

Britcham's Keith Buckley has been honoured with an MBE

The chairman of Britcham Macao was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire at a ceremony in Windsor Castle on Wednesday



The chairman and founder of **Britcham Macao**, Keith Buckley, had his services to the British business community recognised on Wednesday, when he was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) by Prince William during a ceremony at Windsor Castle – a royal residence some 40 kilometres outside of central London.

Speaking with Macao News, Buckley, 76, said he was the first to arrive at the castle for the day's investiture ceremony – whose participants also included New Zealand's former prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, who was receiving a damehood. Once Buckley, his wife Jolan and their two daughters passed security checks, he says the family were ushered into the castle, up its Grand Staircase, past suits of armour and royal portraits, and into a waiting room.

Before meeting Prince William and accepting his medal, Buckley was given a quick lesson in royal etiquette (he was told to use “Your Royal Highness” in the first instance and “Sir” thereafter). Afterwards, he said it all went smoothly. “The first thing [William] asked me, which surprised me a little bit, was, “Oh, you’re in construction, aren’t you?” Buckley recalled. “Then we had a talk about what I did in Macao. And I also told him that I was very happy his wife and the king were recovering from their illnesses. That was the gist of the conversation.”

[See more: [Britcham, USJ join forces to promote environmental protection in Macao](#)]

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Building Cotai ‘from water’

The UK government awards MBEs for an outstanding achievement or service to the community. For Buckley, the title reflects his tireless work in the SAR over the past 21 years, including as a project director during Macao's casino construction boom and in various voluntary roles. Buckley believes he is the third MBE currently living in Macao – another is **Eileen Stow**, of Lord Stow's Bakery.

Buckley moved to Macao in 2003, to work on major casino developments like Sands, the Venetian and the Parisian. In 2005, he co-founded the Macao branch of the Lighthouse Club, a British charitable fund that supports families of construction workers killed on the job. Even when workers are insured, Buckley explained, there are often delays in the compensation process. The Lighthouse Club is there to bridge the gap, paying for funeral costs or for a body's repatriation – taking what can be enormous financial burdens off grieving families.

[See More: [See photographer Adam Lampton's images of Cotai under construction](#)]

Today, Buckley still serves as the club's chairman, a role he balances with his work at BritCham and his position on the board of the Macau European Chamber of Commerce. These roles are unpaid but provide him with a strong sense of purpose, he says.

“We are very, very active,” Buckley says of BritCham. The organisation hosts regular networking events and an annual ball, offers local students scholarships to attend Oxford and Cambridge universities in the UK, and organises fundraisers for a wide range of charitable initiatives.

Work-wise, Buckley says his biggest achievement in Macao had to be “starting from water” in Cotai, when the casino strip was a stretch of sea between two islands. “We created all those buildings, all these opportunities, and it does make you feel proud. Those projects were created with a very good team spirit, and I think that's still felt today.”



At 21 years and counting, Buckley has lived in Macao longer than anywhere else in the world. He describes himself as an “international citizen,” his career having taken him to places as far-flung as Iraq, Poland, Malaysia, Turkey, mainland China and Switzerland. “I'm not one of these expats who says, ‘I'm an expat and I want to get back home’,” Buckley says. “I prefer the idea that ‘home is where I am.’”

While Buckley acknowledges that his roots “are very much British,” his English parents raised him in Germany. The family moved there shortly after World War II, when Buckley's father – who also received an MBE for his work – was heavily involved in running schools for the children of British military and government personnel serving in West Germany.

After his investiture at Windsor Castle, Buckley and his family celebrated with lunch at celebrity chef Heston Blumenthal's renowned restaurant, the Fat Duck. He and his wife, Jolan, have another few weeks away, spending time with their daughters and grandchildren in the UK before heading to Jolan's home country, the Netherlands. When back in Macao, Buckley will dive straight into work: a BritCham tour of the city's water treatment plant awaits, followed by the Lighthouse Club's annual golf day and dinner.

[See more: [Foreign residents of Macao can now visit China for up to 180 days](#)]

As he eyes a retirement potentially outside of Macao, Buckley reflects on the fulfilling decades he's spent in the city. The thing he loves most is the tight-knit community: “Everybody knows each other, and everybody treats each other as equals,” he says. He also reflects on the dramatic changes he's witnessed in the SAR, largely due to the liberalisation of Macao's gaming industry – something his expertise helped actualise. “Gaming has been completely transformational for Macao, when you look at all it's done,” he says. “All the opportunities it's created, all the employment.”

Looking ahead, Buckley anticipates further changes by the end of the decade. He points to the government's recent push for economic diversification, shifting the emphasis away from gaming, and Macao's de facto extension into Hengqin island, part of the mainland. “Accessibility and integration with the mainland is improving so much. You've got the Light Rail Transit heading up to the Border Gate, the [Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macao] bridge, the new Macao Bridge a lot of new initiatives,” he says.

“Whether I'll still be here in five years' time, in my eighties, I'm not sure. But I'll always have a soft spot for Macao.”