

TALKING POINT: Relics of the past

The 'unexploded bomb' I found turned out to be the Dagu Bell

Re the Dagu Bell going back to China.

I'm glad it's going back. Nearly 60 years ago it gave me the first of my grey hairs.

I don't know who buried it, but I found it.

Just after the war I worked my student summer holiday in Portsmouth's Victoria Park cutting the grass, feeding the livestock and edging the flower beds.

While digging out an old compost heap my spade hit metal.

Unexploded bombs were still around so my mate and I got on our knees and cautiously fingered the soil aside. We uncovered a few inches of curved metal and ran for the foreman.

He fingered the soil too,

but a bit more bravely, and uncovered not German but Chinese characters.

You can guess who had to dig it out.

I also turned on the tap to the fountain, far too far, soaking the readers of your early edition sat around the ornamental fishpond. But that's another story, like mid-morning coffee in Verrechia's after watering the flower baskets on the lampposts in Commercial Road, or seeing sailors hurrying to the town station, having to halt and stand like statues in the middle of the park while Colours were played in the RNB.

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Lord Mayor of Portsmouth Councillor Robin Sparshatt, left, handing back the Dagu Bell to Mr Jiaxing Zhang, Mayor of Tanggu Qu government, China