



Bert Hardy's Chinatown:May 1942

Gregory Lee

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Bert Hardy's Chinatown May 1942

**Illustrated Lecture, 20 July 2008, , Liverpool, UK
- a Cultures in Transit Conference event**

OpenEyeGallery

Gregory Lee

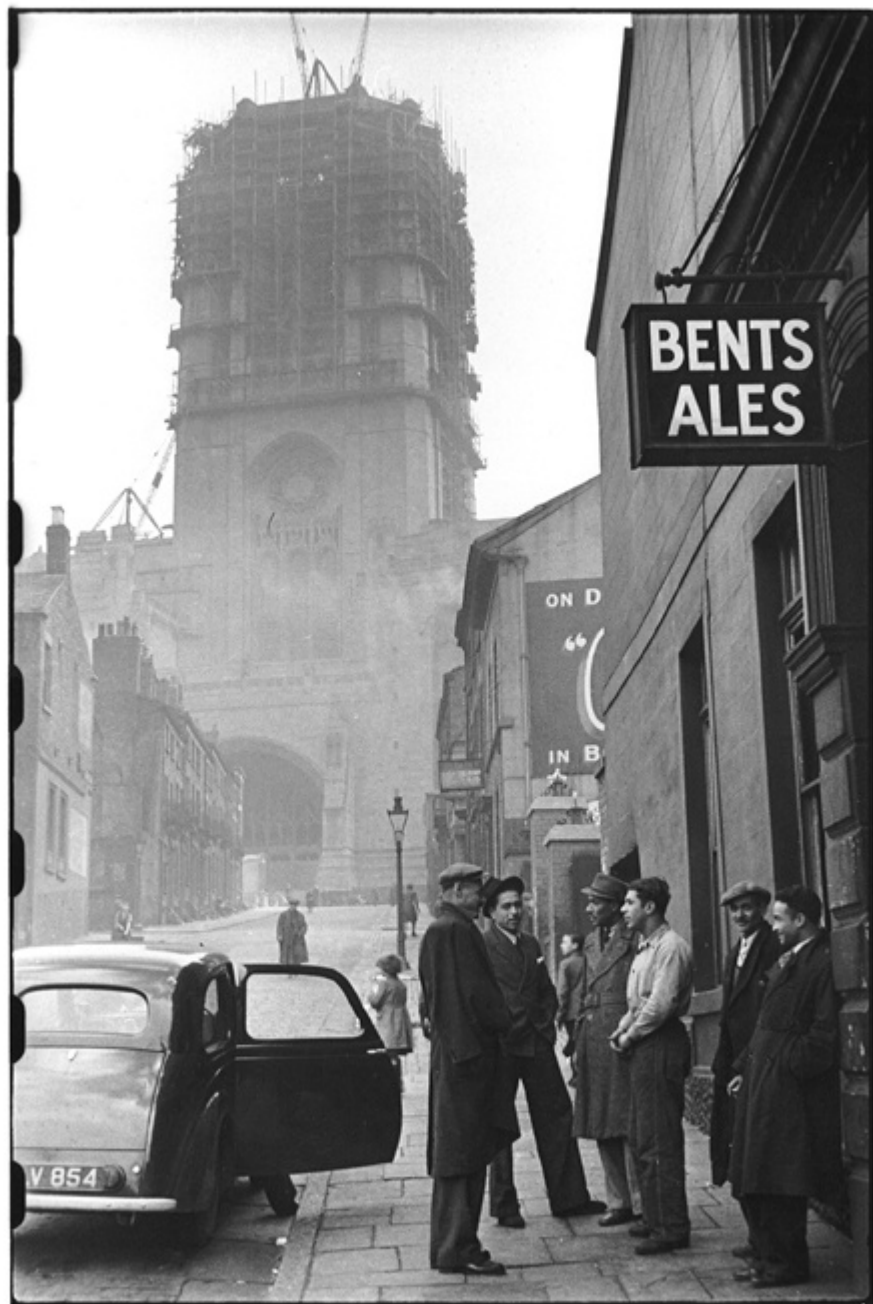
**Professor of Chinese Studies,
University of Lyons (IETT)**

**Director, Chinatown History Project
Liverpool Hope University/U of Lyons**

- The photographs of Chinatown by Bert Hardy were taken in May 1942 during the Second World War.
- They were commissioned by the illustrated news magazine *Picture Post* but were never published. The collection was subsequently bought by the Getty Foundation. The custody of the photographs has now been entrusted to the Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool.
- This lecture was delivered to a mixed audience of academics and members of the local community at the invitation of the Open Eye Gallery.

- The men we see are just a few of the 10,000 Chinese seamen who manned the Merchant Navy ships, for Britain during the war, mainly Blue Funnel, Ben Line, and Shell. Chinese citizens also served as cooks and laundrymen for the Royal Navy during the war and even right up until the 1990s. The pictures show them in lodging houses and makeshift clubs while they wait for the next ship.





































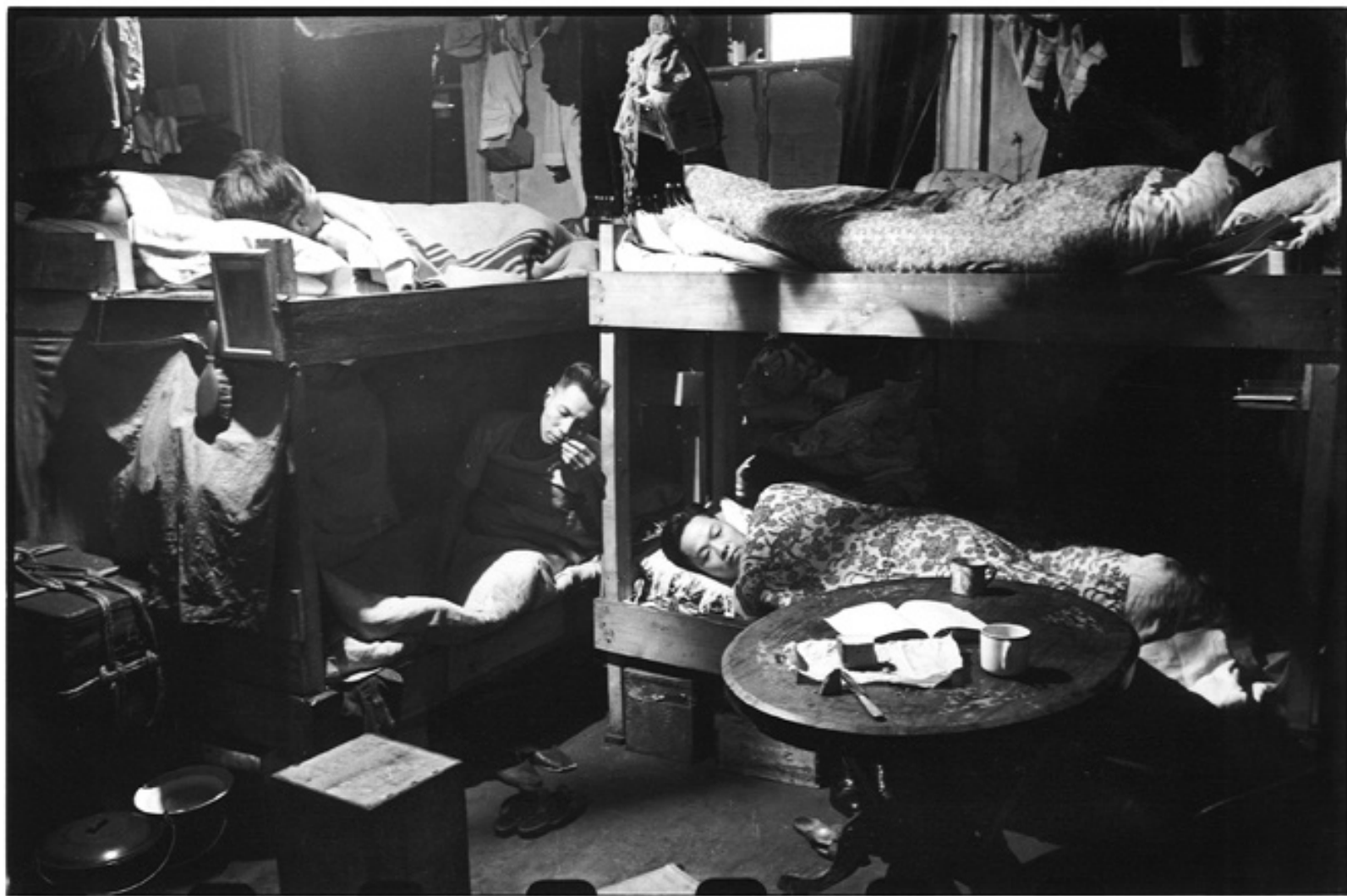


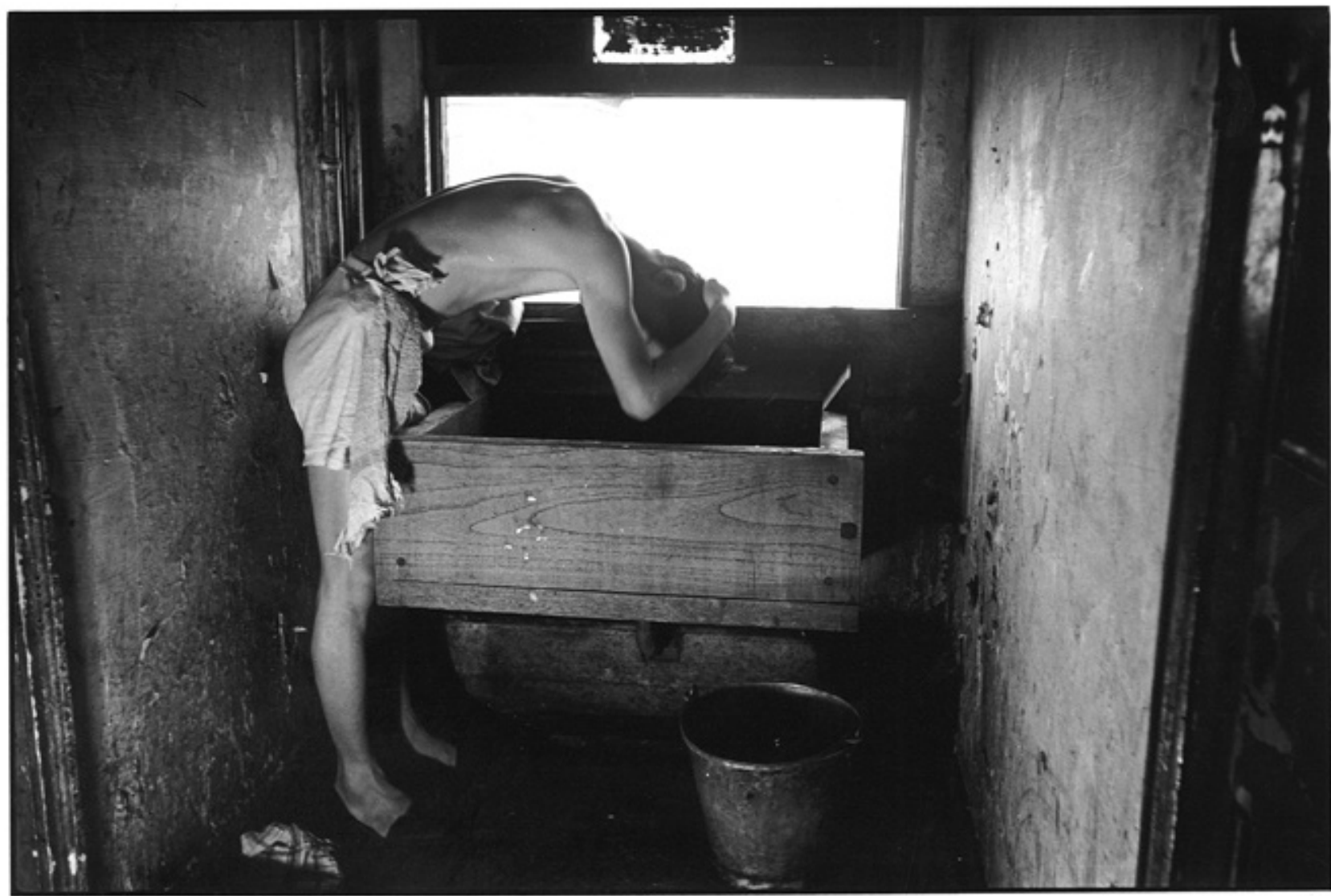


















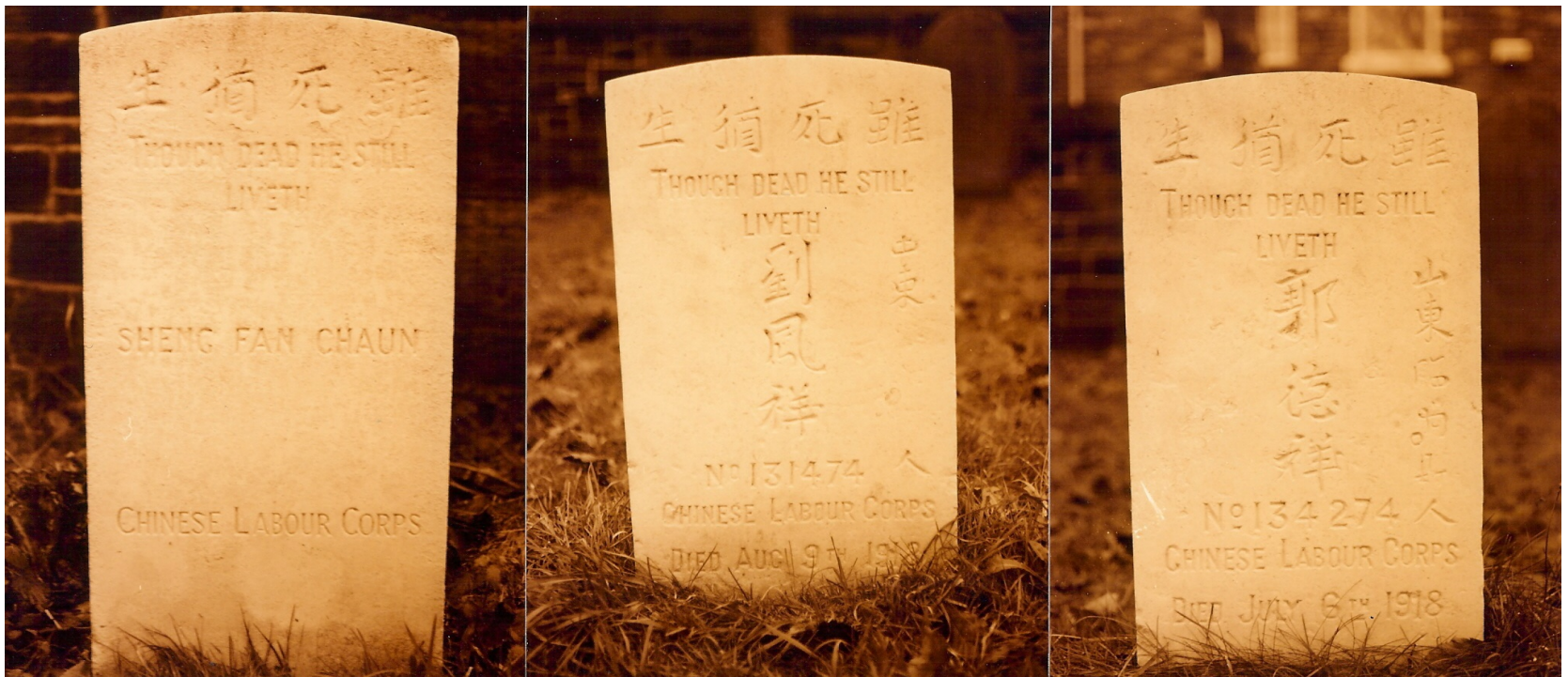






- This was not the first time the Chinese served the British war effort. The First World War trenches were dug not by British Tommies but by 20,000 or so Chinese men who were enrolled in the British Army Chinese Labour Corps. The Chinese government had supplied these men hoping that in return at the conclusion of the war the German colony of Qingdao (Tsing-tao 青島) would be returned to Chinese sovereignty. But the strategy did not work. The Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, decided to transfer the former German territories to Japan, also an ally of France and Britain in the First World War.

Tombstones of three members of First World War British Army Chinese Labour Corps- "repatriated" from France/Belgium and buried in the Chinese sector of Liverpool's Anfield cemetery





Many of the the Chinese Labour Corps troops were from Shandong (Shantung) 山东 Province - one of the objectives of the Chinese authorities in supplying men to serve on the European war front was to recuperate the German colony of Qingdao in Shandong. But the Versailles Peace Treaty transferred the German territorial rights to Japan.



- While many of those serving in the Labour Corps during the Great War came from the northern province of Shandong, during the Second World War the Chinese sailors hailed mostly from the seaport of Shanghai.
- The Chinese seamen had no choice but to serve on the transatlantic supply routes. They were stranded, they could not go back to China where the war was raging against the Japanese occupying forces. The British and American governments even passed laws obliging the Chinese seamen to serve in the merchant navies. They were paid far less than British sailors. And at one point the Shanghai seamen protested and took industrial action.. This act of defiance was not forgotten by the British authorities and the Blue Funnel shipping company.

- After the war, as was revealed just about five years ago, thousands of Chinese men who had settled in Liverpool legally, many of them married to Liverpool women and who had fathered children, were deported. The Home Office and the Holt shipping company had not forgotten the demands for fair pay made by these seamen during the war.
- Their landing papers were revoked, they were rounded up at night by police and Home Office officials, and put into cargo ships roughly converted with bunk beds and sent back to a China in turmoil and to an uncertain fate.
- Their Liverpool properties were appropriated by the city council, and their families maintained a silence for over half a century.

- Thanks to the efforts of Yvonne Foley- the daughter of one of these sailor-fathers - there is now a plaque at the Pierhead, Liverpool's landmark waterfront, acknowledging the contribution that was made by the men and the wrong that was done to them.

23 January 2006: Unveiling of plaque in memory of Chinese sailors who served in British merchant navy during the two world wars and who were subsequently deported from the UK in 1946-1947



和平

TO THE CHINESE MERCHANT SEAMEN
WHO SERVED THIS COUNTRY WELL
DURING BOTH WORLD WARS
FOR THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR
THIS COUNTRY - THANK YOU
TO THE MANY CHINESE MERCHANT SEAMEN
WHO AFTER BOTH WORLD WARS
WERE REQUIRED TO LEAVE
FOR THEIR WIVES AND PARTNERS
WHO WERE LEFT IN IGNORANCE
OF WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR MEN
FOR THE CHILDREN
WHO NEVER KNEW THEIR FATHERS
THIS IS A SMALL REMINDER OF WHAT TOOK
PLACE. WE HOPE NOTHING LIKE IT WILL EVER
HAPPEN AGAIN
FOR YOUR MEMORY
23RD JANUARY 2006.

此碑係由中國僑商會及中國海商會
聯合籌建，旨在紀念在兩次世界大戰
期間，為英國服務之中國海商，並
為在戰後被遣返回國之中國海商及其
家屬，建立一個紀念碑，以表達對
他們之敬意，並希望未來不再發生
類似之慘劇。

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類似之慘劇。

Quite possibly some of the men we see in Hardy's photographs fell victim to the furtive post-war deportations.



Liverpool Chinatown, June 1993, before the construction of the arch or *pailou* 牌楼



- From the 1960s onwards the nature of Chinatown changed. The new immigrants, who make up the majority in Liverpool today, came from Hong Kong and the Canton region. Whole families came and the former "mixed marriage", bi-cultural Chinatown gave way to a new kind of Chinatown community.



A Chinatown Museum?

- Liverpool Hope University together with French partner the University of Lyons (Jean Moulin) and with the support of the local community and the Liverpool City Council, plans to found a European Chinatown Museum.
- The Museum would permanently display Bert Hardy's photographs together with other family photographs and records that would be collected from members of the community.
- In addition to the Museum, a research centre devoted to the histories of Chinese communities in Europe would be established.

Mooted Nelson Street site for Chinatown Museum

