

THE EXCHANGE BUILDING

A stone building originally designed *“for the purpose of affording a convenient place close to the shores of this harbour for the settlers to dispose of their produce not only to the inhabitants, but to the crews of shipping...At the desire of the Colonists and Masters of Shipping, I consented to the allocation of a large room as a place for Commercial meetings, and the tower and public clock are only the usual adjuncts of a Market Place.”*

In November 1851 work commenced on clearing a site for *“a market place &c”* and by the end of the year the sum of £10 had been expended. In January 1852 construction commenced and by the end of the year a further £476 was expended. By the end of 1853 an additional £1,838 had been spent with the tower and one wing completed and the other wing nearly completed. By the end of 1854 the Market House and Exchange Rooms had been finished with the total cost revised to £2,272. Governor Rennie noted that *“much of this cost consists of materials purchased in former years remaining in store and applied to this work”*.

In May 1855 described as:

“A stone building fronting the Ross Road on Nos 11 and 12 Town allotments consisting of a tower and two wings with outbuildings in the rear. The tower is about 55 feet high divided into three stories – the lower one serving as the hall in entered the building – the middle one having turret clock with all the apparatus attached, the clock having a four feet dial on the outside fronting the harbour – the upper story containing the bell and striker of the clock. The middle story is lighted up by 3 rose windows on three sides of the tower (the fourth side being occupied by the clock dial). The clock is placed on a strong oaken stool and cased in. The upper story is fitted on the four sides with wooden shutters in place of windows in order that the striking of the clock may be heard. The left wing forms one large room 42 feet long and 17 feet wide having tin fireplaces. Being at present inhabited by the Governor the furniture of the Government House is there – and the room is fitted with curtains, carpet, muslin window blinds, fenders and fire irons. The right wing is at present divided by wooden partitions into the following rooms – From the hall a door leads to a small centre room with fireplace, out of which lead 2 bedrooms. A door from the anteroom opens into a passage which leads to the kitchen. On one side of the passage is a staircase (leading to attics in the roof) and a small room between the staircase and kitchen. This wing is floored over and divided into rooms lighted by skylights in the roof. On the south side of the buildings is a wooden shed, containing pantry scullery and requisite conveniences. Opposite the tower a wooden jetty projects into the harbour from the Ross Road. The ground round this building being higher than the road is sustained by a retaining wall of masonry coped with York stone”.

In 1855 the Church shared a wooden building on the corner of John Street and Villiers Street with the Dispensary and on weekdays was a schoolroom. By the end of 1855 it was recorded that *“Divine Service is performed temporarily in a Stone Building originally constructed by Governor Rennie as a Market Place or Exchange Room. The accommodation is ample for the present Congregation.”*

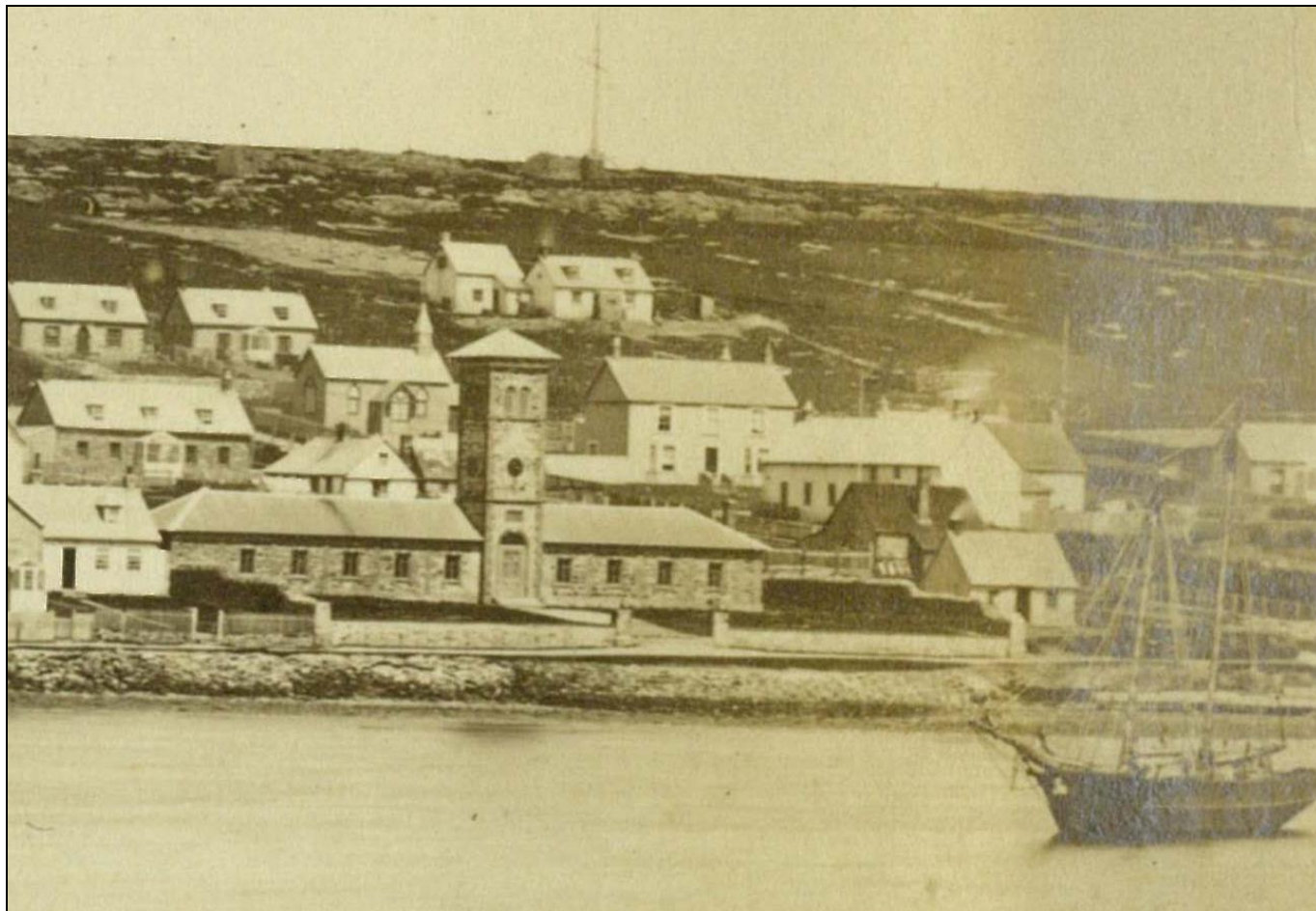
During 1856 £510 was spent in refitting part of the Exchange Rooms into a church and school. *“This building consists of a clock tower 45ft high with two large rooms 50 ft long by 18 ft wide as wings. One of these rooms has been lengthened, and a vestry adjoining it built, and the whole fitted up for the performance of divine service. The other wing has been fitted with desks and benches for the purposes of a school.”*

The church was still unconsecrated in 1859 but was referred to as Holy Trinity Church in the Blue Books for the first time.

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VERSION: 26 September 2017

By 1862 the church was still unconsecrated but was specially reserved by Proclamation dated 8 January 1862 as set apart for public worship.

In 1872 the Mortuary Chapel was brought up from the cemetery and converted into an Infants School.



The Exchange Building 1870s – photo Blake Album



In 1884 a latrine with a covered stone drain to the sea was built for the Government School.



Peat slip behind the Exchange Building – Infant School to the far right (FIC Collection)

During the night of 2 June 1886 a peat slip occurred when “a stream of half liquefied peat, over a hundred yards in width and four or five feet deep, flowed suddenly through the Town into the harbour, blocking up the streets, wrecking one or two houses in its path, and surrounding others so as completely to imprison the inhabitants.” In August 1886 the Governor reported “that so great a mass of peat was pressing upon the south wall that it had cracked in several places under the weight, and had this not been speedily lessened by cutting across and draining the mass, which could not be altogether removed, the whole structure must soon have fallen. This was prevented, and the walls supported by shores, but it was impossible to use the building any longer, and a builder and mason by whom I have had it examined reports it in a dangerous condition, the campanile or central tower being three feet out of the perpendicular.” It was suggested that the site be granted for the erection of a church and they could use the materials of the demolished building.

On 28 February 1887 Special Grant 303 was issued to The Clergy and Laity of the Church of England for the site of a church. The foundation stone for Christ Church Cathedral was laid on the site on 6 March 1890 by Bishop Stirling.