Historic Building Appraisal

West Point Filters
Bungalow & Workmen's Quarters
No. 50 Kotewall Road, Mid-levels, Hong Kong

Historical Interest

Water supply on Hong Kong Island relied solely on wells and streams prior to 1860. The first ever reservoir in the territory was completed in 1863 in Pokfulam to meet the needs in the City of Victoria. In the following decades, to cater for the ever increasing demands, much larger reservoirs and more complex water supplies systems, including ancillary pumping stations, distribution mains to convey augmented water supply to higher levels, were constructed. In order to uphold the quality of water, the Government gradually filtered all reservoir water.

The West Point Filters (西環濾水廠), originally named Pok Fu Lam Filter Beds, were built in the 1890s. To work with West Point Service Reservoir (built in 1907) to enhance water supply in the Mid-Levels area above Conduit Road (干德道), the site underwent additional works to improve the existing four filter beds and the construction of two more filter beds (a total of six filter beds then) and a covered service reservoir. Three staff quarters, which include two workmen's quarters and a bungalow, were built between 1890 and 1904 to accommodate watchmen and overseers respectively.

A renovation programme took place in 1996 to turn the West Point Filters into a service reservoir in order to meet the demand arising from the mid-levels and high-levels. This new service reservoir, renamed as Kotewall Road Fresh Water Service Reservoir (旭龢道淡水配水庫), started operation since 1997. However, the renovation programme did not cover the bungalow and the two workmen's quarters of the West Point Filters. In 2008, the three buildings were renovated and converted into the Lung Fu Shan Environmental Education Centre (龍虎山環境教育中心).

Architectural Merit

The bungalow (平房) is a single-storey building raised off the ground on a rubble wall plinth. The main part of the roof is pitched with an ornamental chimney stack projecting from it. The roofs over the entrance porch, verandah and bedroom are flat. The architectural style is Arts and Crafts with Neo-classical features. The walls are partly painted brickwork and partly painted rough-cast rendering. The open verandah at the side is arched and balustraded in the classical manner. The entrance porch is reached by a short flight of steps. The windows are transomed wooden casements. Bostwick folding sliding lattice security gates are shown fitted to external doors.

Internally the accommodation consists of two L-shaped living rooms, a bedroom and a bathroom.

The two workmen's quarters (職員宿舍) are similar in architectural design and construction. They are both single storey pitched roof buildings with red brick walls and regularly spaced steel framed windows and wooden battened doors. Chinese tiles cover the roofs. There are no architectural features of note. The style is Utilitarian.

The Bungalow is a rare example of Edwardian Arts and Crafts style, but unfortunately its authentic appearance has been diminished by painting over the brickwork and stonework. The Workmen's Quarters are not particularly rare. All three buildings have built heritage value however. ***Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity***

As government staff quarters, the buildings had limited social value, but they are now being used as an education centre so that they have become better known by the public. The bungalow houses an exhibition hall, while the two workmen's quarters are respectively used for organising activities (such as workshops and seminars) and as an office for the centre's staff. ***Social Value & Local Interest***

The West Point Filters are quite close to the Elliot Pumping Station and Filters (西區抽水站及濾水廠) (Grades 2 and 3), the Stone House (石寓) (Grade 3) and the University of Hong Kong where declared monuments, namely Main Building (香港大學本部大樓), Hung Hing Ying Building (孔慶熒樓) and Tang Chi Ngong Building (鄧志昂樓), May Hall (梅堂) and Eliot Hall (儀禮堂) stand. Other buildings in the surroundings include the declared monument, King's College (皇仁書院), and Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong Kau Yan Church (救恩堂) (Grade 1). ***Group Value***