

Heritage Service

Form 1 at St. Paul's Church

5 November 2007

This is the second Heritage Service to be held by St. Paul's College. The aim is for two Heritage Services to be held each year for new and younger boys at the College. This second service here at St. Paul's Church is for you, the boys in Form 1. The first heritage service for boys in Form 2 and their teachers was held three weeks ago a short distance away at Cathedral Church of St. John's in Garden Road. The reason why we decided to hold the two services at St. John's Cathedral and St. Paul's Church will become a little clearer to you as I explain the special link between these two buildings and our College.

Last year we celebrated a special birthday, the 155th anniversary of our College. In March this year, the Cathedral also celebrated a special birthday, the 160th anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone and the start of this building's construction. This Church was built in 1911 and in four years time will celebrate its centenary (100 years).

St. Paul's is, at least in concept, older than the city of Hong Kong, for it was in the latter part of the year 1841 that the Reverend Vincent John Stanton started to collect money in England to establish a school. Stanton was a noteworthy character and pioneer of Hong Kong. It was while he was at St. John's College in Cambridge that he decided to become a missionary. The Reverend Stanton raised a sum of money to bring to Hong Kong and set up a school with the aim to train Chinese clergy and Christian teachers to spread the Word of God in China. The school was open to non-Christians boys of all nationalities. It was also hoped that, through their example and influence, the students would spread the blessing of Christianity and education in Hong Kong and China. It was to be an Anglo-Chinese school, which is equivalent to a school with English as the medium of instruction today.

Vincent Stanton was appointed first Colonial Chaplain of Hong Kong and arrived in December 1843. The building of the school, however, did not materialise for some time as he had many pressing duties, including erecting the Cathedral. In time the school was built next door on the corner of Wyndham Road and Lower Albert Road and in 1849, St. Paul's College opened with nine boys, taught by an English master, a Chinese master and Mrs. Stanton.

In 1850, Vincent Stanton left Hong Kong and was succeeded by Bishop George Smith. Bishop Smith brought in additional funds and the construction of the school premises was completed in 1851 and the date inscribed over the porch of the completed building. The College has adopted 1851 as the more modest date for its foundation rather than 1849. Bishop Smith, writing in 1851, reported that the College contained thirty-three students. The majority of them were Chinese but there were also three students whose families had come from India. The age of the earliest Paulines ranged from 12 to 18. The subjects they studied included English Language and Literature, Geography, Astronomy, Divinity,

History, together with Chinese Language and Literature, especially the Four Books and Five Classics of Confucianism. They were also taught Geometry and a few senior boys were given instruction in Greek.*

(*the material in the section above was taken from the St. Paul's College publication "*From Devotion to Plurality*").

Bishop's House

For the first seventy years the Principal (Headmaster) of the College was the Bishop. In fact, the Bishop lived at St. Paul's College and the buildings next door became known as St. Paul's College and Bishop's House. The Reverend Arthur Stewart, however, was the first Principal of our School who was not a Bishop. He also lived next door at the School with the Bishop still resided in Bishop's House.

By the 1950's, one hundred years after our foundation, the College had grown to such an extent that there was no longer enough room for all the boys and the teachers. The decision was taken to relocate the College to Bonham Road, where we are today. The Bishop continued to live on this site and the building next door is still called Bishop's House.

St. Paul's Church

As I mentioned earlier, this Church was built in 1911 and it was here that St. Paul's College boys would come and worship. You need to remember that in the early days most of the boys were boarders and lived in a hostel behind this building. Two of our principals had a close connection with this Church. I have already mentioned the Reverend Arthur Stewart, who was followed by his brother, Colonel Evan Stewart.

Arthur and Evan's parents were missionaries in Fujian in the late 19th century. But in 1895 their parents and two of their siblings were murdered in a rebellion. Evan and his younger sister Kathleen hid under a bed and survived the attack. Arthur was at school in England. It is wonderful to think that the two brothers would later become so famous in our school while their sister Kathleen went on to be the first Principal of St. Paul's Girls' College (which today is St. Paul's Co- educational College).

Arthur, Evan and Kathleen were to honour their parents' missionary work in China by giving a gift to St. Paul's Church, the stained glass window behind the altar. There is a plaque on the wall beside the window naming this gift. Arthur Stewart also donated the organ pipes on the Western side of the Church.

After our College moved to Bonham Road in 1950 the direct connection to Bishop's House and St. Paul's Church was broken. It is through this Heritage Service, however, that we can keep alive the story of our school and the links we have to this small corner of Hong Kong Island.