

Historic Building Appraisal
Lady Ho Tung Welfare Centre –Main Block & Bungalow
No. 38 Kwu Tung Road, Sheung Shui, New Territories

Construction work on Lady Ho Welfare Centre (何東夫人醫局) took place from 1932 to 1933. The centre was officially opened in 1934. It was named after **Lady Ho Tung**, whose original name was Mak Sau-ying (麥秀英, 1865-1944), the first wife of **Sir Robert Ho Tung** (何東爵士, 1862-1955). Thus, there is a name board with the inscription “Lady Ho Tung Welfare Centre” (何東麥夫人醫局) over the entrance of the welfare centre. *Historical Interest*

Lady Ho Tung Welfare Centre was constructed by the Government with donations from Sir Robert Ho Tung for use as a welfare centre for residents in nearby areas such as Kam Tsin Tsuen (金錢村), Kwu Tung and Ho Sheung Heung (河上鄉). A number of elderly patients had used the clinic’s services for a long time and some of them were born in Lady Ho Tung Welfare Centre.

It was one of the first rural clinics established in the New Territories and served the residents of the entire district. From 1934 to 1973, it served mainly as a maternity centre, and also as a sanatorium for Indian soldiers. In 1948, an entrance hall was partitioned off in order to provide a specialized hospitalized ward for sick members of the Police Force stationed in the New Territories. It had been a general out-patient clinic providing medical treatment and health education activities until 2005.

The welfare centre comprises two single-storey buildings in a mixed architectural style combining Western **Arts and Crafts** features with local vernacular features such as the Chinese tiled roofs and curling end ridges. Such a style may be called **Chinese Eclectic**. Arts and Crafts features include the rendered and painted walls and plinth, “cottagy” type doors and windows, red-brick and quarry tile trim to windows and chimney stacks, and prominent rainwater pipes with swan’s neck bends connected to the gutter outlets. Both buildings are symmetrically planned. The clinic has a colonnaded verandah and the bungalow annex has an enclosed courtyard. *Architectural Merit*

Arts and Crafts style buildings are quite rare in Hong Kong and these particular buildings not only have historical value but also built heritage value. They are well maintained and fortunately do not appear to have undergone alterations thereby retaining their authenticity. *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

The welfare centre has served as a maternity centre, and also as a sanatorium for Indian soldiers and a specialized hospital ward for sick members of the Police Force. It has been a general out-patients clinic providing medical *Social Value & Local Interest*

treatment and health education activities under the management of the Shek Wu Hui Jockey Club Clinic. Its physical setting is very pleasant with shady trees, paved areas and sitting-out benches provided. Because of its history, social value and unusual architectural style it has local interest.

Nearby, one can find the Manor House (將軍府) in Kwu Tung (古洞). The welfare centre also has group value with Kam Tsin Village Ho Tung School (金錢村何東學校, established in 1955) nearby. Kam Tsin Village is a historic area containing Hau Mei Fung Ancestral Hall (味峰侯公祠), Hau Chung Fuk Tong Communal Hall (侯宗福堂神廳) and Earth God Shrine of Kam Tsin Tsuen (金錢村土地神龕). **Group Value**

The welfare centre was vacated since 2005. With its enclosed site, open garden and reasonable building condition, no doubt alternative uses compatible with the historical merits of the buildings could be found. **Adaptive Re-use**