

Historic Building Appraisal

Tai Po Lookout

No. 11 Lookout Link, Tai Po Kau, Tai Po, N.T.

Tai Po Lookout (大埔瞭望台) at Lookout Link (瞭望里) is situated on the former Tai Po Inland Lot No. 5. In 1904, this piece of land was sold to Lawrence Gibbs (傑斯), a British civil engineer who worked with the Public Works Department before joining the firm of Denison, Ram & Gibbs (丹尼遜·雷安及傑斯建築公司) in 1900. The Lookout was designed and built by Lawrence Gibbs in the early 1900s and was used as his residence afterwards. It is believed that he chose to build his house on the top of a hill in Tai Po regardless of the poor transport at that time, probably because of the beautiful views there. In order to get water supply from the hillside, a water tower was fitted into the building . *Historical Interest*

In 1929, the Lookout was sold to a person called Herbert Austin Rogers. In August 1933, another person called Michael Howard Turner became the leaseholder of the house; three months later i.e. November 1933, the house was sold to John Alexander Fraser, a judge in Hong Kong. Fraser was interned in the Stanley camp during the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945). He died in the camp, and was awarded the George Cross after his death for his courage and braveness. During the Japanese Occupation, the Lookout was used by the Japanese as a torture chamber.

In December 1947, the land lot and the house thereon were sold to the government. Since then it was used as the living quarters of government officials such as the Tai Po District Officers and the head of the Police Secret Service until 1996 when it was leased to the Society for AIDs Care (愛滋寧養服務協會) as a residential centre for AIDS patients. In 2000 the Lookout was reverted to its original purpose as a private residence.

The main building of the Lookout is a colonial style one-storey flat-roofed building with an arched colonnaded verandah, a projecting portico (probably built at a later date) and a cylindrical watchtower which probably gives the building its name. The watchtower also serves as a water tower. The walls are painted stark white and are raised off a low random rubble plinth. A detached block of servants quarters, another one-storey flat-roofed building, is set at an angle to the side of the building. The buildings are situated on the top of a small hill served by a driveway off Lookout Link. Internally, the house is fairly symmetrical and according to the original floor plan, has had a number of internal walls and partitions removed. *Architectural Merit*

As an early colonial residence it has a certain charm, and is a rare piece of built heritage in this part of the New Territories. As the residence of successive District Officers for many years the Lookout is of local interest. Apart from some infill windows to the rear verandah, no significant alteration which may have diminished the authenticity of the exterior of Lookout can be identified, while internally a number of walls and partitions have been removed. Since it is situated at a remote location on the top of a hill and mainly serves as a private residence, it may have limited social value to members of the public. Despite that, having high built heritage value with an appealing appearance, the Lookout attracts the attention of historians, architects, tourists and the social and mass media.

Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value & Authenticity

Social Value & Local
Interest

There are no other graded historic buildings near Tai Po Lookout.

Group Value