

Visiting a Lodge in the Far East

Singapore

Bro. Michael Perkins of Scientific 88 Lodge in Cambridge, UK applied to visit Sir Thomas Raffles Lodge no 7444 E.C. (English Constitution) in November 2025.

In advance of the visit and in compliance with the Book Of Constitutions rule 125, a request to visit lodges in both Singapore and Thailand was made through the Secretary of Scientific 88 and the Provincial Assistant Grand Secretary. Permission was granted to visit Sir Thomas Raffles Lodge in Singapore and arrangements were made locally by its Secretary Bro. Gary Low Ming Hao.

The visit to Singapore was made as part of a Far East Prisoners Of War (FEPOW) trip to both Singapore and Thailand organised by the Chairman of the Fulbourn & Teversham Royal British Legion. Michael was invited to travel on the trip by the RBL Chairman when it was discovered that Michael was born in Singapore in 1955 when his father Flt.Lt. Richard Henry Perkins was serving in 110 squadron, RAF Transport Command at RAF Changi.

Flt. Lt Perkins was posted away from Singapore in March 1956 back to RAF Cranwell when Michael was 6 months old – this trip in 2025 was the first time Michael had been back to Singapore in 69 years! It has changed a bit – the original area where RAF officers were housed is now occupied by high rise buildings as are most places in the city.

Michael was subsequently invited by the Worshipful Master of Sir Thomas Raffles Lodge, W. Bro Daniel Leslie Mountstephen to attend a double Passing ceremony at Freemasons Hall, 23A Coleman street, Singapore on 5 November 2025 commencing at 6.30pm.

<https://www.sirstamfordraffles.com/>



Sir Stamford Raffles Lodge No. 7444 E.C.

The Lodge was consecrated on 2nd May 1956 and is governed by the District of the Eastern Archipelago that administers West Malaysia, East Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.

Dress was Black Tie or Morning Dress with short coat and Undress Regalia.

As an aside here, complying with the various dress codes encountered on the trip posed some problems with airline weight restrictions: 30kg to/from the UK to Singapore and Bangkok but only 23kg from Singapore to Bangkok.

Three different suits were required to cover all the formal events on the trip:

1. Black tie for the Sir Thomas Raffles Lodge no 7444 E.C event.
2. Standard black suit for attending two Remembrance day services in Thailand.
3. Light grey suit for attending the National Remembrance day service in Singapore.

Some sacrifices (e.g. walking boots and changes of clothes) had to be made to comply.

The Sir Thomas Raffles Lodge Summons front page prominently displays the notification that: “From antient times, no Master or Fellow Craft could be absent from his Lodge, especially when warned to appear at it, without incurring a severe censure, unless it appeared to the Master or Wardens that pure necessity hindered him,” Antient Charge. No doubt about this then.

A further caution appears on the following inner page:

“Be very cautious whom you recommend as a Candidate for Membership; one false step on this point may be fatal. If you introduce a disputatious person, confusion will be produced which may end in dissolution of the Lodge. If you have a good Lodge, keep it select. Great numbers are not always beneficial” – Dr. Oliver. Sage advice indeed.

On entering the bar area it was surprising to be directed towards a bottle of Singleton single malt whisky standing open on the bar and being advised to help yourself! It was noticeable later in the Lodge room that Brethren were quite vocal at times.

The air travel weight restrictions were further restrictive here as it was not possible to bring a Masonic briefcase – embarrassing to enter the robing room with regalia in a white plastic bag!

The floor officers performed extremely well and the Worshipful Master was exceptional, with a faultless performance despite this being only his second ritual in the chair, In all a very impressive event with minimal prompting and professional performances from all.

The Festive Board was quite interesting and it was surprising to me to see that in a hot country, soup was served as the first course. The main course was a very tasty leg of lamb served on the bone with Tiramisu was the dessert – no sign of any spicy elements which I found a bit puzzling.

Michael gave a response to the Visitors Toast with some information about how he came to be there and his Mother Lodge being Scientific 88 – mention of that number produced some oohs and aahs – for two reasons: Firstly 8 is considered the luckiest number in Chinese culture so two of them together is very lucky. Secondly it is a small number indicating a very ancient lodge.

Michael presented the Worshipful Master with a self-assembly model of the Queens college mathematical bridge as a reminder of Cambridge and this was very gratefully received. Hopefully it will have been assembled by now and be prominently displayed in a glass fronted case in the building. An open invitation and a warm welcome promised for any Singaporean Brother who wished to visit Scientific 88 in Cambridge.

On the following Saturday the 8th November Michael was back at Freemasons Hall visiting St. Georges Lodge No 1152 E.C. with about 20 members of the FEPOW group that had been invited to attend there as the grand-father of one of the group members had been the WM of the Lodge. The group were accompanied by about 20 children from the Raffles Institute school that we had visited the previous day.

We were given a very useful introduction to Freemasonry by W.Bro Manoj Sharma who is a very senior figure in Singaporean Masonry. This included a history of Freemasonry in Singapore, a tour

of the building and an explanation of the features and floor officer roles in the impressive Main Lodge room.

After the tour Bro. Sharma presented each of the FEPOW group members with limited editions of 1500 copies of two impressive books he has written entitled “Freemasonry and the Eastern Archipelago” volumes 1 and 2. These are substantial hardback tomes and are extremely detailed covering the first origins of Freemasonry in Europe right through to the present day in the East.



Michael will be presenting his copies to the library at Bateman street so they will be available there as reference volumes for posterity.



W.Bro Manoj Sharma

Freemasons hall Singapore

By 1845 Singapore had its first Lodge, Zetland in the East, but its brethren had to wait some time before there was a permanent home in Coleman Street, consecrated on 27 December 1879.

Freemasons' Hall is located in the heart of Singapore's vibrant Civic District, a short distance from the Central Business District and is the current home of many Singapore lodges including Sir Stamford Raffles Lodge.

The building is in the English Renaissance or Palladian style as seen on the frontispiece below.

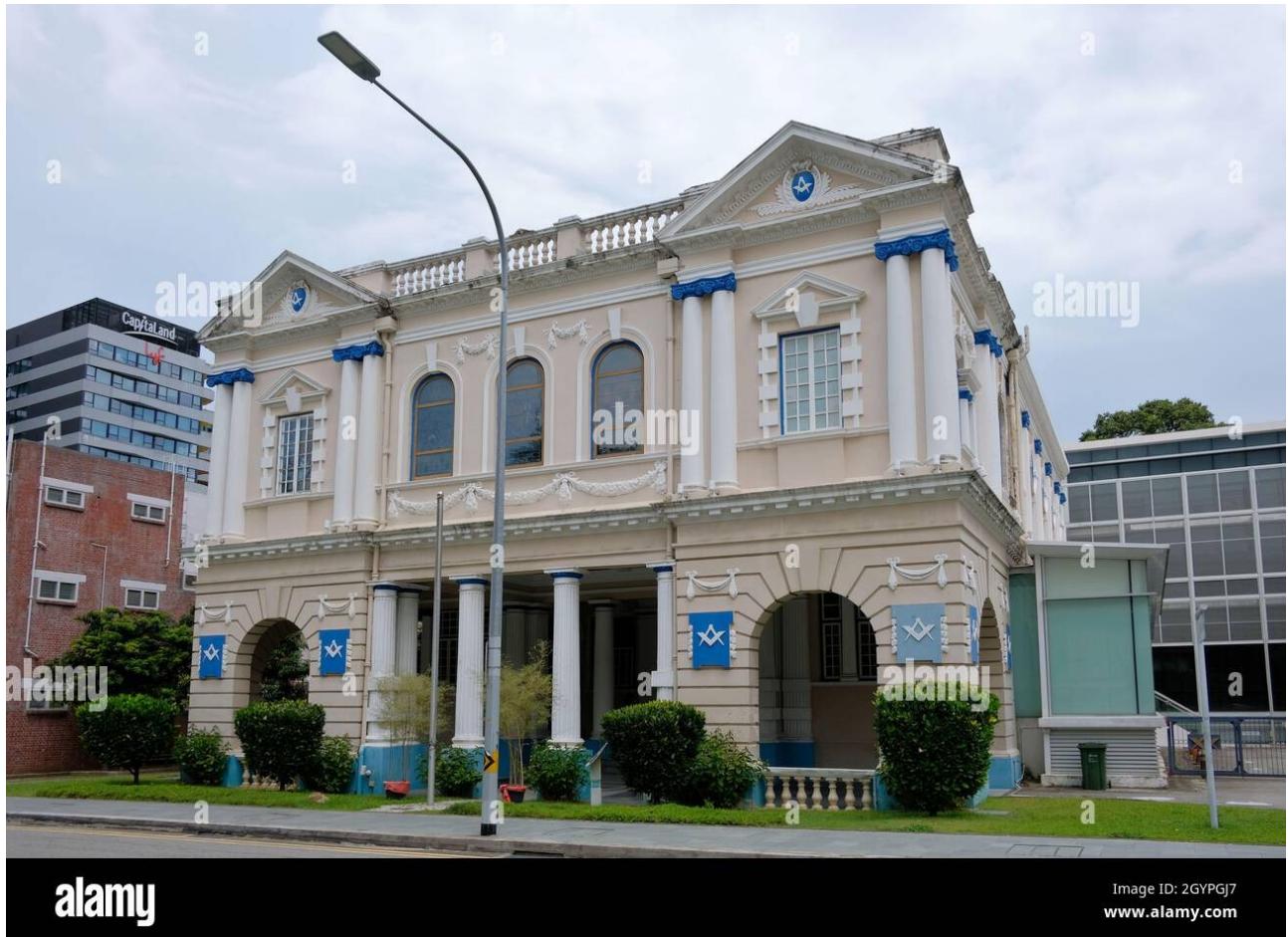


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www.alamy.com

The basement houses the administrative offices and library while the ground floor houses the Madison Rooms and a bar. The Main Meeting Room and West Temple, which is used for ceremonies, are housed on the second floor, along with the Member's Robing Room, the District Officers Robing Room and the Candidates Robing room.

The Masonic Temple features a beautiful domed ceiling that is illuminated in blue at appropriate times in ceremonies. It also boasts an impressive chequered black-and-white floor as seen in the photograph below.

The temple features one of only 11 pipe organs in Singapore.



Thailand.

The FEPOW trip went to Singapore and Thailand (the prime interest there being the Burma-Thailand railway built by POWs in WW2 because most of the attendees had relatives who worked on it).

Despite making enquiries about planned Lodge meeting dates there, unfortunately no Lodge in Thailand was holding a meeting on the dates of the visit so no applications were made for attendance there.

References

For those interested in the history of the POWs and the Burma-Thailand railway (aka The Death Railway), these references will be useful.

1. Far East Prisoners Of War, **FEPOW** – the original organisation set up to act as a resource for the families of servicemen who were here in WW2, but as most of them have now passed away through old age, the organisation has been replaced by COFEPOW – see below.

<https://www.fepow.family>

I was very honoured to be asked to lay the FEPOW wreath at the Singapore National day of Remembrance at Kranji war memorial.

2. Children Of Far East Prisoners Of War, COFEPOW.

<https://www.cofepow.org.uk>

COFEPOW run an associated organisation, **NFFWRA**, for their members welfare activities:

NFFWRA – The National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare/Remembrance Association.

They hold events such as this for VJ80 remembrance.

[NFFWRA VJ80 Commemorations | COFEPOW](#)

3. The Thailand Burma Railway Centre, **TBRC**, an interactive museum, information and research facility dedicated to presenting the history of the Thailand-Burma Railway.

[TBRC Online: THE THAILAND-BURMA RAILWAY CENTRE](#)

4. Relevant films about POWs in the Far East include: The Railway Man & King Rat'

