

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Tai Tam Byewash Reservoir**  
**Ruins of Senior Staff Bungalow**  
**Tai Tam Reservoir Road, Tai Tam, Hong Kong**

**Tai Tam Reservoir** (大潭水塘) is the second oldest and the largest reservoir built on Hong Kong Island. It comprises a group of reservoirs and waterworks including Tai Tam Upper Reservoir (1888), Tai Tam Byewash Reservoir (1904), Tai Tam Intermediate Reservoir (1907) and Tai Tam Tuk Reservoir (1917). **Tai Tam Byewash Reservoir** (大潭副水塘) was the second of four reservoirs to be built in the upper reaches of Tai Tam Valley. It was built to collect the overflow from Tai Tam Upper Reservoir. *Historical Interest*

Tai Tam Reservoir was the backbone for the Island's water supply. With the improved water provision, the urban areas gradually expanded. From the engineering perspective, the techniques used to build the second reservoir were more advanced than that of Pokfulam Reservoir, which relied completely on the simple principle of water running down from a higher place to a lower one. The Tai Tam project, however, did not rely as much on gravity flow. Gravity flow only accounted for 20% of the total capacity of the ultimate fresh water supply.

The **Dam** (水壩) is approximately 50 metres long of concrete gravity construction faced with masonry with an overflow or spillway for most of its length. There is a wing wall of coursed rubble on either side of the dam to support the embankments with flights of steps along the parapets. There is a tide gauge with access steps and safety railings at the west end of the dam. A subsidiary masonry dam is situated to the north of the spillway dam connected to it by a masonry faced earth embankment. *Architectural Merit*

The **Valve House** (水掣房) is situated midway along the subsidiary dam. Both the dam and the valve house are constructed of coursed masonry with tubular steel railings along the top of the dam. The valve house is rectangular in plan with rock-faced rusticated granite walls, a flat roof, entrance door and window of plain design.

The **Workmen's Quarters** (工人宿舍) and the ruins of the **Senior Staff Bungalow** (高級職員宿舍遺址) are situated on the summit of a small hill to the south-west of the dam. The ruins of the bungalow simply consist of some steps, the granite foundations and the ground floor slab. The structural walls have been demolished and pieces left scattered around the ruins. The workmen's quarters consist of a long narrow rectangular single-storey block with red brick walls and a pitched roof of Chinese tiles. A brick privy is built on to the south end. Door and window openings have simple concrete lintels. The building is uninhabited, derelict and falling into ruin from lack of care and

maintenance.

The dams are **Utilitarian** civil engineering structures with the valve house exhibiting some **Italianate Renaissance** influence. The workmen's quarters display some **Arts and Crafts** influence. They are interesting examples of early 20<sup>th</sup> century civil engineering and architecture and should be regarded as having considerable built heritage value. All the structures appear to have retained their original authentic appearance.

*Rarity,  
Built Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity*

The social value of the reservoir and its structures lies in the role they have played in the development of public water supply in Hong Kong. The reservoirs are now part of the rural landscape of the Tai Tam area of much interest to visitors.

*Social Value  
& Local  
Interest*

The question of adaptive re-use does not really arise for the dam and valve house which can hardly be put to any other use. The old workmen's quarters could perhaps be restored and converted into a visitors' information centre.

*Adaptive  
Re-use*