



The Icebreakers

Equality and Mutual Benefit

平等互利



Hu Jintao, the President of the People's Republic of China meets with Stephen Perry, the Chairman of the 48 Group Club. The President described the 'Icebreakers' as visionary people.

*Committed to promoting positive relations
between the UK and China since 1954*





“In the 1950s, a group of far-sighted people from the British business community overcame one obstacle after another, and made the famous ice-breaking trip to China, thus starting business exchanges with the newly-founded People’s Republic. Today, more than 50 years later, it is important that the business communities of our two countries carry on the pioneering spirit of those who broke ice, vigorously explore new avenues and new areas for expanded economic cooperation, and work to elevate our business ties to a higher level. The Sino-British relationship has now entered a new phase of sustained development, and achieved gratifying results, particularly in economic cooperation and trade.”



- The President of the People’s Republic of China, Hu Jintao, speaking at the Guildhall in London, November 2005, to an audience of 700.

The 48 Group Club

THE 48 Group Club name is almost iconic in China - from the President down – and is held in high esteem by the younger generation of Chinese businessmen who are becoming significant decision-makers within the orbit of China’s foreign trade; as well as amongst the ranks of politicians, diplomats, academics and those involved in cultural activities.

Today, the 48 Group Club offers an important - and often key - network of contacts (*guanxi*) for those active in China trade. It organises activities throughout the UK, as well as academic and cultural exchanges, whilst also helping to maintain relationships with Chinese friends.

Member companies and institutions vary in size from the multinational to the micro and come from all sectors: industry, commerce, government, education, sports, culture and the law.

The strength and success of the Group and its forerunners are not purely financial. The foundations lay in the work of a few visionaries such as Jack Perry, Tod Sloan, Roland Berger, Percy Timberlake, Professor Joan Robinson and the British companies which formed its membership.

Equally important was - and is - the very close relationship with Chinese counterparts such as the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.



Madam Fu Ying, Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to the United Kingdom at a reception in London with Stephen Perry.



“We see the relationship between our two countries as among our top international priorities. The 48 Group Club helped establish that relationship and continues to play a major role in China-UK relations.”

- Madam Fu Ying, Ambassador of the PRC to the UK.



Events & Activities

* The Club's high-profile Chinese New Year celebrations held at prestigious locations such as the Guildhall in London and throughout the UK are high spots in the Sino-British calendar. In recent years the Club has also held the annual Icebreaker Reception at the Chinese Embassy in London.

* The trail-blazing Icebreaker Lectures, held at venues such as the Houses of Parliament, Cambridge University and the Great Hall of the People, provide various forums for senior business and government representatives from both countries to share insights into important issues.

* Speakers have included: Lord Woolf, the former Lord Chief Justice; China's Minister of Education, Zhou Ji; Zheng Bijian, Chairman of the China Reform Forum and former Executive Vice-President of the Central Party School; and Liu Mingkang Chairman of China's Banking and Regulatory Commission.



Stephen Perry with Li Yuanchao, Party Secretary of Jiangsu Province at his Icebreaker Lecture in London, March 2007

photo: He Dalong, Xinhua

* The Club hosts visiting high-level Chinese dignitaries and talks such as that by Mr Li Yuanchao, Party Secretary of Jiangsu Province in the Spring of 2007 when he reviewed the 'New Concepts of Socialist China'.

* The Club also offers resources and facilities for arranging ad hoc receptions for important visiting delegations from both the Chinese government and the private sector.



Awards

The Club's awards are recognised as some of the most prestigious in the sector and include:

- * The Outstanding Individual Achievement Award – in collaboration with the Pearl Awards, and jointly sponsored by London Export Corporation & Global Group (Europe) Plc.
- * Others such as the UK Exporter of the Year Award, Chinese Inward Investor of the Year, and the UK Outward Investor of the Year are prized by both British and Chinese organisations.



2007 – Awards to Arup, AstraZeneca and China Telecom at the Guildhall in London made by Zha Peixin, former Chinese Ambassador to the UK.

“We have always been grateful to the 48 Group Club for your commitment to our friendly relationship and cooperation over the years.”

- Zhou Ji, Minister of Education, the People's Republic of China.

History of the 48 Group Club

THE history of the 48 Group Club stems from the early 1950s, when the founding 'Icebreakers' were the first Westerners to establish mutually beneficial trade relations with the newly formed People's Republic of China.

In 1950 the United Kingdom became one of the first countries to recognise the People's Republic of China. In 1953 Lord Boyd-Orr - head of the newly formed British Council for the Promotion of International Trade (BCPIT) - took 16 representatives of British companies to China to discuss trade.



Jack Perry in China meeting with Bo Yibo, Chairman of CCPIT in the 1950s.

This 'Icebreaker Mission' paved the way for the now fabled 1954 trade mission by British companies, which later became known generically as the 48 Group Club and whose trail-blazing initiatives have become a vital part of British-Chinese history.

In the late 1980s the 48 Group Club merged with the Sino-British Trade Council to form the China-Britain Trade Group, now known as the China-Britain Business Council (CBBC).

Today's 48 Group Club - which has grown to over 300 members - continues to develop the work of promoting positive Sino-British relations.

“It has been my privilege to observe China since my first Ministerial visit in 1973 and others later. The pace of change has been and remains extraordinary.”

- Lord Heseltine of Thenford,
a Fellow of the 48 Group.



The 'Icebreakers' mission to China in 1954.

How The Club is Structured

Committee: The ongoing activities of the club are monitored and coordinated by a 23 strong committee – whose current members include; Dr Johnny Hon, Chairman of the Global Group and the 48 Group Club Joint Vice Chairman in Hong Kong; Joanna Lavan, Director of ConnectChina and the 48 Group Club Vice Chairman; Jeremy Gordon, Chief Executive of China Business Services and Secretary of the 48 Group Club; Jeremy Butler, Director of China Desk, KMPG and Treasurer of the 48 Group Club; Keith Bennett, Chairman of Keith Bennett Associates and Chairman of the 48 Group Club Awards Sub-Committee; Lance Browne CBE, Chairman of Standard Chartered Bank (China) and the 48 Group Club Joint Vice Chairman in Shanghai; Peter Batey OBE, Senior Partner of Vermillion Partners and the 48 Group Club Joint Vice Chairman in Beijing; and Stephen Perry, Managing Director of the London Export Corporation Ltd, and Chairman of the 48 Group Club.



Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, centre, in the UK in 2004 with members of the 48 Group Club, including one of the founders Percy Timberlake.

“The 48 Group broke the blockade by the western world against New China and started trading with China. Facts have proven that they did the right thing. They deserve our respect. We must be grateful to them. They were the Icebreakers. Once the ice was broken, the sailing routes were established.”

- Premier Wen Jiabao during a visit to Britain in September 2006.

Contemporary Icebreakers: The original 'Icebreakers' were British organisations and individuals. Today they are joined by a distinguished group of people from Britain and China who are maintaining those links and driving forward the strong bonds of friendship between the two

nations. Amongst the current group are a number of former Chinese ambassadors to the UK, such as Ji Chaozhu, Ma Zhengang and Zha Peixin; Wan Jifei, Chairman of the Chinese Council for the Promotion of International Trade; and Liu Mingkan, Chairman of the China Banking Regulatory Commission.



Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London and Fellow of the 48 Group Club, speaking at a Chinese New Year dinner.

Fellows: This group is made up of individuals who have made significant contributions to Sino-British relations. They include: Lord Heseltine; Lord Howe; Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London; Peter Mandelson, EU Commissioner for External Trade; Sir Fred Goodwin, Chief Executive of the Royal Bank of Scotland; Ben Chapman MP, Chairman of the UK All Party Parliamentary China Group; Lord Powell of Bayswater, former President of the China-Britain Business Council; Lord Sainsbury; and Lord Lloyd-Webber, Chairman of the Really Useful Group.

Honorary Members: These include individuals who have contributed to Sino-British relations in many fields. They include Sir Alan Donald, Honorary President of the China Association and a former UK ambassador to China; Lord Clement-Jones, Chairman of DLA Piper LLP and Vice Chairman of the UK All Party Parliamentary China Group; Katy Tse Blair, Manager, Islington Chinese Association, London; Sir Leonard Appleyard, a former UK ambassador to China; and Lord Coe, Chairman of the London Organising Committee of the 2012 Olympic Games.

Young 'Icebreakers': Inspired by the comments of Premier Wen Jiabao, a new generation is now continuing the links and a small group has been set up to further those contacts.

Ordinary Members: The current membership is in excess of 300 individuals and organisations, both British and Chinese.



Stephen Perry - Chairman
The 48 Group Club

Membership

If you wish to be considered for membership, please
Complete an application form available from the
administration office or via the web site.

For further details about the 48 Group Club please contact:

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The benefits of joining the club are highlighted on the web site:

www.48groupclub.org

We acknowledge support from the following:

Printing sponsored by
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