

Historic Building Appraisal

CLP Power Hong Kong Limited Administrative Building No. 147 Argyle Street, Kowloon

The CLP Power Hong Kong Limited Administrative Building,¹ built between 1938 and 1940 at the intersection of Argyle Street and Waterloo Road, was originally referred to the existing structure known as the clock tower building today, with Messrs. Davies, Brooke & Gran as the architect. It was the headquarters of the CLP Power Hong Kong Limited (中華電力有限公司, CLP), one of the two electric companies in Hong Kong.

*Historical
Interest*

CLP was initially established in Guangzhou (廣州) in 1901. Later, it moved to Hong Kong and set up its first power station in Chatham Road, Kowloon, which went into commercial operation in April 1903. The notable Kadoorie's family has been closely associated with CLP from 1928, when Sir Elly Kadoorie (1865 – 1944) bought shares in the company and was later appointed as a member of its Board of Directors. His son, Lawrence Kadoorie (1899 – 1993) (or Lord Kadoorie from 1981) became one of the Directors in 1930 and then Chairman in 1935, 1939 and from 1955 until he passed away in 1993.

To cater for the increasing demand for electricity in Kowloon and the New Territories, CLP decided to construct a new building to centralize the company's administration. Construction of the Administrative Building at the present site, raised up on a landscaped embankment retained by a masonry wall, thus commenced in 1938-39 and finished in 1940. Large general offices were provided on ground and first floors for the Cashier's and Accountant's staff, while the General Manager's and Assistant's offices were on the second floor. In addition to offices on the ground floor, there was a large showroom where electrical appliances were displayed. During the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945), the building was taken over by the Japanese, without having encountered looting and sabotage. The company, according to rates records, resumed its use of the Administrative Building between 1947 and 1948.

Having said that, the Administrative Building was originally only composed of the existing clock tower building. Two residential blocks, which formed part of the Garden City development of the Hong Kong Engineering & Construction Co. Ltd., another company of the Kadoorie's family, were also built to the west of the

¹ The Building is also known as China Light and Power Company Limited Head Office (中華電力有限公司總部).

Administrative Building around the same period. Those residential blocks, according to old photos and rates records, were named St. George's Mansions and owned by the Hong Kong Engineering & Construction Co. Ltd. Later, the residential blocks had been respectively owned by CLP since 1959 and 1968, and were then converted to office use and connected to the Administrative Building around 1961 and 1972.

The three connected blocks, i.e. the original Administrative Building with a clock tower and the two former residential blocks, shared some modernist features. To date, only the building structure of the clock tower, which is of the highest architectural value as it carries the most significant character-defining element of the then three connected blocks, still exists. The exterior is finished with tapestry glazed facing tiles. The roof is flat with projecting bulkheads. The front elevation is strictly geometric with horizontal bands of windows unified by continuous projecting cills and hoods. Staircases are situated in vertical cores which are set back in recesses from the main facade.

***Architectural
Merit***

The existing Administrative Building remains a rare piece of built heritage. In particular the clock tower is of the highest heritage value and carries the most significant character-defining elements of the building. Although it has been altered and refurbished internally its authenticity has not been substantially diminished.

***Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

The construction of the Administrative Building marked an important stage in the development of CLP and also the development of electricity supply in Kowloon and the New Territories. The building with its prominent location and distinctive appearance (with the clock tower) is an attractive landmark for the neighbourhood. In 1953, the building was decorated and lighted at night to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. In 2001, it was decorated for the CLP's centenary lighting ceremony that was performed by the company's chairman, Mr Michael Kadoorie (or Sir Michael Kadoorie from 2003). For the same occasion, a souvenir ticket set of the Mass Transit Railway was issued with the theme of the past and present of the company's headquarters.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

The Administrative Building and the historic buildings nearby, such as the Maryknoll Convent School (Declared Monument), Diocesan Boys' School (Grade 2), St. Teresa's Church (Grade 1) and the historic buildings within the Kowloon Hospital (Grade 2/ Grade 3), witness the development of the area in the early 20th century.

Group Value

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