

## Historic Building Appraisal

### Dragon Garden

Nos. 32-42 Castle Peak Road, Tsing Lung Tau, Tsuen Wan

Dragon Garden (龍圍) comprises a stretch of land of some 300,000 square feet. It is a private garden that comprises a complex of buildings of varied types – including pavilions and ponds – which have been constructed in the traditional Chinese architectural style. The Garden commenced construction in the 1950s and was developed into the present form under the auspices of late tycoon **Mr. Lee Iu-cheung** (李耀祥) (1896-1976), who was a successful businessman and community leader in influential positions. *Historical Interest*

Mr. Lee Iu-cheung had a distinguished record of public services that earned him a J.P. (1941), a M.B.E. (1949), an O.B.E. (1952), and a C.B.E. (1958). He joined the Kwong Wah Hospital Board of Directors (廣華醫院) in 1926, being member of the Po Leung Kuk Committee (保良局) in 1929-30 and chairman of the Tung Wah Hospital Board of Directors (東華醫院) in 1940. These are only some of the many well-known offices he had held, and he joined many other public services which are too numerous to mention.

It is evident that Dragon Garden was designed by **Mr. Chu Pin** (朱彬) (1896-1971), who was a fellow classmate of Mr. Liang Ssu-cheng (梁思成) in the University of Pennsylvania, USA, where he graduated with the degree of Master in Architecture in 1923. Mr. CHU was the key partner of Kwan Chu Yang, Architects & Engineers (基泰工程司), a famous architectural firm in China responsible for a number of commissioned government projects such as the Museum of Archives in Nanjing.

The **Chinese Garden** constitutes the formal entrance to the Golden Wedding Jubilee Building. It is bounded on one side by a series of interconnected shallow water ponds in which have been planted with different varieties of water lilies. In season the ponds are a living mosaic of yellow, white, blue, purple, and pink floating blossoms. The outstanding feature of this section is the Rock Garden, which measures approximately 12 feet in height, 50 feet in length, and 25 feet across at its widest part. The Rock Garden represents an ancient Chinese art, and it is believed that until recent times it could be found only in China. It is built of individual rocks so arranged as to represent a typical Chinese mountain landscape with peaks, streams, and waterfalls. The limestone rocks used for construction were especially imported from China for this purpose. When assembled the rocks simulate a miniature mountain that has been naturally eroded through the ages. The effect is that of a three-dimensional Chinese mural. This effect is further heightened by extensive decoration with pagodas, huts, figurines, and shrubbery, all to the appropriate scale. *Architectural Merits:*

The **Fish Pond** originally measured 300 feet long by 50 feet wide. On the side of this pond is a small pavilion of old Chinese design. It has the shape of a fan and is tiled entirely with glazed coloured mosaics in Chinese designs. There is a bridge leading from this pavilion to a small island where a number of willow trees have been planted. There is a fountain in the centre of the pond. There is also a garden boat in the form of a typical Chinese junk. The size of the pond has been decreased because of the Castle Peak Road widening works.

The **Pavilion of Leisure** is at the front of the Golden Wedding Jubilee Building. This octagonal building has been built after the style of pavilions of the Qing Dynasty. Two commemorative planks, presented by social celebrities Sir Shouson CHOU (周壽臣) and Sir LO Man-kam (羅文錦) to the garden founder, are hung above the entrance gate and the interior of the building.

The **Golden Wedding Jubilee Building** was built in 1967 to commemorate the Golden Wedding Jubilee of the garden founder. It has a roof of a special ochre colour called “Suen Wong” in Chinese. It is a dark golden hue. The steps leading to the front entrance have a centre panel which is customarily engraved with dragons and which is about 50 per cent of the width of the Building. The dragons have been created from multi-coloured plasters mixed with glass chips. The living room is paneled with blackwood, and the authentic furniture items are also of blackwood that is of great durability and of a hardness second only to ebony. The entire outside walls of the Building are tiled, and the roof is also tiled with up-curved eaves and stylistic patterns of legendary animals meant to guard off evil spirits. The Building has several features, such as imitation ashlar walls, colourful frieze panels, double eaved hip-and-gable rolling pitched roof and ornamental balustrading to terrace.

The **Glass Mosaic Dragon** is half above and half submerged in water. The part of the body above water is 50 feet long. The head of the dragon is tiled with many different coloured mosaics, and the body is covered entirely with scales out from a number of bottles.

The **Rest Area** is for resting before proceeding to the Mausoleum. In the centre there is a Memorial Column with a small lion on top and dragon carved around the pillar, a miniature replica of the Memorial Column outside the Tian An Men (Gate of Heavenly Peace) in Beijing. Surrounding the Column are two storks, an incense burner, and two tortoises that signify longevity. This area is connected to the Mausoleum by a staircase of Chinese design.

The **Mausoleum** occupies an area of about 10,000 square feet and has six structures on it. The **Front Portal** forms an entrance gate into the Mausoleum. It has the customary Chinese design of four columns and a plaque, and a green-tiled roof with up-turned eaves. The characters on the plaque are reminders to respect and remember one's forefathers. The **Tomb**, which was intended to serve as the final resting place of the founder and his wife but has

been removed, previously had a round polished granite base with a dome-shaped tile roof. The tomb site is now a circular patch of turf. The omega-shaped stone-faced retaining walls at the rear still remain. The vertical face of the lower wall is painted blue with a decorative motif in the centre. The **Memorial Hall** is an ornate building with vermilion columns, colourful frieze panels and ornamental windows with a green-tiled hip-and-gable roof. Internally, the Hall is equally ornate and was where the family portraits (now has been removed) were kept. The **Tablet Pavilion** is built in a similar colourful traditional Chinese style with a pyramidal roof, golden pommel finial and so-called “temple dogs” on the ridges. It was erected to house a tablet dated 1971 on which were carved the deeds of the founder’s life. Nowadays, the Pavilion remains but the tablet has been removed. The two **Rest Pavilions** were erected before 1972. They are of simple circular design, with vermilion columns, colourful frieze panels, domed roofs, and ball finials. For durability and ease of maintenance, the buildings are covered with coloured tile designs instead of being painted. The entire floor of the Mausoleum is also covered with granite slabs and pebbles for permanence.

The **Pavilion of Springs** is a peaceful grotto far from any noise except the sound of running water from the spring. The **Swimming Pool** measures 75 feet by 35 feet. Built in the early post-Second World times, the swimming pool was one of the earliest erections of the garden. Previously, the garden founder had opened the swimming pool for the use of students, including those from the Diocesan Boys’ School. At the back of the swimming pool there is a pond with various types of water lilies. At one end there is a large statue of Goddess of Mercy with her two attendants.

On the hillside above the changing pavilion adjoining the swimming pool, there is a large mosaic picture showing a fairy riding on a phoenix. On the side panels Chinese **Bone Characters** are seen, so called because they were original found carved on buffalo bones. These characters were being used some 3,500 years ago before the invention of pen and ink. These bone characters were discovered about 1920 through accidental excavation in Central China.

The **Song Pavilion**, built after the style of architecture of the Song Dynasty (A.D. 960-1276), is high up on the side of the hill facing the sea. It houses statues of two legendary warriors in typical old Chinese armour, who are said to be the best spiritual house guards, as they devour evil spirits. It is open sided, octagonal, with ornamental beams, columns and brackets in white stonework, set on a crenellated stone retaining wall, flanked by a colourful mural and calligraphy panels.

The **Hard Landscaping** of the garden consists of ornamental staircases of white stone in traditional Chinese style, stone-built bridges, steps, retaining walls and rubble walls, and paths and terraces paved with stone flags. The **Soft**

**Landscaping** consists of hundreds of species of trees, shrubs, and plants all having been selected for variety's sake, and strategically sited to enhance the topography and natural landscape.

Dragon Garden is a rare surviving example of a private garden in Hong Kong. It has a heritage value comparable to the existing Lou Lim Ioc Garden (盧廉若公園) in Macau, and the Tiger Palm Garden in Hong Kong which was demolished and redeveloped a few years ago.

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

Despite the high-rise development in its immediate surroundings, Dragon Garden commands a scenic environment and a nice waterfront sea view. The adverse impact on the garden's pond arising from the widening of Castle Peak Road is only partial.

The Garden comprises buildings and structures of varied types, in addition to many different species of trees and shrubs which form an integral component of a significant architectural and historic garden complex.

At some points of time, Mr. Lee Iu-cheung opened Dragon Garden for public viewing and enjoyment. He shared Dr. Sun Yat-sen's vision that the world should be shared by all. The garden features Dr Sun's calligraphy "*tin xia wei gong*" (天下為公, literally, "what is under heaven is for all"). He also threw open the swimming pool of the garden to the benefit of school students.

*Social Value  
& Local  
Interest*

Also, the Garden was used as the filming of movies including the glittering spy classic "The James Bond 007: The Man With The Golden Gun", starred by Roger Moore in 1974.

The question of adaptive re-use is being explored by the owner and those with a stake in the garden.

*Adaptive  
Re-use*