On the afternoon of March 26th, 1861 Frederick Bruce, the first British minister to China to reside in Peking, entered the grounds of the former palace of Duke I-liang, and the history of the old British Legation had begun. The desire of Great Britain to have a minister resident in the capital was of long standing, and had its origins in the eighteenth century. From at least 1760 some English merchants in Canton had been arguing that only when an ambassador from England resided at Peking would their grievances be properly represented to the Emperor of China and their position improve. Eventually this point of view was strong enough to influence the Government of England. Indeed one of the prime objects of the embassy of Lord Macartney to the Court of the Emperor Ch'ien-lung in 1793 was to secure for England just such permanent representation at Peking. However, there was not the slightest chance that such a request would be granted. All foreign embassies to China were regarded as tributary missions of a temporary nature, and all foreign countries as inferior. Even the first Anglo-Chinese War of 1839-1842, and the subsequent Treaty of Nanking failed to obtain this object. From the Chinese point of view relations with the western barbarians were still a local matter to be carried on by the Governor-General at Canton or by the Governor-General at Nanking. The foreign powers, for their part, were still unable to gain direct communication with the Imperial Government at Peking, and therefore were unable to protest effectively when the treaties did not appear to be working properly, or when they wished to revise them. This was the background to the War of 1858-1860, in which English and French forces were used to secure the Treaties of Tientsin, by which the earlier treaties were revised. Article III of the British Treaty of Tientsin stated (in part): "It is further agreed that Her Majesty's Government may..."
acquire at Peking a site for Building, or may hire Houses, for the accommodation of Her Majesty's mission, and that the Chinese Government will assist it in so doing”. Then, when the Imperial Government appeared to procrastinate over the ratification of these treaties, another English and French force fought its way to the capital and compelled the Manchu authorities to ratify them by the Convention of Peking. This was signed by the British envoy, Lord Elgin,¹ and by Prince Kung,² the chief Chinese representative, on October 24th, 1860 in the Hall of Ceremonies situated in what was later to be called Legation Street. The second clause of the Convention stated that “Her Britannic Majesty's Representative will henceforward reside permanently, or occasionally, at Peking, as Her Britannic Majesty shall be pleased to decide”.

Lord Elgin proposed that Prince Kung's own residence should be rented to the British, but Prince Kung memorialized the throne as follows:

As regards the matter of the English residing at the capital in the near future, we have been discussing it with them during the past few days. The chief barbarian official [Lord Elgin] considers that the quarters in Prince I's [Prince Kung] palace are spacious and he insists that it is to be their future residence at the capital. Moreover, he stated that there were still open spaces in the palace and that he wants to build houses there himself. It seems to your ministers that to

¹ James Bruce, eighth Earl of Elgin. He served as Governor-General of Canada 1846-1854. In 1857 he was appointed envoy extraordinary to China and signed the Treaty of Tientsin in 1858, returning to England early in 1859. In 1860 he was again sent to China as special envoy, and signed the Convention of Peking. He returned to England in 1861 and was appointed Governor-General of India in the same year. He died in India in 1863.

² I-hsin (1833-1898), the first Prince Kung, was the sixth son of Emperor Tao-kuang. When the joint French and British forces approached Peking in September 1860 the Emperor Hsien-feng fled to Jehol leaving his half-brother, Prince Kung, to make peace with the allies. When a prototype Chinese foreign office, the Tsungli Yamen, was set up in 1861, Prince Kung was in charge of it, and he played an important part in Chinese affairs for the next fifteen years.
allow them to reside there temporarily is already improper. If by any chance they are allowed to occupy it permanently and build additional houses it would be all the more improper.

We have repeatedly explained this to him tactfully. According to the barbarians’ statement, if they are not to reside at Prince I’s palace they must be given Duke Chi’s palace in Ch’ang-an Street in the eastern part of the city. He still wants to build additional houses. Furthermore, he states that each year they are willing to pay a rent of one thousand five hundred taels. At present we are still attempting to dissuade him, and not to let them reside in a nobleman’s palace. Instead we are looking for another palace for them. Whether they will listen to us or not we will act as occasion demands.\(^3\)

In a memorial submitted in the second year of the reign of the Emperor T‘ung-chih (1863) Prince Kung wrote: “Prince Kung and others further memorialize that ever since England ratified the treaty in the tenth year of the Emperor Hsien-feng (1860) it has been using the palace of Duke I-liang as an official residence.”\(^4\) Also in a subsequent memorial about the French Legation buildings Prince Kung wrote: “Moreover the English envoy, before withdrawing his troops inside the An-ting gate occupied the Palace of Duke I-liang on his own initiative (i.e. without authorization from Chinese officials).\(^5\)

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\(^3\) *Chou-pan i-wu shih-mo* 莊範夷務始末 Hsien-feng, *chiian* 68, 2b-3a. Hereafter cited as IWSM.

\(^4\) IWSM, *T‘ung-chih,* *chiian* 20, 36a. I-liang was the fourth son of Mien-ch‘ung, [a direct descendant of the Emperor K‘ang-hsi]. In the eighteenth year of Tao-kuang’s reign he was created a “general guarding the state” of the third rank. In the first year of Hsien-feng’s reign (1851-2) he succeeded to the title of “duke guarding the state” (a Manchu title bestowed on the sons of imperial princes). He died in the thirteenth year of Kuang-hsi’s reign (1887-8). *Ch‘ing-shih kao* 清史稿, *Huang-tzu shih-piao* 皇族世表 “genealogies of the sons of the Emperors,” *piao* 4, 9b.

\(^5\) IWSM, *T‘ung-chih,* *chiian* 20, 37a, column 5. The An-ting Men 建之門 “gate of established peace”, is the easterly of the two gates in the north wall of the Tartar City, and the starting point of the road to Jehol. It was occupied by the British in 1860 who dragged their guns up the ramp and positioned them on the wall in order to command the city.
These extracts give the official Chinese version of how the British came to occupy their first Legation quarters, and agree closely with Lord Elgin's own account contained in a despatch to Lord John Russell, the Foreign Secretary, dated Tientsin, 13th November 1860:

On the 7th instant Mr. Bruce reached Peking, having hastened up from Shanghai in compliance with my request. His arrival was most opportune, as it was very important that before my departure from the capital I should be able to confer with him on various matters, and more especially on the subject of the place of residence for the future of Her Majesty's Representative in China. Mr. Bruce informed me that he was perfectly willing to take up his abode in Peking at once. On consultation with Baron Gros and General Ignatieff, however, I found that the latter was about to leave Peking for the winter, and that the former was of opinion that it would not be advisable that M. de Bourboulon should establish himself in the capital until the spring. I considered it, therefore, to be my duty to advise Mr. Bruce to return with me for the present to Tien-tsin, and to remain there until a suitable residence should be provided for him in the capital. In order, however, that there might be no misapprehension on the part of the Chinese Government in reference to this point, we selected a house which we thought might be adapted to the purpose, and which was procurable on easy terms, and we accepted the services of Mr. Adkins, one of the Student Interpreters, a very promising young man, who volunteered to remain at Peking, and to superintend the arrangements necessary for putting it in order.

Harry Parkes, who was Lord Elgin's interpreter at this time, writing to his wife on November 17th 1860 gave a few more details:

Peking is in a wretched state of dilapidation and ruin, and scarcely one of their palatial buildings is not falling into decay. We have obtained one of the best, and yet it is quite

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6 Elgin to Russell, 13 November 1860. Parliamentary Papers, "Correspondence Respecting Affairs in China 1859-60", 2754 of 1861, No. 119, p. 254. See also ibid., p. 259 for a note from T. Adkins to Frederick Bruce dated Peking, 12 November 1860, reporting that the capital was returning to normal and that he had found no opposition to his residence there.
uninhabitable according to our notions, and we therefore tell
the Chinese that the Minister is obliged to postpone taking
up his residence until the residence is fit to receive him. Mr.
Adkins is therefore charged with the task of repairs, and in
March of next year or possibly earlier Mr. Bruce expects to
take up his quarters there. His arrival at Peking before we
quitted it was a happy hit. Formal interviews took place
between Lord Elgin and Prince Kung at which the former
introduced his brother and abdicated in his favour; so that
before we quitted Peking Mr. Bruce had commenced his
business with the Chinese authorities, while that of the Special
Embassy terminated.  

So interpreter Adkins remained alone in the Palace of Duke
I-liang throughout the winter of 1860-61, until in March 1861
Bruce set out from Tientsin, accompanied by Thomas Wade, his
interpreter, and Dr. Rennie, physician to the new Legation.
Colonel Neale, the Secretary of the Legation, with two attachés,
St. Clair and Wyndham, had gone ahead with the baggage. We
are fortunate to have a detailed account of the first year at the
British Legation kept by Dr. Rennie. In the Preface to his book
Peking and the Pekingese he explained that “a few months after
Her Majesty’s Legation had been established in Peking, a feeling
began to be entertained by its members, that, with a view to
future publication, some record should be kept of the various
incidents which were from day to day occurring, during what
may be termed the inaugural period of foreign diplomatic residence
at the capital — the most important event in the modern history
of Anglo-Chinese intercourse.” Since Rennie had been keeping

7 Quoted in The Life of Sir Harry Parkes by Stanley Lane-Poole, 2

Parkes was born in 1828, and came out to China in 1841 to join his
two sisters who were living with their cousin, the wife of the Protestant
missionary, the Rev. Charles Gutzlaff. Parkes was attached to Sir Henry
Pottinger's suite in the expedition up the Yangtze in 1842 and witnessed
the signing of the Treaty of Nanking. He started to learn Chinese and at
the age of fifteen was attached to the British Consulate at Canton.
Many appointments as interpreter and consul followed until 1865 when he
was appointed Minister to Japan. In 1883 he became British Minister at
Peking. He died in 1885.

8 D. F. Rennie, Peking and the Pekingese during the First Year of the
a daily diary of events he was naturally encouraged to continue, and thus we have a very readable account of the first year at the Legation.

Rennie had reached Peking on the evening of March 25th, going on ahead with the French suite and staying the night at the French Legation. The next morning he was up early. "Before breakfast I visited the Leang-koong-foo, the building which has been selected for the British Legation, and in charge of which Mr. Adkins has resided at Peking during the winter. The Leang-koong-foo, or palace of the Duke of Leang, was originally an imperial residence, given by the Emperor K'ang-hsi (who died in 1722) to one of his thirty-three sons, whose descendants are known as the Dukes of Leang. The present representative of the family, and owner of the Leang-koong-foo, holds a command in the neighbourhood of the great wall. The Duke of Leang has let his family residence in perpetuity to the British Government, at an annual rent of fifteen hundred taels (500 £.), no rent to be paid for the first two years, owing to the extensive repairs and alterations required." A visitor at that time described it as "a straggling, dreary, dilapidated building, which time and money might convert into a tolerably habitable barrack for a brigade of infantry, but which can never become a comfortable or suitable residence for a Minister and the few members of his suite." Time was to prove him wrong.

Meanwhile the British party arrived on March 26th 1861 and Rennie describes the formal entry into the British Legation. "At three o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. Bruce, Colonel Neale, and the other members of the English Legation, arrived in Peking, escorted by the detachment of Sikh Cavalry. This morning the French flag was hoisted over the gate of the Tsin-koong-foo, and on Mr.

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9 Ibid., I, 28-9. A language-student at the Legation, writing in 1885 stated: "A rent of 1,500 taels, or between £400 and £500, is paid into the Tsung-li Yamen (the Chinese Foreign Office) every year. It is the duty of the senior student to make this payment, and, in order that he might appear at the Yamen respectfully attired, a box-hat was, it is said, provided sometime about 1861, and is still at his disposal. But it is not often worn." "Where Chinese Drive", English Student-Life at Peking. By a Student Interpreter. 27. See footnote 16 below.

10 E. B. de Fonblanque, Nippon and Pe-che-li; or Two years in Japan and Northern China (London, 1862), 217.
Bruce's arrival the Union Jack was hoisted over the entrance to the Leang-koong-foo." In his diary for April 1st Rennie gives a detailed description of the Legation as it then appeared.

The Leang-koong-foo may be described as consisting of two sets of quadrangular courts, running parallel to each other north and south, with a covered passage between them. These courts contain blocks of buildings, built in the ordinary Chinese style of architecture. The set of squares on the eastern side form the palatial portion, and contain the state apartments. The roofs on this side are covered with green glazed tiles, and supported by heavy columns of wood. . . . The interior, though out of repair, is still very handsome; the ceilings of the state apartments being beautifully decorated with gold dragons, within circles on a blue ground, which again are in the centres of small squares of green, separated by intersecting bars in relief of green and gold. The western division of the Foo is composed of buildings of a less showy kind, but nevertheless fitted up with great elegance and taste. The roofs are covered with ordinary grey tiling. It is in a fair state of repair, and is at present occupied by the Legation. Moral sentiments, painted in gilt letters on ornamental boards, are placed over the entrances of the various buildings in the different courts. Some of them Mr. Wade translated to me this morning. That over the door of the apartments occupied by Colonel Neale and myself means, 'Hall for the nourishment of virtue', and that over the house reserved for Mrs. Reynolds, the Legation house-keeper, shortly expected from Shanghai, is 'Hall for the study and development of politeness'. . . .

Arrangements have been made with a Chinese builder, named Choon, for putting the whole in thorough repair; and it has been determined to convert the palatial portion into the Legation residence, retaining as much as possible its Chinese character. The other division of the Foo is to be fitted up partly for the Chinese secretary's department, partly as residences for the student-interpreters, who are in future to learn the language at Peking under the supervision of Mr. Wade.

Dr. Rennie was soon out sightseeing, going everywhere on horseback through the dust or the mud of the Peking streets and lanes. At this time, and for long afterwards, the Imperial Canal
ran parallel to the wall of the Legation in which the main gate was situated, and in summer often flooded the road, and at times gave off a horrible stench since many drains ran into it. Meanwhile repairs to the Legation proceeded and Rennie describes, among other things, Colonel Neale doing his accounts, the five hundred Chinese coolies being paid, a temporary strike, and continual trouble over 'squeeze'. The part intended for the members of the Legation to live in was now called 'Legation Court' and Rennie preserved, in translation, an estimate for redecorating the front of these buildings in the Chinese style, the total being one thousand and fifty Mexican dollars.

By mid-April the weather was growing hot and on April 26th Parkes, Wyndham, Lt. Gow (in charge of the guard) and Rennie made a trip to the Western Hills in search of a temple which could be adopted as a residence during the extreme heat of the summer. The Russians, who had maintained an ecclesiastical mission in Peking since the Treaty of Kiakhta in 1727, had been in the habit of going to the Western Hills in the summer, and probably gave the newly arrived English this tip. Henceforth this was to become the yearly practice of foreign legations in Peking.

Meanwhile the first mail from home arrived on April 27th, having been posted in England on February 26th. In this way Rennie's account is full of interesting detail. For instance just near to the entrance to the Legation there was now a line of Peking carts for hire, just as later there was a rickshaw stand, and more recently pedicabs. From this time onwards Rennie described the arrival of various English visitors who were entertained at the Legation.

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11 Rennie visited it in March, 1861. It was situated in the same street as the newly acquired French Legation, and the members consisted of an Archimandrite together with three ecclesiastical and six lay members. (Rennie, I, 43-4.). This place, known as the Nan-kuan ("Southern Hostel"), was originally a hostel for Russian envoys and, since it had a large compound, it was used by Russian merchants who after 1698 received the privilege of sending a trade caravan to Peking at regular intervals. It was situated near the Mongol market. As a result of the Treaty of Kiakhta (1727) two hundred Russian merchants were allowed to come to Peking every third year to trade, and Russia was permitted to build a church in the grounds of the Nan-kuan, and appoint priests. In addition four Russian students and two tutors were allowed to reside there and were subsidized by the Chinese government to study the Chinese, Mongol and Manchu languages. When the first Russian minister to Peking, Colonel Balluzec, took up residence there in July 1861, the Nan-kuan became the Russian Legation, and the ecclesiastical mission then joined up with another Russian mission at the Pei-kuan ("Northern Hostel"). See footnote 29 below.
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and shown the sights of Peking. This became an agreeable task for the members of the Legation, and there was a constant stream of visitors to Peking enjoying the hospitality of the old Legation right up until its closure in 1959. One of the earliest of these visitors was Sir Robert Hart, the Acting Inspector-General of the Chinese Customs. Meanwhile the business of engaging Chinese clerks, gate keepers, and language teachers proceeded. At various times Rennie mentions such familiar things as burglaries within the Legation, and the virulence of the mosquitoes. By now the Legation was the haunt of curio dealers, many of the things they had to offer being of real value, since the destruction of part of the old Summer Palace by the British and French forces had occurred as recently as the previous autumn, and a great deal of loot was now in Chinese hands. In fact, what with buying antiques, conducting visitors round the sights of Peking, and going to the Western Hills in the summer the members of the foreign legations had already set a pattern during their first year in Peking which has continued much the same until the present.

The local craftsmen found nothing beyond their capacities, and one Chinese tailor made a fine new Union Jack with the old one to copy from. Rennie remarks: "The Peking tailors have already mastered the making of European clothing, and several members of the Legation have had things made by them". The total number of Europeans in the three legations (English, French and Russian) was twenty-two. The first American minister to reside at Peking did not reach the capital until July, 1862. On 23 August, 1861 Rennie records: "We have been busy to-day getting ready for Her Majesty's Foreign Office a large bird's-eye view of the Leang-koong-foo, made by a Chinese artist. Figures for reference have been painted on it by Colonel Neale, and a key also made out. The drawing is very exact, every building being carefully depicted." In October buildings next to the Legation on the south side were bought by the British Government from a brother of Duke I-liang. This new area was leased to a medical missionary, William Lockhart, who wanted to set up a medical mission in Peking. By January 1862 the extensive alterations to the Legation had come to an end, and the Chinese interpreter, who had made a good harvest of 'squeeze' out of it, now resigned and departed for Tientsin where the foreign troops were stationed. The time
had now come for Dr. Rennie to leave Peking, since he had been appointed Senior Medical Officer of the British Forces. He left in April 1862, and one of the last pen-pictures he gives us in his diary is of a Mrs. Wright, a milliner at Shanghai, whom he met on the road between Peking and Tungchow, riding in a cart with a friend, Mrs. Innocent, the wife of a missionary, these two good ladies being on their way to the Legation to stay with the housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds, since the three had been old friends in Shanghai.

Only a few years later the Legation was in disrepair. A. B. Freeman-Mitford, who was a member of the Legation staff from 1865 to 1866, described it as it appeared to him in June 1865.

Our Legation is situated in the southern part of the Tartar city. We occupy a most picturesque palace called the Liang Kung Fu, or Palace of the Duke of Liang, which, like all Chinese buildings of importance, covers an immense space of ground. There are courtyards upon courtyards, huge empty buildings with red pillars, used as covered courts, state approaches guarded by two great marble lions, and a number of houses with only ground floor, each of us inhabiting one to himself. When the Legation first came to live here the whole place was put into repair, and redecorated in the Chinese fashion with fluted roofs of many colours, carved woodwork, kylins of stone and pottery, and all the thousand and one fancies with which the Chinese cover their buildings. Unfortunately the repairs were badly executed, and nothing further has been done to keep matters straight, so the Legation, which ought to be as pretty as possible, is really a disgrace to us. The gardens are a wilderness, the paving of the courts is broken, the walls are tumbling down, and the beautiful place is going to rack and ruin. In this climate of extreme heat and cold a stitch in time saves ninety-nine. Fancy a residence in the heart of a great and populous city where foxes, scorpions, polecats, weasels, magpies, and other creatures that one expects to find in the wild country, abound. That will give you an idea of how space is wasted in Peking.\footnote{\textsuperscript{12} A. B. Freeman-Mitford. \textit{The Attaché at Peking} (London, 1900), 66-7. The author, who later became the first Baron Redesdale, spent the years 1866-70 as a member of the British Legation in Japan.}
The life of a young attache is described by Freeman-Mitford in all its facets; fun and boredom together. By mid-June the temperature in the Legation was between 95° and 107° Fahrenheit, so the majority of its members moved out to the Western Hills and took up residence in part of the Pi-Yün Ssu, the Temple of the Azure Clouds, the most beautiful of all the temples in the Western Hills. But even then he had to ride to the Legation (a distance of about 12 miles) from time to time to ‘copy despatches’. Even while in the Western Hills it was not all sightseeing, as his teacher went with him, and Mitford had to press on with his Chinese studies. However, he contrived to ride out to the Great Wall and to visit the Ming Tombs and the Summer Palace (the I-Hö Yüan) among other places. Not all was heat and perspiration. By the end of October he was writing: “Outside, the rain is falling fitfully and the wind blowing a hurricane; it moans and howls dismally through the courts and cranky buildings of the Legation, piercing its way into all sorts of odd nooks, and routing out old bells that jangle in a harsh and discordant way from the quaint eaves, as if they were angry at being disturbed in their dusty dens. Doors are creaking and timbers groaning in every direction, and the windows threaten to burst in, but the stout Corean paper holds good, though it gets stretched and flaps unpleasantly like loose sails in a calm, and on the whole I confess I prefer glass. Every now and then, as the storm abates for a while, I hear the tap, tap, tap, of the watchman’s bamboo as he goes his rounds. . . . In short, we are working gradually into winter.”

The rest of his letters are principally concerned with snow and ice, and on 25th November he mentions that they are sending off the mail that day “in the hopes that it will yet be able to leave Tientsin for Shanghai before we are finally shut out by the frost from all communication with the outer world.” However, in winter there were compensations. A skating rink was fixed up inside the Legation; food was more enjoyable because there was now plenty of game — hares, pheasants, wild duck, and venison; and also by now pears and grapes were available. In February

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13 Ibid., 163-4.
1866 the student-interpreters put on an amateur theatrical performance, consisting of Our Wife, and To Paris and back on £5. The female parts were all taken by the students, and it was voted a great success. The faces of the Chinese servants, watching from the back of the hall, gave Mitford a lot of quiet amusement. The next summer he was staying in a temple which he calls Ta Chio Ssu or 'Temple of Great Repose', about twenty-three miles from Peking, having moved there with all his furniture together with chickens and a cow and its calf. But even there he could not entirely escape the despatches. "Copying despatches with the thermometer at 100° in the shade, with a basin of water and a towel at one's side for very necessary hand-wiping, and a pad of blotting-paper over the blank part of one's paper, is indeed an affreux métier." The climate took its toll, and Mitford mentions two of his young companions who died of fever.

Mitford left Peking for Japan in 1866. In the same year Major Crossman of the Royal Engineers was sent out from England by the Government to inspect the British Legation and Consular Buildings in China and Japan. From one of his reports, written at Shanghai in July 1867, we can glean some more information about the early development of the Legation at Peking. For instance he gave a hint as to the origin of the Legation Chapel when he wrote: "There is a large house opposite to the Chinese secretaries' quarters, used partly as a theatre and partly as a lumber-room, well and solidly built, which can be converted into a good church by the addition of an external porch, removing the flooring of the upper storey so as to throw it open to the roof, and by the addition of some wood work and ornament, to give it a somewhat ecclesiastical appearance." He also mentioned that the number of student-interpreters was shortly to be increased to thirteen.

Meanwhile Sir Frederick Bruce had been succeeded by Sir Rutherford Alcock at the end of 1865, while Sir Thomas Wade was promoted to be Minister in 1871, a post which he held for the next twelve years. In 1883 he was succeeded by another 'old

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14 Parliamentary Papers, "Reports from Major Crossman and Correspondence respecting the Legation and Consular Buildings in China and Japan", 315 of 1868, No. 7, p. 22.
China hand' of great experience, and a man of forceful character, Sir Harry Parkes. His daughter, Marion, had accompanied him to Peking and in a letter to a friend wrote of the Minister's house:

How can I describe the house to you? It is so utterly unlike anything we have seen or lived in before. It really was originally a series of Chinese temples, and has been adapted for the use of Europeans by having odd little rooms built on, at odd and inconvenient corners. The entrance is very fine: first come two courts, with handsome red pillars; the carving and painting of the roofs is very picturesque and the colouring really beautiful. From the court you mount a flight of steps, and enter the hall, or Queen's room as it is called — her picture being there.

* * * *

The grounds here are small but very nice; each person has his little home, and it reminds me much of a cathedral close; it is very peaceful and quiet. . . .16

In the following year Parkes had to part with his daughter Marion when she was married in the Legation Chapel to James Keswick, a partner in the firm of Jardine, Matheson and Company, and at that time Chairman of the Municipal Council of Shanghai. In the Spring of 1885 Parkes was unwell and he died after a short illness, the only British Minister to die in harness in Peking. He drove himself too hard and died of overwork.

The life of a student-interpreter at this time has been well described in a book called Where Chinese Drive,16 which was published in 1885, the title being taken from Paradise Lost, Book III. The author, W. H. Wilkinson, described the Legation as having a frontage along the Imperial canal of about three hundred yards, and continued:

The compound forms an oblong of which the shorter side is about one hundred and thirty yards long. On the north it is shut in by the Han-lin College; on the west for the greater part of its length by the Lüan-i K'u, or as we call it, the "Imperial Carriage Park". South of this, still on

15 Quoted in Lane-Poole, op. cit., II, 368-9.
the western side, is a bare space occupied in winter by Mongol traders, and known in consequence as the "Mongol Market". On the south side, a congeries of little Chinese shops. The whole is surrounded by a massive wall, which on the west, as being the wall of the Carriage Park and enclosing Imperial ground, is topped with yellow tiles. The principal gate of the Legation is in the centre of the eastern side, facing the canal. The gate-house has an upper storey surmounted by a flag-staff, and carrying the royal arms. . . .

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North of the doctor's house is the Fives Court. From this, under the wall of the Carriage Park, runs the Bowling Alley. Opposite the Fives Court, again, is a converted Chinese building, now divided into a billiard-room, a reading-room, and a small stage. North of this are the garden and buildings of the Students' Quarters.

The Quarters consist of a long row facing south, having an upper storey, and containing ten sets of rooms, five above and five below. The whole block is in the common style of foreign architecture out here, with verandah and balcony. Each set consists of a sitting-room about fourteen feet by ten, with a small store-closet, a bed-room, say ten feet square, and a bathroom. In the upper rooms the store-closet becomes a cupboard, the bathroom being lengthened to allow the door to open on the stair-head. There is a stern disregard of ornament in the interiors at any rate, but they were comfortable enough on the whole.17 . . .

The only furniture supplied to the incoming student was a bed, a chest of drawers with a looking-glass, a wash-stand, and three cane-bottomed office chairs for his sitting-room. Wilkinson mentions mess fees. "On first joining the mess the student pays an entrance fee of $25. We contracted with the cook to supply us with breakfast, tiffin, and dinner at 50 cents — 1s. 10d. a day. All stores, such as condiments, jellies, tea, coffee, we provided ourselves: in regard to wine, each man had a separate account with the cellar." From time to time they gave a mess dinner, the largest one being for forty men, students and guests included.

17 Ibid., 24-5; 27-8. For a plan of the buildings see over.
Plan of British Legation at Peking in 1900.

Adapted from a plan in "China in Convulsion" by A. H. Smith, published by Fleming H Revell Company, N.Y., 1901.
Wilkinson's book is a gay account of student life with work and play nicely balanced. He mentions many things which must have been familiar to generations of inmates of the Foreign Legations at Peking, such as paying calls on the European residents, buying a pony, choosing a reliable 'boy', the continual battle against 'squeeze', the danger of theft and so on. For pleasure not only was there the bowling alley, which provided the chief amusement inside the Legation during the winter, there was also skating on an improvised rink nearby. Three of the students once skated down the canal to Tungchow, a distance of about twelve miles. There was also the usual entertaining. "Balls and concerts were given at some of the Legations and at the Inspectorate-General of Customs (where a number of young European men were employed). Dinners everywhere. But the pleasantest of all, perhaps, were the carpet dances (with the carpet up) at two or three houses. We shared the misfortune of most European communities in the East: an undue preponderance of the male. Dancing men were at a discount." At Chinese New Year the students generally put on a pantomime or a Christy Minstrel Concert. By this time there was a weekly arrival of mail throughout the summer, and a monthly one during the winter. In the spring and autumn the Peking race meetings were held at a place a mile or so from the western wall of the city. The race-course boasted a tiny grand-stand but Wilkinson is careful to state that these were pretty amateur races; they were picnics first and race meetings second. In summer there was tennis on the Legation lawn, and in the grounds of the residence of the young European employees of the China Maritime Customs, as well as garden parties at the American Legation. The courts in the British Legation lay east and west, and since it was too hot to play until sundown one of the players had to perform with the sun full in his eyes which made play somewhat erratic. For summer dress the students wore a patrol jacket of white drill with trousers to match. In July and August they usually moved to a temple in the Western Hills where they could go for rambles. The main disadvantage of this life came from rain and rats. One summer it rained prodigiously and they were almost washed out of their temple. As for rats an ingenious student subdued them by training four owls which he had bought. They spent the day roosting one on each post of his bed, but at night went into action...
against the rats. One other drawback. They had to carry their revolvers about with them wherever they went because of local hostility and robbers.

As regards work, Wilkinson was quite frank. He explained that soon after his arrival a student was provided with a Chinese teacher, and provided himself with a copy of Wade's *Yü-yén Tzu-erh Chi* 語言自通集, better known under the title 'A Progressive Course of Colloquial Chinese', which was the only orthodox introduction to the study of Mandarin. The Assistant Chinese Secretary directed his studies. "Working hours are theoretically from 9 to 12, and 1 to 4, but custom has altered these to 10 to 12, and 2 to 4. The four hours thus left will be divided up... much in this way: 10 to 10.30 Tone Exercises/10.30 to 11 Reading with Teacher/11 to 11.30 New work/11.30 to 11.45 Writing/11.45 to 12 Character Slips\(^{18}\)/the Afternoon Scheme being much the same."\(^{19}\)

Only those who have studied Chinese will appreciate the toil and brain-teasing implied in this simple-looking course of study. As Wilkinson remarks after explaining the 'drill' for acquiring the correct tone in which to pronounce each character: "It was dreadful work. The poor teacher would get hoarse, and have to imbibe an enormous quantity of tea". There was an examination in colloquial Chinese at the end of the first year and another, in which written work was generally supposed to hold more weight, at the end of the second year. Besides studying Wade's course they were encouraged to dip into the daily *Peking Gazette* in which they sometimes found a good murder case to read. As the final examination drew near the students tried various methods of 'cramming', but as Wilkinson explained it was a hardship to undergo a competitive examination held in the middle of the Peking summer with the temperature standing at over 100\(^\circ\) in the shade. However, the dreaded examination when it came, was not very formidable. "Our paper-work was done in our own rooms, or in the Reception Hall of the Minister's residence. Here, right opposite the entrance, is a life-size portrait of the

\(^{18}\) Slips of thin cardboard which usually have a Chinese character on one side and its pronunciation, tone and meaning on the other side. Still sometimes used by foreigners in the early stages of learning Chinese.

\(^{19}\) "Where Chinese Drive", op. cit., 65.
Queen. . . . While we were waiting for our examiner, a sudden desire seized Gordon to show his loyalty, after the custom of the country; so he dropped down in front of the portrait, and solemnly knocked his head nine times on the floor, kotowing in proper form. He seemed much inspired by it, and had a feeling that he was now in some way under the special tutelage of Her Majesty, and could be trusted to floor the paper.” The impression given by Wilkinson’s account is that student life in Peking at that period held much that was enjoyable.

However, there was plenty of work for them to do on being sent to their posts. As one observer wrote in 1900 “Our Legation . . . is a bigger establishment than that of any other country, owing to the fact that the British Consular Corps in China has exceptionally large requirements. In the Legation the Student Interpreters, who subsequently become Consular Assistants and Consuls, learn the language of their adopted country and to some extent their future political, judicial and commercial work. After two years at Peking they move on to a Treaty Port and begin to put theory into practice. There are often as many as twenty of them in Peking at a time, besides an efficient staff of older men who act as the Chinese Secretaries.”

Meanwhile trouble was imminent and another visitor at this same period mentions the marines. Describing the Legation Quarter he wrote: “The familiar redcoats of British marines drilling on the lawn lent perhaps an extra touch of homeliness to the well-kept grounds. For in view of possible troubles, most of the foreign legations were provided last winter [1895—Ed.] with a special guard drawn from the fleets in the Gulf of Tchih-Li. They have since been for the greater part withdrawn . . . As if to heighten the contrast, the Chinese authorities had also assigned to each legation a special guard of their own braves who were encamped along Legation Street. . . .”

In 1900 the marines were to lend a more than homely touch to the scene inside the Legation. By mid-May of that year the anti-foreign massacres inspired by the Boxers had alarmed the Europeans, who were coming into Peking for protection. The

20 Ibid., 266-7.
21 Clive Bingham, A Year in China 1899-1900 (London, 1901), 47-8.
guard was reinforced by marines from the warships in the Gulf of Chihli, and arrived in Peking on May 31st. Seventy five was the number fixed for the French, British and Russian contingents. On June 10th an immediate attack on the Legation area was expected, while at the same time reinforcements were awaited from Tientsin. On June 20th the German Minister, Baron Ketteler, was murdered by Boxers on his way to the Tsungli Yamen, the Chinese department dealing with Foreign Affairs. As a result all the women and children in the various Legations, together with the non-combatant men, gathered inside the British Legation, since this was alone regarded capable of any serious defence. In here there were eventually over eight hundred people, including the Ministers of eleven different nations and some Chinese Christian converts. At this time the Legation was only half its final size, being roughly 700 yards long and 200 yards wide, but containing eight different walls, some of them very thick, which made it good for defending.

Meanwhile the German Minister's interpreter, Cordes, who had been wounded, was brought into the Legation and a hospital was hurriedly set up, under the charge of Dr. Poole of the British Legation with Dr. Welde of the German Legation as his assistant. The nurses consisted of one fully trained and certificated nurse (Miss Lambert of the Church of England Mission) who was made Matron, and a number of partly trained missionary women under her, together with Fuller, a naval sick-berth steward, who had been sent up with the marines. One of the partly-trained missionaries was Jessie Ransome who kept a diary of the siege giving the story of the hospital work. As she recorded:

The first thing to be done was to find a building which could be set apart for a hospital, and this, in the crowded state of the British Legation, was not very easy. It was decided to use the Government offices and reading-room, commonly known as the Chancery, and two rooms were hastily cleared and prepared for use, one as operating theatre, and the other as a ward. Even then we had not an idea of the task before us, thinking that a few days would certainly bring Admiral Seymour and his column to our relief; and so it was only by degrees, as our patients increased in number, that we cleared out more rooms and even encroached upon
the next house till we had no fewer than six wards, and some beds in the hall, besides an extra ward for convalescents in the Minister's house.\textsuperscript{23}

Mosquitoes were very troublesome and nets had to be improvised for the patients, while there was a perfect plague of flies. Food, however, was not too scarce, but only dull, since it was difficult to make appetising dishes for patients out of pony meat and rice. But an old Chinese cook, one of the Christian refugees, performed marvels, helped and encouraged by the ladies belonging to the various Missions. “I have seen him run backwards and forwards across the little yard between his kitchen and the hospital with shot and shell flying all round him, and never hesitating an instant.” In spite of over-crowding, a dull diet, and a scarcity of drugs, out of about 120 cases admitted to the hospital only fourteen died. One of the reasons for the general good health of those besieged Jessie Ransome attributed to hard manual work and simple food. “Another cause of our good health was the moderate weather which prevailed throughout the siege. There were days when the temperature seemed almost unbearably; but it was nothing to the weeks of suffocating heat which are usual in Peking in June and July; and later, when the rainy season ought to have set in, there was nothing more severe than an occasional stormy day or night.”\textsuperscript{24} In fact all the various accounts of the siege stress the temperate weather. Had there been a typical Peking summer illness must have been far more general. As it was a number of the little children in the Legation died.

By now a volunteer corps of a hundred or more men had been formed, and occupied commanding points on the Legation walls, or went out on sorties from the gates in support of the marines. The fortifications were strengthened by sandbags which the womenfolk made by the thousand, their sewing machines being nearly as useful as the men’s rifles. There was much work to be done in digging trenches and constructing barricades, and most of this was superintended with great skill by the missionaries. In fact the ‘six fighting parsons’, under the leadership of the Rev.

\textsuperscript{23} Jessie Ransome, \textit{Story of the Siege Hospital in Peking, and Diary of Events from May to August, 1900} (London, 1901), 8-9.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, 18-19.
Gamewall, an American Methodist, became almost legendary. We get a pen picture of Gamewall in the diary of the Rev. Roland Allen, who was chaplain to the Anglican Bishop in North China at this time. “Mr. Gamewall was almost voiceless, but still pursued his weary round of the Legation on his bicycle, overseeing the fortifications, and carrying out every suggestion of the military council with untiring zeal.”

Outside the Legation Chapel (by now filled to overflowing with missionaries) stood a stone kiosk with a bell inside it, erected to celebrate Queen Victoria’s Jubilee. This Bell Tower stood in the middle of the Legation at a point where four ways met. As Allen explained: “The Tower stood in the midst of tree-shaded ways beautiful from every point of view, sheltered, too, more than most spots from shot and shell. It was only once struck; no one was wounded there. It was well suited to be the centre of the life, as it was by nature the centre of the structure of the Legation.” People used to collect there in groups to discuss the latest news and rumours. The bell itself was used as an alarm in case of a general attack, when it was rung furiously, and in the case of fire when it was tolled. All round the kiosk were posted up notices for the guidance of the besieged as well as cables, messages, edicts and rumours. Here also was posted up, from time to time, an official census of the inhabitants of the Legation. For instance on August 4th Jessie Ransome entered in her diary the census figures just posted up on the Bell Tower which gave a total of 883 men, women and children. One of the few amusing incidents of the siege was only known to the besieged some time afterwards. On 16th July, 1900 the Belfast newspaper, Northern Whig, had published an account of


26 When Professor L. Carrington Goodrich passed through Hong Kong in 1962 we spoke about the siege of the Foreign Legations and he told me that he was one of the children of missionary parents who sheltered in the Legation chapel. His father was the Rev. Chauncey Goodrich, remembered today by students of Chinese as the author of A Pocket Dictionary and Pekingese Syllabary, which was first published in 1891 and is still in print. See A. H. Mateer (Mrs.) Siege Days (New York, 1903), 217-18 and photograph opposite page 44. For another photograph see Arthur H. Smith, China in Convulsion (New Jersey, 1901) II, 494.

27 Allen, op. cit., 119.
Bell Tower, Chapel and Pavilions in the old British Legation.

Photographed by the author in 1958.
Pavilions and one of the two stone lions in the old British Legation.

Photographed by the author in 1958.
the death of Sir Robert Hart during the siege, and on July 21st it carried a long letter from the President of Queen's College, Belfast, which served as a somewhat premature obituary notice for Hart, who, in fact, lived until 1911.25

The relieving troops finally entered the British Legation on August 14th, when a Company of mounted Sikhs rode in at about 3 p.m. accompanying General Gaselee and his staff. So ended the siege which had lasted from June 20th until August 14th, a total of 55 days. Fortunately no overwhelming damage had been done to the British Legation, though many of the roofs were badly smashed about and bullets and shells had gone through most of the buildings. One last ironic touch: immediately after the raising of the siege the commissariat functioned so inefficiently that the besieged had to forage for themselves and for some days got less to eat than during the fighting. Meanwhile those who had 'enjoyed' the hospitality of the British Legation during the siege departed and the work of clearing up and repairing the damage began.

The actual damage suffered by the British Legation buildings was slight in comparison with the damage done to the other foreign Legations. The outer walls were badly damaged and had to be rebuilt, but one small section on the north-east corner facing the Imperial Canal was sufficiently unharmed to be left intact, and on its surface someone painted in black nine-inch letters the words “LEST WE FORGET”. Most of the buildings in the compound were soon repaired and the Legation again looked substantially the same as before the siege. However, as part of the settlement after the Boxer troubles and the siege of the Legation Quarter Britain acquired considerable ground on the northern and western sides of the old Legation. This consisted of land formerly occupied by the Mongol market, by the Imperial Carriage Park and by the Hanlin Academy, which was burnt out during the fighting. This newly acquired land was later used for

25 Born in 1835 Hart came out to China in the Consular Service in 1854 and spent his first three months as an interpreter at Hong Kong. After various consular appointments he was permitted by the British Government to resign from the consular service in 1859 and to join the newly formed Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs service as Deputy-Commissioner of Customs at Canton. In 1863, at the age of twenty-eight, he was appointed Inspector-General of the Maritime Customs, a post which he held until his resignation in 1908.
expansion. Thus a new student-interpreters’ mess was built and also a new house for the Counsellor in a pleasant garden. A barrack was also built for the Legation guard on the site of the former Chinese Board of Works, Board of War, and Court of State Ceremonies, an area with historic associations. The barracks were large enough to house 500 men though normally not more than 100 were stationed there at any one time. As a result of this enlargement the British Legation now covered about thirty-five acres, and was the largest foreign Legation in Peking. While this reconstruction was going forward the opportunity was taken to make the Legation more self-contained so that if ever it were again besieged it would be in a better state to resist. With this object in view the Ministry of Works built a thoroughly ugly electricity power-plant and a water tower. A large coal dump was also formed so that now the Legation had its own supply of water, coal and electricity.

Gradually memories of the siege became less vivid and life settled down into a routine which was much the same as before the siege. Perhaps the only difference was that by 1908 there were signs of some modernization in Peking itself such as macadam roads, handsome cabs and electric light. Meanwhile visitors to Peking continued to enjoy the hospitality of those living in the British Legation, and no clear change can be seen until 1928 when the Kuomintang was victorious over the Northern warlords and the capital was established at Nanking. As a result the British Ambassador moved south of the Yangtze and resided mainly at the British Consulate in Shanghai while the majority of his staff moved to Nanking, though the student-interpreters continued to study at the Legation in Peking which now became a Consulate. When war broke out between England and Japan in December 1941 some British nationals and American nationals, who were sick or elderly, were interned in the Legation. The Swiss Consul looked after the buildings, aided by Chinese employed by Her Majesty’s Ministry of Works. The buildings were reoccupied as a Consulate at the end of the war, but in 1948 the Chinese Communists captured Peking, and at first the government of the Chinese Peoples’ Republic refused to recognize the status of the British Consulate there. However, in January
1950 the British government recognized the Chinese Peoples' Republic, and as a result the British representative in Peking was recognized and the remainder of the diplomatic staff came to Peking from the former capital of Nanking. In 1954 the two governments agreed to exchange Chargés d'Affaires. Meanwhile a few changes had taken place which affected the Legation. For instance, in 1945 it was decided not to repaint the words LEST WE FORGET on the outside wall. In 1950 the part of the Legation compound which formerly housed the barracks was requisitioned by the government of the Chinese Peoples' Republic.

This was the position when I went to Peking as a tourist in July 1958 and enjoyed the hospitality of friends in the old Legation. It was my first and only visit to Peking and I was impressed by the spaciousness and picturesqueness of the old Legation. The British Embassies at Tokyo and at Bangkok, although impressive in their own ways, could not compare with the old Legation at Peking. Here the grounds were more extensive, and the Chinese buildings and pavilions well preserved and brilliantly painted, so that it was an attractive place in which to stay. Only the water-tower and the dingy brick power-plant spoilt the pleasant effect of trees and lawns and flowering shrubs. The large extent of the grounds deadened the noise of the city outside as well as attracting various wild birds — crows, cuckoos, magpies, hoopoes, woodpeckers and orioles.

While I was enjoying my stay in the Legation and sightseeing every day in the city, the news suddenly broke that American troops had landed in Lebanon and British troops in Jordan. Two days later demonstrators began to assemble outside the gate of the Legation shouting slogans and pasting handwritten posters on the 400 yard stretch of the high walls facing the old Imperial Canal. I had been warned that this demonstration was likely to start in the afternoon but I was so engrossed in sightseeing at the Summer Palace during the morning that I failed to start on the return journey to the Legation early enough. In fact I travelled back to Peking in a bus with a number of children carrying home-made pennants bearing Chinese characters which meant 'English wolves get out', so that I knew that the demonstration was about to begin. When the bus arrived at the
north-west gate of Peking I took a pedicab, but when we reached
the Wangfuching and ran into columns of marching children
the driver began to show signs of fright, so I paid him off and
started to walk. By now I realized that I had left it too late to
reach the Legation gate before the demonstrators arrived, so I
made a wide circuit and eventually reached the Hsinchiao Hotel
near the Chungwenmen (Hatamen Gate). Having been told that
the demonstration would probably end by about 10 p.m., because
a previous demonstration over the Suez episode had lasted until
that time, I decided to wait at the Hsinchiao Hotel until the coast
was clear. Just before 11 p.m. I walked to a point near to the
entrance of the British Legation and mingled with the sightseers,
but found the demonstrators still hard at work. It was rather
like a rowdy Bank Holiday evening on Hampstead Heath. There
were large crowds strolling about watching the demonstrators
who were still queueing up five or six abreast and moving forward
very slowly towards the gate of the Legation. Once opposite the
open gate they performed their slogan-shouting, sometimes
accompanying their shouts with gesticulations and a series of
jumps, before being waved on by cadres who appeared to be
controlling the demonstration. All along the road facing the
wall of the Legation ran a water pipe with taps every few yards
so that in the summer heat of Peking no one need go thirsty.
Among the bushes growing down the centre of the street (where
once the Imperial Canal flowed) were canvas latrines, while the
whole area was lit up at night by arc lamps fixed among the trees,
and the front of the Legation gateway was picked out by powerful
spot-lights. Nests of amplifiers had been fixed to the trees near
the gate so that the inhabitants of the Legation had no difficulty
in hearing the slogans being chanted, such as Ying-Kuo lang kan
ch'ü-ch'üii 英國狼趕出去 'English wolves get out'. Since the
demonstrators seemed particularly fiery at this stage I decided to
retreat and try again at dawn. After a few hours sleep at the
Hsinchiao Hotel I again approached the Legation gate only to find
a long queue of new demonstrators, refreshed by a night's sleep,
taking some vocal exercise before going to work. At this stage I
decided that it was quite safe to enter the gate of the Legation,
and joining the queue I moved forward gradually until opposite
the gate and then, detaching myself from the queue, walked into the compound. The demonstration had started on a Friday afternoon and continued all Friday night, throughout the whole of Saturday and Saturday night and only ended about midday on the Sunday. Altogether according to my reckoning it lasted for forty-four hours without a break. It was an exciting exhibition for the people of Peking and everyone caught something of the 'Roman Carnival' atmosphere. To me it was interesting as an example of 'mass diplomacy' carried out by slogan and poster in an attempt to impose a point of view by noise and numbers. After the demonstrators finally dispersed the entire wall running along the road outside the Legation was covered from top to base with posters painted in Chinese ink on gaily coloured paper. Slogans and pictures, some crude but some of considerable merit extending for 400 yards, made quite a poster gallery. One felt that the masses had let off steam and left their coloured breath behind. From the point of view of organization it was a considerable feat to keep up a continuous demonstration for over forty hours, and to marshal large crowds so that all had a chance to shout and gesticulate at the entrance to the Legation. It showed a practical grasp of logistics, and also complete control over the masses by the Party cadres. The demonstrators never got out of hand though they were usually noisy enough to be convincing.

Already by the Summer of 1958 there were indications that the authorities in Peking were about to request the British Government to hand over the land occupied by the old British Legation. In January 1959 the Vice-Director of the West European Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent for Mr. A. C. Maby, at that time acting British Chargé d'Affaires, and informed him that part of the centre of Peking was scheduled for reconstruction and that the area occupied by the British Legation was required for the site of a large new building for the Judicial Executive. The staff of the Legation was therefore requested to move out of their quarters by May 31st 1959, and the British were invited to work out plans for new permanent premises. The Russians had received a similar request, but had already prepared a new and sumptuous Embassy
in the north-east quarter of the city, well away from the new diplomatic quarter.\footnote{This was built on a site which had been granted to Russia as far back as the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689). As a result of fighting between Russian settlers on the frontier between Siberia and Manchuria about a hundred Russian prisoners were brought to Peking in the period 1683-5. They were formed into a company, given a place of residence in the northeast corner of Peking, close to the Lama Temple, and intermarried with Chinese and Manchus. They retained their Greek Orthodox faith and were allowed to have their own priests. See Michel N. Pavlovsky, \textit{Chinese-Russian Relations} (New York, 1949) 145-164. It was to this place, known as the Pei-kuan ('Northern Hostel') that the members of the Russian ecclesiastical mission transferred in 1861.}

All accommodation for foreign embassies was to be concentrated in one area outside the east wall of the city, and about one and a half miles from a newly constructed gate, just near to the old astronomical instruments which can still be seen on top of the east wall. Eventually, after negotiations, the new British Legation was allotted two large houses and two blocks of flats in this new diplomatic quarter. The last christening was performed in the Legation chapel, the books in the small library were taken off their shelves, the flag at the gate was hauled down, and everything was packed.\footnote{Unfortunately the imposing Royal Coat of Arms which dignified the gateway of the old Legation was too large to fit properly into the new Legation buildings. Mr. Michael Stewart, the Chargé d'Affaires at the time of the move, arranged with Sir Robert Black, the Governor of Hong Kong, that the Coat of Arms should be sent to Government House in Hong Kong. It is now fixed onto the wall at the far end of the long ballroom of Government House, which it dominates by the brilliance of its colours.} Among the more colourful of the closing scenes in the life of the old British Legation should be mentioned the two Commonwealth cricket matches played in the Autumn of 1958 between the Moonrakers, captained by Mr. Duncan Wilson, the British Chargé d'Affaires, and the Woolgatherers captained by the Indian Ambassador, Mr. G. Parthasaraty. The rules governing this diplomatic cricket were many and local but the chief rule of all was that if anyone hit a ball into the grounds of the Chinese Ministry of Public Security next door his whole side was out.

Finally, in September 1959, the staff moved to their new quarters and thus after nearly one hundred years of continuous occupation the existence of the old British Legation in Peking came to an end. From an historical and sentimental point of view its loss was sad. But from a realistic point of view which
looks towards the future it was a welcome move. By the 1950's the old British Legation had come to occupy an invidious position in the heart of Peking. It was too big and imposing for a foreign embassy. It was too closely linked in the minds of the Chinese people with a long legacy of dislike of the foreigner, connected as it was in their minds with two captures of Peking — in 1860 and again in 1900. Moreover, it was in the nature of a box inside which a few British diplomats were the easy target of mass demonstrations. In the long run it was better to be rid of such a prominent place and instead to form part of a new diplomatic quarter on a site chosen by the government of the Chinese Peoples' Republic itself. Certainly, from the Chinese point of view, by 1959 the large space occupied by the old Foreign Legation Quarter in the centre of Peking was too valuable to be inhabited by a small number of foreign diplomats. It was an obvious site for the new government offices which were needed. Thus in 1959 a symbol of the far off days of the so called 'unequal treaties' disappeared, and with its disappearance the prospect of better relations between Great Britain and the Chinese Peoples' Republic was, perhaps, imperceptibly enhanced.