</sup> He completed the rest of his service back on Hongkong Island and took his pre-retirement leave on 7th September, 1923. At forty-nine years of age and with a total of twenty eight years of service to the Crown, he doubtless felt ready to leave the enervating climate of the East and claim his pension.

The couple settled back in Liverpool, where members of both families were still quite close by and Patrick drew pension of £270 p.a. Some savings in Hongkong made it possible for them to purchase their own house and in the 1930s they lived at 79 Bankfield Road, Old Swan, then close to the outskirts of Liverpool. During the war years the couple moved to the Catholic presbytery, accommodation of the Brothers of Charity, who ran the orphanage at Thingwall Hall, where Josephine was employe as housekeeper and maybe Patrick, too, worked for the Brothers. It was here that four days after Christmas 1946 Patrick Francis Boulger died, aged seventy-two. He left his widow to inherit £1091 6sh. 6d., but his pension died with him. Josephine survived him by some 30 years, until her death in a convent nursing home in her native city in June, 1976, aged eighty-seven.

Patricia O'Sullivan, July 2017

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<sup>1</sup> *Hongkong Telegraph*, 9th July 1921, reporting the medal ceremony of the previous day.