Chinese Organisation in Newcastle

1. APT CHAU CHINESE ASSOCIATION
2. NORTH EAST CHINESE ASSOCIATION
3. EDMUND NG CHOI LEE FUT KUNG FU CLUB
4. SOUTH MOUNTAIN CHINESE OLDER PEOPLE’S ASSOCIATION
5. NEWCASTLE CHINESE WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION
6. NEWCASTLE CHINESE HEALTHY LIVING CENTRE
7. CHINESE ANGLO CULTURAL EXCHANGE ASSOCIATION
8. NEWCASTLE CHINESE STUDENTS AND SCHOLORS ASSOCIATION
9. CHINESE FESTIVITY GROUP

OTHERS:

1. TRUE JESUS CHURCH
2. NEWCASTLE CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
3. NEWCASTLE CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH ?
4. Mascot House – Sheltered Housing For The Chinese Older Community
5. CICT Learning Centre
6. Chinese School

BY-GONE ORGANISATIONS

1. WAH SUN SHEH
2. YUN OI SHEH
3. NEWCASTLE CHINESE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
4. CHINESE YOUTH FORUM
5. CHINESE ART FORUM
6. THE DRAGON’S PROJECT
7. CHINESE PING PONG ASSOCIATION ?
8. CHINESE FUTURE GROUP
9. WAH HONG PROJECT
10. CHINESE CONNECTION – BRIDGE THE GAPS WITH BBC NEWCASTLE

THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE – BY SOW FONG COLE

Introduction

As a development worker with the City Council of Newcastle, was fortunate to be a part of the development of China Town. Beside the physical side of China Town, community services and activities being the soul of the street.

Therefore, inevitably a range of community groups was founded:

South Mountain Chinese Older People’s Association, Newcastle Chinese Women’s Association, Newcastle Chinese Healthy Living Centre, Chinese Community Centre (North of England), Chinese Festivity Group, Chinese Festivity Group. My journey will only depict the above mentioned.

The Journey

When first arrived in UK in December 1970, for nearly 10 years we were (my family) living around the county of Yorkshire; to my dismay there was little sign of Chinese people. For Chinese grocery, it necessitated my husband to journey to London.

Eventually, our family settled in Newcastle upon Tyne, as it was close to our abode in Longhoughton, Northumberland. We lived in an RAF married quarter for my husband

was serving his last year of service 34 miles from Newcastle upon Tyne. After moving to the city it was to my delight that I could buy Chinese food from Bamboo (near Percy Street) and subsequently Wing Hong at Westgate Road – both were mini Markets. Eventually Bamboo gave way to a major city development.

During which time, my husband was employed to manage Wing Hong and led to a deployment in Stowell Street into a much larger site - with incentives from the Government Grants; ‘Chinese Street’ was then paved, in spite of a Community Centre was already in the street. At the time Stowell Street was regarded a ‘black spot’.

The following businesses were Jade Garden Chinese Restaurant – obliquely opposite Wing Hong. Eventually, the Street filled with a variety of businesses in which most of them were owned by Chinese people.

A huge transformation presented to Stowell Street - from a ‘black spot’ into a thriving and well sought-after place. The surrounding areas also being benefited.

And this was the turning point of Chinatown. After my husband left Wing Hong, I began my employment with Wing Hong for over 3 years. Witnessing the supermarket served as a magnet attracting Chinese people as well as the new arrivals the Boat People; they came from various parts in the region. A common scene was that the Boat People would bring large containers for topping up Soya Sauce. As during that period Chinese Supermarket was a rear treat. The customers would approach me for writing letters or reading letters - in English. That precipitated my voluntary work. Often working alongside the Christian Groups which/who were actively supported the Boat People’s settlement programme.

Chinatown

Chinatown in Newcastle-upon-Tyne is one of only five Chinatown districts in England. Chinatown runs along Stowell Street in the heart of the bustling city centre with centuries-old landmarks located nearby e.g. the Black Friars, St. Andrew Church and the Hadrian Wall etc…St James Park Football Stadium also in the vicinity.

A Ceremonial Chinese Arch marks the northern entrance to the district. It’s decorated with Chinese calligraphy, and paintings of dragons, serpents and phoenixes. Note the image of the city’s coat of arms and portrayals of scenes and figures from the Tyneside region. Seated stone lion statues guard one side of the gateway and symbolize good fortune and prosperity. (webpage)

Cultures are observed and practiced in the Chinese Community. Chinese New Year Festival regarded to be the most important festival in the Chinese Calendar – home or away. To ensure Chinese New Year Festival to take place and be celebrated elaborately annually, Chinese Festivity Group (CFG) was setup with collaboration from various Chinese Community Organisations and with strong support from the City Council, Newcastle/Gateshead Initiatives and NE1. CFG is tasked to oversee the celebrations of Chinese New Year.

The success created one of the busiest and most entertaining times in Newcastle in February during the Chinese New Year festival. A parade with dancing dragons, lions and unicorns begins at Old Eldon Square and continues into the district. Watch acrobats, drumming troupes and folk dancing demonstrations. Stalls of souvenirs and city information were at the market for visitors to prows and to seek for hands on support. Also mini fairground and Children’s Marque to entertain the younger generation. Annually, the Festival attracted over 15,000 visitors from the region and beyond.

The journey continues

Between 1981 and 83, I was appointed to be the first Community Worker for the Chinese Community by Tynework Agency (a Manpower funded project). The experience allowed me to further understanding regarding the lack of awareness about existing services and therefore the lack of uptake from the Chinese Community.

After a harrowing experience I realised that ‘if only I know’ I could have helped a Chinese old lady out of her fear of loneliness and isolation which plagued her to her dying day. Determined to equip myself, CQSW was studied. When qualified I became a Community Development Worker for the Chinese Community on the 6th of January 1989 with Social Services under section 11.

Owing to the lack of Chinese speaking welfare rights officer, I was the only worker to have dual responsibilities i.e. provision of Welfare Rights service in supporting the individuals and community development - for the Chinese Community.

During this phase, there was very little services and activities in the Chinese Community; only a centre for North East Chinese Association. Though some groups were in operation but only operate on the quiet.

YEN OI SHEH (place of kindness) Was formed by a Christian group to collaborate with Age Concern Newcastle, to provide a weekly Luncheon Club for the Chinese elderlies and this was the first of its kind in Newcastle.

About a year later, Northeast Chinese Association took over the partnership from the Christian Group. From then on The Club renamed to be North East Chinese Association Chinese Elderlies Group.

In the meantime, Sun Jai (Small Hill) Chinese Older People’s Luncheon Club was born - another similar project was being established; however, with a different principal and approach i.e. it had a committee and to include the over 50s rather than only for the over 60s.

Members met weekly on Mondays at High Grove which was a City Council run Sheltered Housing in the St Paul’s Estate in Elswick. The Housing Department kindly provided the facility at cost free. The group eventually named South Mountain Chinese Older People’s Association – the chosen name came from a Mr Chan – indicating small hill had grown to be a mountain also suggests longevity ; life as high as South Mountain (in China) – a common birthday greeting.

Meeting at High Grove gave opportunity to the Chinese members to know and understand the philosophy of sheltered housing. Eventually, a numbers of Chinese elderlies moved into High Grove to enjoy a range of facilities and essentially the alleviation of social isolation and loneliness.

Owing to the increasing number of membership, South Mountain moved

* To Callerton House and then Murray House. In 2017, South Mountain finally moved to The Brunswick Methodist Church in the city centre.

South Mountain continues to deploy by accessing the Chinese carers to be benefited from Carers’ Services in Newcastle and Gateshead. The first project was to collaborate with Gateshead Carers to form a Chinese Carers’ Group – meeting once per month.

The second project was to facilitate the Chinese community to participate Newcastle Carers’ monthly coffee morning.

In 1993, Mascot House a sheltered housing became available to the Chinese Community is situated at Westgate Road - at the edge of China Town. It was a collaboration between Banks of the Wear Housing Association and Grainger Town Development Project with support from the City Council. Representatives from the Chinese Community also involved in the planning process.

In creating a platform for the Chinese women, Newcastle Chinese Women Association was founded by a group of Chinese women. The members meet monthly. It is a friendship group with an aim of creating opportunity for the members to meet; also marking International Women’s Day.

The following project was Newcastle Chinese Healthy Living Centre. In 1995, Social Services were trying to indentify needs in the Chinese Community in relation to AID and HIV. Conferences in 1996 1nd 1997 had been organised, both conferences were attended by100 Chinese people.

Purpose of the conferences was to find out how to help the Chinese Community if there was a concern of the diseases. During which time the diseases were of a sensitive subject. Newcastle Chinese Healthy Living Centre was form to address health issues rather just AIDS and HIV.

Eventually, Stowell Street became a centre of attraction i.e. Aspers Casino and the Gate were built, 36 Chinese Lanterns were hung over both sides of the street, a deluxe Chinese Ceremony Gate began to Hawk across the North End of the street. Chinese Town received officially acknowledgement to include signage in Chinese. WAH YEN TENG was constructed at the South end of the street, under NE1’s pocket gardens’ initiatives.

City Council and Chinese Future Group were working side by side in the development process. While the Chinese Arch hawking across the street in the north the Chinese Garden offers a tranquil place for people to rest and to play Chess as Chess boards were among the features.

During which time again under the collaboration from the various Chinese Organisations, North East Chinese Centre (North of England) was found to provide CICT Learning Centre (Yuk Wah - education for the Chinese and Yuk Miu – Nurture Childcare service all operating from Charlton Bond Centre; a large City Council owned building at Waterloo Street. Beside the learning programmes The project received support from an education department, ‘ability for you’ and the City Council.

Today the centre continues to providing a range of learning programme only, from Lynwood Business Centre at Lynwood Terrace.