

Historic Building Appraisal
Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel
Pak Sha O, Tai Po, New Territories

The exact year of construction of Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel (聖母無玷之心小堂) cannot be ascertained, but it seems to have been built **between 1915 and 1923**. The Chapel was one of the earliest churches in Sai Kung. From 1882 to 1890, Pak Sha O was served by **Rev. Leong Chi-sing, Andrew** (梁子馨神父), a pioneer in the development of Catholicism in the New Territories. *Historical Interest*

The conversion of Pak Sha O into a Catholic village partly resulted from the desire of the villagers to combat the harassment of the tax-lords of Sheung Shui (上水) on the collection of land rents. The story goes that Pak Sha O and its neighbouring villages had been harassed by the tax-lords before the arrival of Catholic missionaries. One of the ways for land tenants to protect themselves was to convert to Catholicism and to side with foreigners, i.e. the priests.

The Chapel was badly damaged during the Second World War, but was restored thereafter. Mass was held at the Chapel once a month in the 1950s and 1960s for the Catholic converts who numbered about three hundred. Since the 1960s, the religious activities at the Chapel gradually decreased as villagers emigrated to Britain. Mass probably ceased in the late 1970s. In 1982, the Chapel was converted by the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong (天主教香港教區) into a tent site and training camp.

The Chapel is a simple one-storey rectangular pitched roof building with rendered and painted walls and gable ends. It is divided into three bays, two bays comprising the Chapel and one bay the Father's Residence. The main entrance to the Chapel is situated in the east end wall. A pair of double doors is hung in the doorway which is protected by a simple porch or canopy and an arched hood moulding. There is a simple Latin cross over the arch and another cross at the gable apex. The side walls have simple rectangular windows with arched hood mouldings. The walls are strengthened on each side by a rectangular buttress, one of which is extended above the roof line to form a bell cote. The altar recess is set against the dividing wall between the Chapel and the Father's Residence. It is formed by an archway supported by two decorative columns. The architectural style of the Chapel is indeterminate and difficult to categorise, but its decorative arched altar recess and arched window hood mouldings are **Neo-Classical** features. *Architectural Merit*

The Chapel is a simple RC mission church with built heritage value. It has undergone several restorations and renovations since it was built; for example, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. From an old photograph it seems to have had *Rarity, Built Heritage Value &*

a Chinese tiled roof. Its authenticity therefore has been affected but its present appearance reflects the care which is apparently being bestowed upon it. *Authenticity*

The social value of the Chapel lies in the role it played in the religious activities of the villagers, and latterly as a Catholic training camp. As an early RC mission church it has historical and local interest. *Social Value & Local Interest*

The Chapel has group value with other historic buildings in Pak Sha O. The site has been converted into a training campsite by the Catholic Scout Guild nowadays. The Chapel is common in design together with Holy Family Chapel (聖家小堂) in Chek Keng (赤徑), Immaculate Conception Chapel (聖母無原罪小堂) in Tai Long (大浪) and St. Joseph's Chapel (聖約瑟堂) at Yim Tin Tsai (鹽田仔). *Group Value*

It is not quite clear for what purpose the Chapel is being used for at present, but it seems it has a useful role to play in the training campsite. *Adaptive Re-use*