

Historic Building Appraisal
St. John's Chapel
No. 2 Cheung Po, Pat Heung, Yuen Long, N.T.

St. John's Chapel (聖若望小堂) was built in **1928** with funds raised locally and with a donation from Italy. One third of the donation came from Hong Kong and the rest from Italy. It was named St. John's Chapel in honour of St. John the Baptist, as the first converts of Cheung Po (長莆) were baptized on the birthday of St. John the Baptist. The Chapel, as well as being used for religious services, was also used as an elementary school for children in Cheung Po and from nearby villages. *Historical Interest*

All the inhabitants of Cheung Po are Hakkas, composed of five clans of four surnames: two clans surnamed Tang (鄧) and the others surnamed Tsang (曾), Cheung (張) and Wong (黃). Most of their ancestors migrated from other areas between the 1740s and the 1770s, namely the Tsangs from Sheung Tong (上塘) near Sheung Fa Shan (上花山) of Tsuen Wan (荃灣), the Cheungs from Ta Shek Wu (打石湖) of Pat Heung (八鄉) and the Wongs from Tai Mong Che (大芒峯) of Lam Tsuen (林村), Tai Po (大埔).

Rev. Richard Brookes (穀祿師神父, 1892-1980) and Rev. Situ Teng-chiu John (司徒廷昭, 1872-1947) had once served at the Chapel, where villagers of Cheung Po and nearby villages attended the mass. The school closed down in 1951. Since the 1960s the religious role of the Chapel was gradually substituted by the chapel at Kam Tsin Wai and St. Jude's Mass Centre near Kat Hing Wai. The Chapel was vacated in the 1980s, but it is still cared for by the villagers.

The Chapel is a simple one-storey pitched roof building built of local grey bricks with an entrance porch at the front entrance and an apse at the east end to house the altar. There is a lean-to annex on the northwest corner used as a storeroom or vestry. The roof (probably originally Chinese tiles) is now covered with corrugated sheets. The porch has simple square columns with a fascia inscribed with the name of the Chapel in Chinese characters (天主堂). The entrance doors are simple wooden battened doors. The gable above the porch features a bell-cote and cross with a date plaque underneath. The side windows of the Chapel are protected by ornamental hoods and are fitted with guard bars and wooden shutters. Internally, the walls are whitewashed and the floor is cement screeded. The China fir pole purlins of the roof are exposed. Wooden pews line the walls. An arched opening connects the Chapel with the apse where the altar stands. A pair of wooden doors of traditional construction form a side entrance. Modern installations such as fluorescent strip lights and fans have been installed. *Architectural Merit*

The Chapel is built in simple **Qing Vernacular** style with Western influence so that it is of mixed style. As an early mission church it has built heritage value and historic value. Apart from the replacement roof the Chapel seems to have retained its authentic appearance fairly well.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

The social value of the Chapel lies in the role it played in the lives of the villagers in their religious activities and also as a village school providing education for their children. The older villagers care for the Chapel as it has fond memories for them.

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

Together with other old buildings such as Houses Nos. 3-6, Houses Nos. 9-11, Houses Nos. 15-16 and Kwan Tai Temple, St. John's Chapel is an integral part of Cheung Po village.

Group Value

Adaptive re-use depends a lot on the requirements of the local community. Consultation with the villagers would be necessary before coming up with any suggestions for adaptive re-use.

**Adaptive
Re-use**