

Historic Building Appraisal
St. John Ambulance Brigade Hong Kong Island Area Headquarters
No. 2 Tai Hang Road, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong

St. John Ambulance Brigade Hong Kong Island Area Headquarters (聖約翰救傷隊香港分區總部) was built in 1935 with funds donated by **Chau Man-chi** to commemorate his father **Chau Yue-teng**. The site was granted by the government in 1933, and the building was formally opened by Sir William Peel on 9 May 1935. The building was used by the Japanese military police during the Japanese Occupation. After the Liberation St. John Ambulance Brigade resumed its services. In 1958 when a new headquarters building was built in MacDonnell Road, the Tai Hang Road building became the Hong Kong Island Area Command Headquarters of the Brigade. *Historical Interest*

The Hong Kong St. John Ambulance is a famous charitable organization with long history, providing First Aid and ambulance services in emergency and courses of instructions on first aid and home nursing for the general public. It has been serving the community since 1884. Some famous figures have been the directors of the Brigade; for example, Sir Robert Ho Tung (何東) and Sir Kenneth Ping-fan Fung (馮秉芬). Mr. Ho Kom-tong (何甘棠, younger brother of Sir Robert Ho Tung) was one of the original promoters of the Brigade. Before the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong in 1941, the Brigade was approached by the Military Authorities to supply volunteers to be attached to the Royal Army Medical Corps as stretcher-bearers, making up the deficiency of military personnel. During the War, more than 100 officers and members of the Brigade were sacrificed while they were performing duties.

This four-storey **Neo-Classical** building stands on a terraced site with a classic **Italianate Renaissance** style balustraded double flight staircase and terrace. The retaining walls are built of coursed granite with horizontal concrete beams. There is an arched recess in the retaining wall facing the entrance in which is set the inscribed foundation stone. The front façade of the building is stuccoed and painted with rows of regularly spaced windows at each floor level. A cantilevered typhoon canopy protects the ground floor windows. There is a moulded cornice and central triangular pediment at third floor level, and another cornice with a stepped **Art Deco** style pediment at parapet level. There are three flag poles mounted on the flat roof behind the parapet. The east end of the building has a semi-circular portico with Tuscan Order columns and granite steps. The end elevations are rather plain and the rear elevation is rather cluttered with split type air conditioners, cat ladders, and surface mounted building services conduit and plumbing. Internally there are some original Art Deco style doors and a very fine Art Deco style staircase featuring an *Architectural Merit*

ornamental ironwork balustrade with a heavy moulded hardwood handrail.

The building is well-maintained and retains much of its original authenticity although some minor alterations and additions have been made. It is a rare and valuable piece of built heritage. Standing tall and imposing on an elevated site, the building displays elegance and grandeur in the classical manner.

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

The social value of the building lies in the role it has played as Headquarters of St. John Ambulance Brigade for over 70 years. It is a well known building and a landmark in the area. The Headquarters is overlooking the harbour and backed up by a mountain of greenery, which blends well with the historical and heritage quality of the building itself.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

It has group value with other historic buildings in Causeway Bay, such as Shing Kwong Church (聖光堂) in Eastern Hospital Road and Haw Par Mansion (虎豹別墅) in Tai Hang Road.

Group Value

The building has proved to be fairly adaptable as the top floor was once used as a spacious apartment, and other floors used for classrooms, offices, messes and an assembly hall.

***Adaptive
Re-use***