Wei-Hai-Wei was ruled by the British for 32 years. The area was 288 square miles with a population of 128,000 in 315 villages. It was very similar to Kowloon and the New Territories at Hong Kong (also leased in 1898). This lease had 256 square miles and a population of 102,000.

Both leaseholds had walled towns. At Wei-Hai-Wei the walls measured 4 miles but the population of 1,500 to 3,500 was mainly engaged in keeping opium dens and brothels. Both walled towns, Kowloon and Wei-Hai-Wei, were initially administered by the Chinese; at Kowloon the administration was suppressed but at Wei-Hai-Wei the Chinese administration continued throughout the occupation.

Up to 1920 the colony received grant-in-aid of £115,900 in total. The last six years saw a surplus of £20,558.

Overall the administration lost money, in that total taxes raised did not cover the costs of administration.

With Hong Kong due to be returned to China it is tempting to contrast the smooth transition back to China of Wei-Hai-Wei in 1930.

Wei-Hai-Wei was in no sense a 'one horse town'. It was the Summer station for the China Squadron, and it had its own regiment of Chinese troops who served in the Boxer Rebellion and it had its own police force, hospitals and schools.

Apart from permanent staff manning the Naval base on Liu Kung Island and occasional bodies of soldiers, the entire territory was administered by about ten Europeans. Any monies raised by taxes was spent on roads, drains, hospitals, schools, etc. Wei-Hai-Wei belies the concept that colonies existed for the benefit of British taxpayers.
A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE EXHIBIT

FRAMES 1 & 2 The Japanese occupation 1895-1898 and the Courier Post. Of particular interest is the incoming letter with the cachet 'Liu Kung Tau Telegraphs'.

The only recorded inwards cover prior to the Courier Post.
Frames 3 & 4  The Chinese Post Office was opened on March 15th, 1899. The various cancellations are shown including a registered letter with two different IPO tie prints.

Frames 5 & 6  The British Post Office on the Island of Liu Kung Tau. The Post Office on the mainland at Matau, renamed Port Edward to mark the coronation of King Edward VII.

Frame 7  The Boxer Rebellion. Wei-Hai-Wei was initially the advance base for the C.E.F.

Card sent through Field Post Office No.9 which was on Liu Kung Tau island but moved to the mainland by October 9th, 1900.
The Chinese Labour Corps of 120,000 men was raised for trench digging etc in France during the 1914-1918 World War.

Registered letter from Yangsin dated 18 February 1918. Sent to Port Edward and forwarded in sealed bags to France. '31994' was the number of the member of the Corps in France. '77 Co.' was added for delivery to the 77th Company of the Chinese Labour Corps.
Mail via Siberia. Up to November 1903 only mails bearing Russian stamps were accepted. Russian stamps were added at Wei-Hai-Wei and letters appear to have only had Chinese stamps covering a local letter rate (not yet documented) to Chefoo.

Postcard sent via Siberia during the short period the route was open for British Mail, November 1903 to January 1904.

Stamps printed for exclusive use in the Colony. Wei-Hai-Wei fiscals. Fleet Mail.

Shows the plans attached to the Rendition Treaty showing the land retained on lease together with postcards of the Colony.

Inwards Mail.

Envoi: The Convention under which Wei-Hai-Wei was returned to China in 1930. After this date the Royal Navy still had a base. Fleet and Diplomatic Mail. Outwards mail up to the Japanese occupation.