

Historic Building Appraisal
Building of The Garden Company, Limited (Sham Shui Po)
No. 58 Castle Peak Road, Shum Shui Po, Kowloon

Established in 1926, The Garden Company, Limited (嘉頓有限公司), *Historical Interest* also commonly known as “Garden Bakery” or “Garden”, is one of the oldest and popular bakery, biscuit and confectionery manufacturers that is still in operation in Hong Kong. The company was named “Garden” by its co-founders, Cheung Tze-fong (張子芳) and his cousin Wong Wah-ngok (黃華岳), who discussed, at the Hong Kong Botanical Garden, the plan to open a bakery shop.¹ The existing building at No. 58 Castle Peak Road (the “Building”) was completed in 1960.²

The bakery was firstly established in Sham Shui Po in 1926³ and was later moved to a larger, three-storey store in Apliu Street in the same district in 1931. Biscuits, bread and cakes were produced with locally manufactured machinery. In 1938, operations were transferred to the new factory on Castle Peak Road.⁴ It was a two-storey reinforced concrete structure with brickwork, situated on a plot of land registered as New Kowloon Inland Lot No. 2014 (or “N.K.I.L.2014”) which is part of the site of No. 58 Castle Peak Road at present. It accommodated a Bread Department, Sale Department, Public Restaurant and dining space for company’s staff members on G/F, as well as storage space and offices on 1/F.

In 1948, the two plots of land adjoining N.K.I.L.2014, i.e. Section A and the Remaining Portion of N.K.I.L.2837 abutting the junction of Castle Peak Road, Yen Chow Street and Kowloon Road, were acquired to make way for the expansion of the company. In 1951, an additional factory building comprising three storeys with a mezzanine floor was constructed on the land newly acquired, and the company began to supply bread and biscuits to army, navy and air force of Hong Kong. The purchase of the automated biscuit production plant from the U.K. in 1952 made Garden the first bakery in Hong Kong to implement mechanised production of biscuits; the company had also achieved automated

¹ The Botanical Garden was officially renamed as “Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens” in 1975.

² An occupation permit was issued by the Building Authority in 1960.

³ In 1927, a retail and wholesale branch was opened on Dex Voeux Road Central.

⁴ With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Garden Bakery produced Army Cracker (抗日勞軍餅乾) for soldiers fighting against Japanese invasion. In 1938, Garden became the major supplier of wartime army bakery goods. According to a letter dated 2 November 1956 from the then Navy, Army & Air Force Institutes, Garden provided all bakery products, biscuits and sweets required by all H.M. ships based on or visiting Hong Kong and all shops, clubs and canteens which the Institutes operated in Hong Kong for H.M. Forces. Those products were also consumed by the Forces in Korea, Singapore, Malaya and Ceylon.

production of bread and confectionery by 1954.

On 5 May 1956, the three plots of land mentioned above (N.K.I.L.2014, Section A and the Remaining Portion of N.K.I.L.2837) were surrendered to the Government in exchange for a new Crown Lease for a larger piece of land of N.K.I.L.3745, which covered not only those three plots of land, but also the adjacent plot of N.K.I.L.2837 facing Kowloon Road. This private lot of N.K.I.L.3475 is still the lot on which the Building stands.

Unfortunately, the Building was damaged during the riots in 1956.⁵ However, according to contemporary newspaper reports and a survey report dated 17 October 1956, the Building (the section built in 1951) was not seriously damaged during the riots. It was the production plants of the company that suffered most from the severe damage. The automated bread plant was repaired and resumed operation on 21 October 1956, whereas the automated biscuit and confectionery plants which were so badly damaged took two months for fixing.

The year 1960 marks an important milestone for the development of the Garden Bakery – the redevelopment of the two factory buildings at No. 58 Castle Peak Road into the current Building was completed in order to accommodate further growth of the company. The building on Castle Peak Road (formerly N.K.I.L.2014) was demolished to give way to the construction of a building comprising G/F and seven storeys above, with a mezzanine floor between G/F and 1/F, while adding two storeys to the 1951 structure facing the junction of Castle Peak Road and Kowloon Road (formerly Section A and the Remaining

⁵ The rumours on the reason why the Garden Company was attacked are set out below:

- (i) According to Garden's own account of the incident, two European detectives sought admission to use the telephone in the company. Their presence in the company triggered off the anger of the mob against Garden. After the detectives had used the telephone, they went to the roof where they were seen by the rioters who concluded that the detectives were directing operations against them from that vantage point. Meanwhile, another European detective with bandaged head, accompanied by a few policemen, took shelter among Garden's vehicles while the rioters were stoning them. Soon the rioters even set fire on Garden.
- (ii) The old Garden logo features a star with wheat-ears (嘉禾托星) in red. This logo was seen on the front elevation of the building facing Castle Peak Road. It was rumoured that the logo got on the nerves of the pro-Nationalist (or "pro-Kuomintang") rioters, whose grievance was triggered by the management office of the Li Cheng Uk Resettlement Estate, which removed the flags of the Nationalist Party (rival of the Communist Party) on 10 October 1956, i.e. the "national day" of the Republic of China in Taiwan. In the eyes of the rioters, the red star of the Garden logo resembled the red star of the Communist Party.
- (iii) It was rumoured that Garden manufactured mooncakes for the Communist Party on Mainland China. Cheung Tze-fong, Managing Director of Garden, denied the allegation after the riot.

The riot started at Lei Cheng Uk Resettlement Estate (李鄭屋徙置區) in the Sham Shui Po District on 10 October 1956, and had spread across the District on that night; by 10 p.m., rioters reached the vicinity of the Building. Soon, a mob of about 1,000 persons who emerged from Shek Kip Mei Estate attacked Garden, after hearing that two European detectives had entered the Building. Rioters set fire on Garden's three-storey factory (built in 1951), stoned at it and broke the glass panes on doors and windows and damaged the furniture, machinery, vehicles etc. on 10 and 11 October 1956.⁵ The junction of Castle Peak Road and Tai Po Road (the latter lies in parallel to Kowloon Road) outside the Building was reported to be the centre of disturbances in Sham Shui Po on 11 October 1956.

Portion of N.K.I.L.2837). The works were designed by Chu Pin, a then well-known architect who was amongst the first generation of Chinese architects trained in the USA.

The Building has a trapezoidal footprint defined by the lot characterized by its clean and functional design. Originally, a restaurant and store were housed on G/F, office and packing space on the Mezzanine Floor, manufacturing of biscuits on the 1/F and 2/F, manufacturing of bread on the 3/F, manufacturing of chocolate and packing on the 4/F, offices again on the 5/F to 7/F, and a laboratory on the top roof above 7/F. The basement was mainly used as machine room and cold storage.

*Architectural
Merit*

Chu Pin (朱彬) (1896-1971) from Kwan, Chu & Yang Architects and Engineers (基泰工程司) was the architect who contributed significantly to the design of the Building.⁶ He obtained his Master of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, U.S., in 1923 and was one of the first-generation U.S.-trained Chinese architects who were famous for designing Chinese-style buildings constructing of reinforced concrete and other modern materials. Then he joined Kwan Sung-sing (關頌聲) and Yang Ting-pao (楊廷寶) to establish Kwan, Chu & Yang Architects and Engineers in Tianjin (天津). Later, Chu Pin migrated to Hong Kong and became an Authorized Architect in 1950 as well as the director of the firm's Hong Kong branch. The Building on Castle Peak Road is an example of Chu Pin's works in Hong Kong, with little ornamentation and functional approach of design.⁷

Architecturally, the front elevation facing Castle Peak Road is the most attractive and well-known facade which could be perceived from a distance down Yen Chow Street. The use of sun-shading devices is both a functional concern as well as an international trend popularized by Le Corbusier in the 1950s. The elevation can be divided into three compositions. The street level which is opened to the public is decorated with large plate-glass show windows and marble finish to give a welcoming impression; the lower building mass intended for factory workshop is featured with sun-shading devices to protect the windows from direct sunlight. Lastly, the topmost office levels are surrounded by horizontal window bands extending the whole length of the facade to allow an unobstructed view.

⁶ Chu Pin was the Authorized Person of the new structure with a clock tower and the two floors added to the 1951 section of the Building.

⁷ Man Yee Building (萬宜大廈) (1957) (demolished) in Central and Dragon Garden (龍圍) (Grade 2) in Tsing Lung Tau are other examples of Chu Pin's works.

The southeast elevation facing the junction of Yen Chow Street, Castle Peak Road and Kowloon Road, with six even bays, features the clock tower which can be perceived from afar. It is also the lift tower and the highest point of the Building. The clock's design with contrasting black hour markings and hands sticking out from the white face allows it to be read easily even from a long distance. The elevation is like having a frame with the projecting fins around the facade, with a horizontal emphasis with the use of the projecting canopies. The word "Garden" has existed on both sides of the clock tower since the completion of the Building.

The northeast elevation facing Kowloon Road has a design with a rather rich composition that comprises a vertical core, horizontal strip of windows and projecting eaves. The mass at the higher levels shows a gradual recess to the roof.

In 1966, a group of 20 window openings on the front elevation facing Castle Peak Road were bricked up to provide ample surface area for the installation of Garden's brand name in Chinese "嘉頓" in red mosaic tile. The works were designed and executed by James H. Kinoshita from Palmer and Turner Hong Kong Architects and Civil Engineers.⁸ In 2000, the two Chinese characters "嘉頓" were replaced with the "bakery chef" logo we see today.

Internally, the Building used to have an open plan design with reinforced concrete columns supporting the structure. In order to overcome the trapezoidal shape of the floor plan, the architect arranged the workshop area to the side of Castle Peak Road with rectangular setting, while the lavatories and utility area are concentrated on the sharp corner to the north. The spatial arrangements also considered the circulation of people and commodities. The lift lobby leading to the offices and entrance to the restaurant and gallery can still be accessed from Castle Peak Road, where the pedestrian traffic is the busiest. The car park and service lift are positioned at the rear side on Kowloon Road which has lower vehicular traffic. The original spatial design reflects a functional consideration for the operation of a composite building with restaurant, office and factory uses. To date, experimental baking is conducted on 3/F and 4/F until a recipe for mass production at the company's production plants in other places can be achieved. The Building is regarded by the company as its head office.

⁸ James H. Kinoshita obtained his Master of Architecture from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He joined Palmer and Turner in Hong Kong in 1961 and later became one of the directors of the firm. Within his 28 years of practice with the firm, Kinoshita designed, for example, the AIA Building (1967) at No. 1 Stubbs Road in Wan Chai, Jardine House (1972) at No.1 Connaught Place in Central and the campus of Hong Kong Polytechnic University (1976) in Hung Hom. His works had contributed to the city's skyline with a modernist style since the 1960s.

The Building, a reinforced concrete structure with column, beam and slab construction with flat roofs, is a fine example of contemporary factory building. Its structure has remained largely intact since its completion in 1960. The projected facade stands out from other surrounding buildings to publicize Garden's corporate image. The clock tower is considered the most prominent element of the Building as it is most recognised by the people in the district and a rare feature of industrial or commercial buildings.⁹ The CLP Power Hong Kong Administration Building in Argyle Street is another example of commercial building with clock tower retained in Hong Kong.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The Western and Chinese sections of Garden's restaurant were opened in the Building in 1959 and 1961 respectively. The experience of dining at the restaurants is still fondly remembered by the local residents, who recalled that men would be dressed in smart wear and ladies in cheongsam when dining there. Besides, it donated bread and biscuits to those in need, such as orphans and victims of natural disasters.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

Today, more than 90 years since 1926, "Garden" is still a well-known brand of bread, biscuits and confectionery for Hong Kong. Life Bread (生命麵包) is one of the most well-known products of the company.¹⁰ To make way for further expansion, a site was acquired in Sham Tseng in 1962 to set up new production plants – the new biscuit plant came into operation in 1963, the confectionery plant in 1969 and a modernized plant for "Life Bread" in 1970. However, the Building on Castle Peak Road is still the head office of the company, with some bread and confectionery bakery, as well as a Western restaurant and retail shop in operation.

The clock tower is the most recognised and familiar feature of the Building. It is one-sided with the clock facing east, in the direction of the former Sham Shui Po Ferry Pier as well as a low-rise neighbourhood including Shek Kip Mei Estate. Taking advantage of the corner site at a traffic junction and the relatively high position of the clock,¹¹ the Building was one of the highest structures in the district and eventually became a distinctive landmark and popular meeting point in the district. Besides, a hill overlooking the Building is locally referred to as "Garden Hill" (嘉頓山), in view of its proximity to the Building.

⁹ The clock tower is still the most prominent feature of the Building, although the original wind-up system was replaced by an electronic one in the 1990s.

¹⁰ Life Bread, since its introduction in 1960, has been using waxed paper for packaging so as to keep it constantly fresh and hygienic. Waxed-paper packaging was first introduced to Hong Kong by Garden.

¹¹ The clock tower was an important time indicator to the nearby residents.

The Building is in proximity to other historic buildings, such as Nos. 51 *Group Value* and 53 Yen Chow Street (Grade 1), Sham Shui Po Police Station (Grade 2), North Kowloon Magistracy (Grade 2), Mei Ho House (Grade 2), Precious Blood Convent (Grade 2) and Precious Blood Hospital (Caritas) (Grade 3).

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