

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Old Lunatic Asylum Chinese Block - Main Building & Staff Quarters**  
**Eastern Street, Sai Ying Pun, Hong Kong**

The building now known as Lunatic Asylum Chinese Block (舊華人精神病院) was first opened in **1891** as a lunatic asylum for Chinese patients. The **main building** is a two-storey red brick and granite structure which originally could house only 16 patients since at that time most Chinese patients would go to Guangzhou (廣州) for treatment. A one-storey medical staff quarters was built next to it in simple rectangular plan.

*Historical  
Interest*

After the opening of the Castle Peak Mental Hospital in the 1960s, the Lunatic Asylum Chinese Block was used as the Leprosy Clinic on the ground floor and the Emergency Cholera Hospital for Hong Kong Island on the first floor, until the Methadone Treatment Programme commenced in 1972. The site is now the Eastern Street Methadone Treatment Clinic.

It is a Neo-Georgian building originally used to be for mental illness treatment that contributed to the social development in early colonial period. The verandah, the brickwork and granite constructions seem to be the major architectural or physical significance of the building.

*Architectural  
Merit*

The **Main Building** is a rather shabby three-storey red-brick block built on a raised platform or terrace supported by a random rubble retaining wall. The main elevation facing Eastern Street is composed of three arcaded verandahs formed of semi-circular and segmental three-ring rough brick arches with centre keystones. Some of the arched openings are enclosed with built-in windows but most are filled with iron security grilles. Architectural features are few being confined to granite keystones, imposts, plain band courses and a profiled projecting cornice at second floor level. The rear and end elevations have simple regular fenestration in the **Neo-Georgian** style.

A single storey building annex at the rear serves as **Staff Quarters**. Both the main building and the annex are roofed with Chinese tiles.

Although the interior of the building has been altered over the years during renovations and changes in use, the exterior appears to have been little altered and therefore retains its authenticity. The use of red bricks and adoption of open verandahs was quite common in the old days but it is quite rare nowadays to find a building of this style and vintage. It therefore has built heritage value and deserves a higher standard of care and maintenance.

*Rarity,  
Built Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity*

As the oldest remaining block of the three original blocks, the Old Lunatic Asylum Chinese Block has considerable social value and it is still in use for medical purposes today. Being on the corner of High Street and Eastern Street on an elevated site it is well known in the area.

***Social Value  
& Local  
Interest***

The Old Lunatic Asylum Chinese Block has group value with the façade verandah of the Old Mental Hospital preserved on the opposite site. The aged and Chinese populated district of Sai Ying Pun, the site of the Diocesan Home and Orphanage (now Diocesan Boy's School) in Eastern Street, and the neighbouring King George V Park are complimentary to the heritage buildings.

***Group Value***

With its walled front garden and useful rear annex, no doubt alternative uses could be found for the building such as a restaurant or kindergarten.

***Adaptive  
Re-use***