

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Fortifications at Devil's Peak,**  
**Sai Kung, N.T.**

When the New Territories were leased to Britain in 1898, the British military chose Devil's Peak (魔鬼山) on the northern side of Lyemun Strait as a site for a defensive position. In **1914-1915**, two batteries were constructed there with four gun emplacements. The peak was selected as the site for the headquarters of Eastern Fire Command, and a redoubt was subsequently constructed. The battery on the upper level, named Gough Battery, was equipped with a 6 inch gun. The battery at the lower level was called Pottinger Battery and its armament comprised two 9.2 inch guns. Pottinger Battery was named after Sir Henry Pottinger, the first governor of Hong Kong and the Gough Battery, for General Sir Hugh Gough, Hong Kong's first general officer commanding. *Historical Interest*

Due to changes in the defence plan, all the guns at Devil's Peak were moved to Cape D'Aguilar and Stanley to reinforce the defence there in 1936. Meanwhile, the Eastern Fire Command was also moved to Stanley. As a result of these removals and relocations there were no fixed armaments at Devil's Peak by the second half of the 1930s.

Shortly after the outbreak of war in December 1941, the western sector of the Gin Drinkers Line was captured by the Japanese. The surviving members of the garrison in Kowloon were then ordered by Major-General Maltby to evacuate to Hong Kong Island. Together with a battery of the Hongkong and Singapore Royal Artillery, the Pajputs then defending in Devil's Peak assisted in this evacuation. This they did from their position on the Devil's Peak line, beginning on 12 December. Shortly afterwards the Rajputs withdrew to Hong Kong Island, which was undertaken on the 13th at the foot of Devil's Peak. In the following days, Devil's Peak was used by the Japanese as an artillery position in their effort to bombard the northern shore of Hong Kong Island. On Christmas Day 1941, Governor Mark Young surrendered to the invading Japanese army. Devil's Peak later fell into disuse.

Many of the original military structures around Devil's Peak can still be found today. These include four gun emplacements and some of the associated magazines, a redoubt at the summit and the trench leading to it, two searchlight positions near the coast, and a few other structures. *Architectural Merit*

At the summit of Devil's Peak there is a redoubt which was constructed around 1914-1915 to protect the Fire Command East HQ buildings. A concrete loopholed wall extends around the compound with bastions projecting at strategic points to defend the flanks. Trenches and dug-outs can be seen inside

the compound and an outwork connected by steps can be found on the eastern side of the redoubt. About halfway down the hill between the redoubt and the upper battery can be found a ruined concrete bunker which can probably a heavy machine gun post. It is connected to the redoubt by a trench now much overgrown.

The battery at the mid-level in the Gough Battery consisting of an old 6 inch gun emplacement, an old 9.2 inch gun emplacement, and associated magazines and bunkers. Concrete bases for long since demolished buildings can be found and also a U-shaped defensive wall or field gun emplacement at the north-east corner of the site. Most of the structures are built of concrete, but some fine brickwork vaulting can be seen in the main underground magazine between the two gun emplacements.

There are two unusual circular pillboxes to be found at the Gough Battery site both based on designs invented by private companies in the U.K. One seems to be a copy of the 'Norcon' or 'Armco' pre-cast concrete pipe pillbox (War Office Type FW 3/25), and the other pillboxes, which is partially underground, also constructed out of concrete pipes, seems to be based on a type known as the Tett Turret produced by the building firm of Bribidge of East Horsley, Surrey, U.K. The former pillbox, which is open at the top, has had Kung fu balancing posts (mei hua zhuang) literally 'plum blossom posts' erected inside it by persons unknown.

The battery at the lower level is the Pottinger Battery consisting of two 9.2 inch concrete gun emplacements connected by underground magazines and bunkers. There are two coastal searchlight emplacements in forward position, a fire command post, a circular pillbox structure, and a ruined engine house. All the structures are in a ruinous state and much overgrown. The gun emplacements are half buried. Some Chinese graves have been built on the site which are probably illegal encroachments.

The ruined structures on Devil's Peak were intended for military purposes and are therefore functional in nature. For military historians and those with an interest in early 20<sup>th</sup> century armament and fortifications these military remnants no doubt have considerable fascination.

Today these remnants of military structures at Devil's Peak provide a reminder of the early defences of Hong Kong harbour. They constitute an integral part of Hong Kong's historic coastal defences. They also have group value although rather widely dispersed over a large area.

The structures have suffered from neglect, vandalism, and much damage over the years including intentional demolition to prevent or discourage unauthorized use. Pottinger Battery is partially buried and very overgrown. All metalwork has been removed long ago presumably salvaged for scrap. No

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

remains of armaments remain. A flight of concrete steps now replaces the old footpath leading up to the redoubt. Some improvement works to the redoubt to make the structures safer were carried out recently by the local District Office.

Rugged and almost wild, Devil's Peak rises directly above the narrow Lyemun Strait and directly overlooks the eastern approaches to Victoria Harbour. Once remote, Devil's Peak now looks down on extensive urbanization in every direction, in particular the massive New Town conurbation built on reclaimed land at Junk Bay (Tseung Kwan O). *Social Value & Local Interest*

The hill is named on maps as Pau Toi Shan, literally 'Gun Battery Hill', however it is better known locally as Mo Kwai Shan. Legend has it that the area was once the lair of the pirate Cheung Po-tsai (張保仔) who is said to have founded the little Tin Hau Temple in Lei Yue Mun Village in 1753.

The war relics remain a corner of serenity amidst the commotion of present day Hong Kong. The abandoned and overgrown gun emplacements are a popular venue for morning walkers, weekend war gamers, kite flyers and bird watchers as access to the site is not restricted. The Wilson Trail, a popular hiking path, winds through Gough Battery and past the redoubt.

In recent years, there has been a proposal to build a road to go over Devil's Peak above and extend down below and cut Lei Yue Mun into halves. If the plan is to be carried out in the form of coastal highways, not only the war relics in Devil's Peak, but the last piece of natural coastline in Kowloon will be destroyed. *Adaptive Re-use*