

Historic Building Appraisal

High Rock Christian Camp

No. 102 Sha Tin Tau Village, Sha Tin, New Territories

Situated at No. 102 Sha Tin Tau Village (沙田頭村), the High Rock Christian Camp (基督教靈基營) was originally erected and used as a police station. Being the second police station in Shatin which replaced the original one in Yuen Chau Kok, the premises functioned to ensure law and order from 1924. During the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945) the premises were used as a command centre by the Japanese army. *Historical Interest*

In 1950, the police station in Sha Tin Tau Village was re-used by the **Mennonite Central Committee** (MCC, 基督教門諾會互助促進社) which did voluntary relief and welfare work in various countries in Europe and Asia. The MCC established a hostel there for children who had had contact with tuberculosis in their own homes, but were yet free from infection. The Committee also set up their Far Eastern headquarters office in the building which housed two American personnel.

The site was eventually rented to **Miss Mildred Dibden**, an independent Christian lady missionary, for the care of abandoned and destitute babies with the setting up of the Shatin Babies Home in 1953. Before setting up the Shatin Babies Home, she had run babies' homes in Fanling and Yuen Long. Funds for the babies homes came mainly from private voluntary donations and help was given by organizations such as Y.M.C.A. (Women's Section) (香港基督教女青年會), Union Church (九龍佑寧堂), etc.

The work of the Shatin Babies Home came to an end in 1966, when the 'Christian Missions in Many Lands' assumed responsibility for operating a primary school and kindergarten on site. The Missions took over the site in January 1964 under the registered name of Shatin High Rock Christian School (沙田靈基學校), or Spiritual Foundation School. The founders of the School, Miss Ruth Whitehead and Miss Frances Hollingsworth, resided in the premises after Miss Dibden and her remaining 20 children moved to Portsmouth, UK.

In 1980, the premises were converted into High Rock Christian Camp for children and youths under the management of Stewards (HK) Ltd (香港神託會), a Christian charitable institution incorporated in 1962. During recent years, apart from being a recreational campsite, High Rock Christian Camp has developed into a place for cultural exchange. This has been achieved by organizing joint programmes with young people from overseas (Austria, Korea, America) to build up their relationship with the youngsters in Hong Kong.

The building complex is two stories high with a basement and encloses a courtyard which is used as a playground. The building displays an interesting *Architectural Merit*

vocabulary of architectural features showing **Modernist, Edwardian** and **Arts & Crafts** influences. It is mainly constructed of red bricks, but some facades have been rendered and painted. The architectural design is simple and functional, as opposed to decorative and ornamental. Arts and Crafts influence can be seen in the use of local materials and in the craftsmanship. The North and West Blocks, which are probably the oldest parts of the building, have pitched roofs of Chinese tiles and open verandahs at the playground side. Original wooden doors and windows still exist. The South and East Blocks are more modern in appearance with rendered and painted walls and aluminium windows.

The building is one of the few remaining pre-war police stations in Hong Kong and therefore has built heritage value. Due to the various changes of use, the building has undergone alterations such as enclosure of front verandahs, addition of sun canopies, replacement of windows, removal of internal partitions, etc. Nevertheless, the basic integrity of the architecture is still maintained.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The social value of the building lies in the various uses to which it has been put, all serving the community in some way. It has played an important part in the fields of law and order, education, religion, medical care, recreation, leisure and culture. The premises have existed for over eighty years now, and are a reminder of the old days of Shatin.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

Nearby on the east side of the High Rock Christian Camp, the Tsang Tai Uk (曾大屋) is located and on the west side, the Che Kung Temple (車公廟) is also located.

Group Value

The building has shown that it is adaptable and can be put to a number of uses. As far as is known, there are no plans to close down the High Rock Christian Camp.

*Adaptive
Re-use*