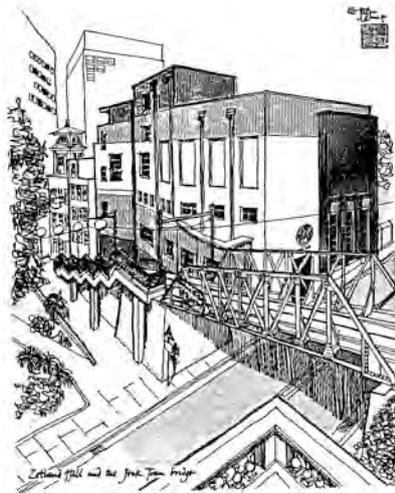




Zetland Hall 'In Which We Meet' Hong Kong



Far East Freemasonry evolved in Hong Kong, South & Northern China mainland, Shanghai and other ports from the 1840s until the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949 when some Shanghai and other port lodges English, Scottish and one Irish transferred their warrants to Hong Kong in the 1950s. They are still in operation in Hong Kong today.

The first meeting of Freemasons to discuss the formation of a lodge in Hong Kong was held on 29 April 1844 at Flag Staff House the office and residence of Major General Sir George D'Aguilar Commander British Forces.

The first Lodge formed in Hong Kong was the Royal Sussex Lodge No.735 E.C. (later renumbered 501) was granted a warrant dated 18 September 1844 to meet at Victoria on the Island of Hong Kong.

In the 1840s lodge meetings were held in hired rooms. Zetland Lodge No.525 E.C. warranted on 21 March 1846 decided to build its own premises at the Court House site at the corner of what is now Zetland Street and Ice House Street. This building was the first Zetland Hall named as a compliment to the then Grand Master, Thomas, Second Earl of Zetland 1844 to 1870.



The foundation stone was laid on 1 February 1853 with full Masonic honours by W.Bro. Samuel Rawson P.G.M. of China. His portrait is on display in the current hall today. Architectural drawings no longer exist of the building known as 'The Bungalow' c.1860 (Left). The Bungalow was deemed too small and a new building was erected on the same site in 1865. The façade appears on much of the Zetland Hall crockery and logo of the Zetland Hall Trustees.(1865 Hall below)



During the Pacific War the 1865 Zetland Hall was damaged 'by friendly fire' in 1945 as to make the building irreparable. The Urban Council served notice to clear away the debris from the site of Zetland Hall to abate the insanitary conditions and the foundations.(right)



Soon after liberation of the Colony in 1945 the Craft found temporary premises at 11 Queen's Road Central and the King's Building.(below))



Plans for a new Masonic Hall were drawn up in Stanley Civilian Internment Camp Hong Kong. However, two Zetland Hall Trustees purchased the St.George's Hotel site at No.1 Kennedy Road adjoining the first stop of the 1888 Peak Tram then offered the site to the Trustees at cost.(right)



At a meeting on 7 July 1947, the purchase and sale of land was announced stating that the assignment of the old Zetland Hall site to the Hong Kong Electric Company Ltd. had been duly completed, the sale price being HK\$900,000. The purchase price of the new site on 1 Kennedy Road and the amount due for legal expenses left HK\$775,000 remaining a sum towards the erection of the new Zetland Hall.



The foundation stone of the new Zetland Hall was well and truly laid with traditional Masonic ritual as planned 2 April 1949 in the presence of many robed English, Scottish, Irish Brethren & their Ladies.(See Foundation Stone laying)



The dedication of the building with architects with Bros.Wood & H. J. Tebbutt took place on 30 January 1950.(See below))



Zetland Hall is more than a meeting place for the Masonic fraternity it is a depository of much of Hong Kong and China Masonic early historical records.

Brian Coak