

The Masonic Hall 30 Bund Foundation Stone Laying

The Foundation Stone Laying drew public-wide attention on July 1865, as the long procession proceeded along the roads from the Masonic Hall in Canton Road to the new site. It was headed by the Consular Body, the Municipal Council; Commissioner of Customs; the Shanghai Rangers; The Rifle Corps; the Police Band; followed by the Brethren where the Band of the 67th Regiment were waiting at the designated site. The balconies of the adjoining houses were crowded to witness this colourful ceremony. (Fig.17 Foundation Stone Laying)



The Foundation Stone Laying of Trinity Church

About a year later from the date of the Foundation Stone Laying of the new Masonic Hall on the Bund in May 1866 an equally colourful procession began to assemble outside the Masonic Hall on the Bund as the brethren displayed their Lodge banners aloft in the breeze. After opening the Provincial Grand Lodge, the Provincial Grand Lodge EC and the brethren proceeded to the British Consulate where the Her British Majesty's Consul, the Consul - Generals for France and America and the Consular Body and a body of seamen and marines fell in headed by the Assistant Marshall and walked to Trinity Church. The officials were followed by the Shanghai brethren and distinguished visiting brethren with a brother bearing the V.S.L. borne on a cushion.

Curious spectators jostled each other at the unusual sight of the colourful procession thronging the streets. On arrival at the church compound, a grand stand had been erected and the largest assemblages of ladies ever seen in Shanghai waited patiently to witness the ceremony in the warm afternoon sunshine.

The brethren entered the church first and evening Service was read followed by an appropriate Sermon. The brethren then moved to the site where the Foundation Stone was suspended. The Band played the 'Masonic Anthem' and the Provincial Grand Master delivered an address. It was concluded with Prayer while the H.B. M.'s Consul presented a handsome silver trowel to the Provincial Grand Master requesting him to make use of it in laying the stone.

The Inscription on The Foundation Stone reads:

" The Foundation Stone of Trinity Church, Shanghai, laid with Masonic Ceremony, under the direction and superintendence of the D.P.G.M. of Freemasonry for China E.C, on 24th May, 1866. Being the Birthday of her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.H.B.M's Consul. Chas. A. Winchester, Esq. C.E.Parker, Esq. D.P.G.M. Trustees: Wm. G. Cuthbertson, Esq., and Wm. Keswick, Esq. Treasurer: Hy.Dickinson,Esq. Architects: G.G. Scott Esq., R.A. & William Kidner, Esq Builders: Messrs. S.C. Farnham & Co. Consular Chaplain: Rev. C.H. Butcher, M.A."

Deposited in the cavity included new coins from the Hongkong mint; By-Laws of Lodges; copies of various newspapers; the Hong list for January 1866; the list of Provincial Grand Officers of the day.

The stone was then lowered, tried and proved. The building plans were presented for approval and finally the stone was anointed with corn, wine and oil. On conclusion, appropriate addresses were made and the dignified proceedings were terminated with the singing of Psalm 100. (Fig.18 the lowering of the stone)



The procession re-formed in inverted order and the brethren returned to the Masonic Hall.

The Dedication of the Masonic Hall 30 Bund.

The design for the new and third Masonic Hall on the Bund was prepared by Bro. Clark but was handed over to Bro. William Kidner, Architect, before Bro. Clark's departure from Shanghai.



All members of the Craft in Shanghai were invited to attend the dedication ceremony on 27 September 1867.

It was a little after 4.00 PM when Bro. Murray PGM opened the Provincial Grand Lodge at the new building. In his address he declared our inviolable adhesion to Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth- the principles upon the Craft was founded. After the ceremony, 80 brethren adjourned to the Banquet Hall.

(Fig.19 The Masonic Hall)

The Plans & Completion of Trinity Church

The Masonic Hall was completed before that of Trinity church.

The plans of the church were drawn up in England by Sir Gilbert Scott for an imposing church. Sir Gilbert was the leading Victorian architect of neo Gothic structures. His earliest works included gaols and workhouses but he soon designed magnificent buildings, particularly churches. Due to the lack of funds the drawings for the church were considerably modified by Bro. William Kidner, the DGL Supt. of Works who completed the plans for the Bund Masonic Hall. Consequently, the church building was not completed until 1869.

In that year, before a visit to Shanghai by the Duke of Edinburgh the Duke of Somerset made a speech in the House of Lords in which he referred to Shanghai as 'a sink of iniquity!' Smuggling was still rampant especially opium, gambling, vice was prevalent, corruption, political intrigue, murder and kidnapping of young girls was a frequent occurrence under the thin veneer of probity and legal trade.

The photo below left (Fig.20 left) is the 1866 Trinity Church in Shanghai and right Holy Trinity Church in Stoke both designed by Sir Gilbert Scott. (Fig.21 right)



A Masonic Procession from the Masonic Hall to Trinity Cathedral 1887

The celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Reign of Queen Victoria was held in Shanghai on 21 June 1887. Once again, the streets were crowded despite early rain at the sight of the Masonic banners and the brethren in full regalia as the brethren processed from the Masonic Hall to Trinity Cathedral accompanied by the Consular Corps and naval officers in full uniform. It is possible that many local residents viewed the procession with the brightly decorated flags were part of a foreign Triad faction!

Early Map of Shanghai

The map shown below is dated 1912 and indicates clearly the Masonic Hall No. 30, the Cathedral together with other important buildings. (Fig.22)



The Masonic Hall on the Bund can be seen at the upper right corner of the map opposite the Public gardens above while that of Trinity Cathedral is situated north of the Central Fire Station centre towards the bottom of the map.

The Venerable Brothers

In 1891, serious riots occurred along the Yangtze Valley instigated by a scholar in Hunan, Chou Han, who employed a secret society known as the Kolaowei (venerable brothers). They put up posters calling on the people to attack mission establishments. As a result, many churches were demolished and looted. Many missionaries and foreigners were killed as a result in the insurrection. The rioters though were ultimately suppressed.

Shanghai Semi-Centennial 1893

In November 1893, Shanghai celebrated its semi-centennial. An elaborate programme was held including parades, a firing of a salute of 50 guns, banquets, children's fetes on the Racecourse, The Bund, Nanking Road, Garden Bridge (Fig.23 see below) and the Public Gardens were illuminated at night. Among the distinguished guests was the Governor of Hong Kong. One might note that in 1894 bubonic plague swept through Hong Kong!



A Tower is added to the Church

The 1866 Trinity Cathedral was constructed without a tower but in 1893, a tower was added and it improved the structure aesthetically. (Fig.24 & Fig.25 See below)



Masonic Hall Rebuilding in 1897

In the year 1895, it was discovered that the back portion of the Masonic Hall was unsafe and required rebuilding down to the foundations.

In April 1897, there were local disturbances when the Municipal Council raised the price of wheelbarrow licences and the pullers went on strike!

Two months later in June 1897, on the Anniversary of the Coronation of HM Queen Victoria, a large assembly of Freemasons witnessed the formal deposition of a leaden casket containing Masonic items and documents into a specially prepared cavity in the walls of the new building. Among the documents so deposited were programmes of Services held at Trinity Cathedral and Union Church.

Masonic Divine Service at Trinity Cathedral

The International Settlement now being a very cosmopolitan society the Municipal Council could not take part in the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria and the celebrations were held under the British Consul authority and British residents. DGL of Northern China met at the temporary Masonic Hall in Kiangse Road on 22 June 1897 and processed to Trinity Cathedral to attend Divine Service. After an impressive and well-attended service the Masonic procession formed up in reverse order and returned to the Masonic Hall where DGL was closed.

At this time saw the beginnings of the industrial revolution in Shanghai. Entrepreneurs established flourmills, spinning and weaving factories, chemical works, engineering and shipbuilding in view of the availability of cheap and often employed very young children due to the absence of labour laws.

The Masonic Hall Reconstruction

The Masonic Hall on the Bund was again reconstructed in 1912 when the whole frontage was rebuilt. It was at a time when there was an increasing manifesting anti-foreign sentiments among secret societies in Shantung Province known as the 'Boxers' abetted by the Empress Dowager. This uprising sparked off another allied military expedition to Peking to put down the Boxer and government forces.

More Trouble Flows Under The Bridge.

WW I over, Shanghai was a dangerous place, murder and kidnapping was rife. There was a continual political tug o' war in China between the Nationalist and the Communists. In 1927, the Nationalist forces advanced on Shanghai but the International Settlement was cordoned by allied troops. Despite the tension, the Craft in Shanghai decided that the reconstructed Masonic Hall on the Bund had fulfilled its original intentions and the land was sold to erect a new hall. The hall was demolished in 1928 and in that year, the

Municipal Council opened the public gardens to Chinese residents, and an entrance fee was charged both to Chinese and foreigners. (Fig.26 below is a card of Hongkew Park Shanghai)



The Erection of the Fourth Masonic Hall

The foundation stone for the fourth Masonic Hall in Avenue Road was laid in January 1931 according to ancient custom under the auspices of the DDGL Master EC. Bro. Nation. (Fig.27 Avenue Road Masonic Hall)

Dedication of the Fourth Masonic Hall

Two hundred and forty seven Brethren assembled on a warm evening on 26 September 1931 to witness the solemn Consecration of the crowded new hall in Avenue Road. The consecrating vessels were the same as used for the ceremony of the Foundation Stone laying with the addition of a silver vessel for salt. Arrangements were made for the representatives of the English, Irish and Scottish Constitutions to participate in the ceremony. The DGM EC Bro H.J. Clarke dedicated the two Lodge Room and consecrated the hall according to antient usages and established rites.



The Dean of Trinity Cathedral

As an indication of the universality of the Craft, in 1932, a warrant was issued under the Grand Lodge of Vienna 'Lodge Lux in Orientis.' It was open to German speaking members and in December 1932, the DGM EC consecrated the Lodge at the Shanghai Masonic Hall. H.J. Clarke. The DG Chaplain was Bro. A.C Trivett M.A., D.D. the Dean of Trinity Cathedral. The lodge held lectures on a wide range of subjects and it was one of the leading lodges to offer true Masonic education. Their lodge meetings were very

popular. The Dean also gave lectures at the lodge. On the death of Bro. H.J. Clarke in 1935, one of the leading Masonic lights in Shanghai for many years, a formal service was held for him at Trinity Cathedral conducted by the Dean, Bro. Very Revd. Trivett, DG Chaplain EC.

Conflict



Europe was already on a war footing and in 1937, the Japanese forces landed in Shanghai. By 1942, Shanghai had been turned into one huge internment camp until liberation in 1945 and conclusion of the horrors of the Pacific War. The Shanghailanders had to rebuild their lives afresh from the ashes of that terrible conflict.

The Centenary of Trinity Cathedral Was Not Forgotten



In March 1947, despite the early post-war difficulties Lodge Cosmopolitan No.428 SC managed to issue a Summons inviting its members to attend Evensong at the Trinity Cathedral, as it was the Centenary year of the church and regard to the fact that the 1866 Foundation Stone was laid with full Masonic Ceremony with great pageantry.

On Sunday 13 April 1947, the DGL EC and Scottish Lodges with their families attended the Service conducted by the Dean, Bro. Trivett of Northern Lodge No.470 EC.

The Promulgation of the Peoples of the Republic of China

Following the long and bitter war against the Japanese and between the Nationalists and the Communists left China ravaged. Despite better-armed and engaged foreign advisers, the Nationalists were unconscionably corrupt and their economic and fiscal policies were inept and failed to adopt social and economic reforms. Consequently, the Nationalists fell into the hands of Mao and the Communists.

On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong announced the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China establishing a new socialist order. (Fig.28 Proclamation of the PRC)

Following the winds of change in Shanghai, the Lodges found it difficult to continue due to heavy taxes and an attrition of its membership. By the end of 1951, the Scottish District became dormant leaving Cosmopolitan carrying one Scots banner flying.



The Demise of Freemasonry in Shanghai

On 20 March 1951, the Northern DGL EC meeting at the Avenue Road Masonic Hall closed. After singing the British National Anthem, the D.G. Master resigned and with it, the District ceased. The R.O.S. Provincial Grand Lodge moved to Hong Kong in 1952 with Lodge Erin No.463 IC and Royal Sussex No. 501 EC removed its warrant to the place of its birth to Hong Kong. Tuscan Lodge No. 1027 EC moved to London. L. St. Andrew in the F.E. No.493 SC removed to Hong Kong in 1953. This left one single taper in the name of Freemasonry burning in Shanghai and that was Lodge Cosmopolitan No. 428 SC. That last Masonic taper was finally snuffed out towards the end of 1960 and the Craft in Shanghai came to a sorry close. The first lodge erected in Shanghai, Northern Lodge No. 570 EC continued working for 111 years and ceased in around 1960.

The Masonic Hall, we understand, was taken over by a Trade Union while the Shanghai Club was made into a seaman's hostel. China was soon to face another kind of social rebellion in the form of the Cultural Revolution that rocked and tore apart the very fabric of society from top to bottom from which it has not fully recovered, even today. What happened to the Masonic Hall and to Trinity Church during those chaotic days we do not know? On our visit to Fuzhou in our quest to find the Masonic Hall there, we visited the Roman Catholic Church. During the Cultural Revolution, this church was used as a factory! I am glad to say that the former elegant church has been beautifully renovated and used again for its intended purpose.

With the demise of the Craft in Shanghai in the 1950's, went with it an end of Masonic services at Trinity Church.

Freemasons Return to Shanghai After Half a Century

It was not until May 2001, that a group of Freemasons under the 'banner' of the District Grand Lodge of Hong Kong & the Far East and their ladies left Hong Kong to visit Shanghai especially to see the former Masonic Hall. On 12 May 2001, the group alighted pensively from their coach and stood in front of our former Masonic Hall constructed seventy years earlier. The '1912 Bund' corner stone, as reconstructed was still in place. Despite the thick covering of white paint, one could still discern the proudly words inscribed-'Shanghai Masonic Hall'. Since its construction in 1931, an additional floor had been added. Otherwise, the facade of the building had not been modified greatly. The number of the building No. 1623 Avenue Road was designated as long ago as 1931 when it was a new suburb of Shanghai. Today, the road is known as Peking Road West.

The De facto Occupants

The de facto occupant of the former Hall is the 'Chinese Medical Association Shanghai Branch' The organization was founded in 1917 and has developed into sixty-nine specialty medical societies. The medical library is now one of the largest in Mainland China. (Fig.29 Left -The front elevation of the former Masonic Hall (Fig.30 & Fig31. centre & right the entrance to the building)



Internally, we found the building little modified except that the former large Lodge room was being used as an auditorium and another floor had been added above. The visitors to the hall probably comprised one of the largest assemblies of Freemasons held in the hall for half a century or more. The group included Craft members from the English, Irish and Scottish Constitutions and active members of Royal Sussex Lodge No. 501 EC and Lodge Cosmopolitan No. 428 SC. Happily; both lodges are active in Hong Kong today!

A Search for Trinity Cathedral

On 14 May 2001, a small group took a coach to the Bund area in an attempt to find Trinity Church. Regrettably, the coach driver and guide were unable to help us in our attempt in discovering the church. The face of Shanghai is changing rapidly and many established buildings had already been demolished for redevelopment and road infrastructure. We simply concluded that the church had already been demolished and the site redeveloped. Many churches and temples had been destroyed or closed down by the authorities in an attempt to strengthen control over religious activity in some parts of the country.

On return to Hong Kong, more attempts were made to trace the church. Further research indicated that the church was also known as the 'Saint Shanyi Church' and was situated south of Nanjing Road. (Fig.32)

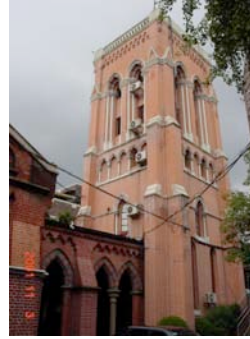


A New Search for the Church

A new opportunity arose to find the church when the writer's friend and Potunghua teacher Mr. Bei Tsan-po planned to go to Shanghai. He was a former resident of Shanghai and armed with additional information he was kindly requested to see if he could locate the old church building. He finally discovered the building and was able to take some photographs of the facade, which were e-mailed to the writer. He found the old church at number 201 Jiangxi Road very much as it was described to him (Fig.33 below)



He ascertained that the church was now designated the Whangpoo Town Hall and was sometimes used as an Army Recruitment Centre! (Fig. 34 right)



The Church Tower

Remarkably, the old tower is still standing although some new appendages in the form of air conditioners had been added for the comfort of the new occupants (Fig.35 The Tower above right). Another indication of the new order shows the wheelbarrows, rickshaws and sedan chairs have long gone and are now replaced by the ubiquitous official black sedan car. (Fig.36 below left)

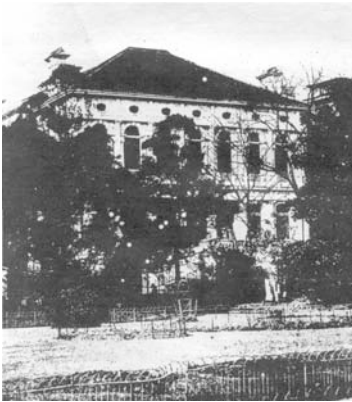


Mr. Bei did not venture inside the building, as church has been placed under the administration of the Security Bureau. Had he done so, who knows, he may have been cajoled into being drafted into the Army, so he sensibly retreated respectfully from the consecrated ground! (Fig.37 Security Bureau building right)

Epilogue

The grey torpid waters of the Woosung River have seen the waters tinged with blood many times over but the river continues to wend its way to the sea as it silently slips by the new shimmering Shanghai. The city and its residents both Chinese and foreign, endured rebellion, civil conflict, military occupation, decades of abuse yet in its short history has been able to leave a worthwhile legacy to remember. The milestones in this paper of the first 150 years of the development of Shanghai records, especially, the Freemasons and their Masonic Hall and the cordial relationship with the congregation of Trinity Cathedral. This is further evidenced, as behind the corner stone of both the Masonic Hall and Trinity Church 'time capsules' have been embedded containing a number of Masonic items of interest awaiting discovery.

(Fig.38 Masonic Hall 30 The Bund below



(Fig.39 The church)



Shanghai Today

Today, as Shanghai residents enter the contemporary Cathedrals of gleaming glass and steel rising beyond the Bund thrusting skyward they grasp their hands in supplication in the name of progress and prosperity that constitutes the new Shanghai. (Fig.40 & Fig.41See Commercial & Gang Hui Plaza below)



(Fig.42 The Grand Theatre)

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(Fig.43 The First Masonic Hall was situated in Nanjing Road)



(Fig.44 Nanjing Road today)

