

Historic Building Appraisal
St. John Hospital (Haw Par Hospital)
Cheung Chau Hospital Road, Cheung Chau

From the words carved on the tablet hung above the entrance, as follows, *Historical Interest* the linkages of this hospital with the Aw Brothers and St. John Ambulance Association can be easily understood.

St. John Ambulance Association
 Haw Par Hospital
 Donated by Mr. Aw Boon Haw and Mr. Aw Boon Par

The hospital was originally named in English as Haw Par Hospital ('Haw' meaning 'tiger' and 'Par' meaning 'leopard' – thus literally, 虎豹醫院), but its Chinese name that appears on the tablet is 長洲醫院 (Cheung Chau Hospital). The hospital is also known as St. John Hospital (聖約翰醫院) as it was built for the St. John Ambulance Association (聖約翰救傷隊).

Construction work on the hospital began in 1932 and was completed in 1934. It was funded by a generous donation from two Burmese Chinese brothers, Mr. Aw Boon-haw (胡文虎) and Mr. Aw Boon-par (胡文豹), who started a medical business in Rangoon (仰光) in 1900 and named their company as Haw Par Brothers in 1932.

In the early days, there was no properly equipped hospital in Cheung Chau, though there was a hospital, namely The Cheung Chau Fong Bin Hospital (長洲方便醫院) practicing Chinese medical treatment. To cope with the increasing demand of the growing population, construction of a well-equipped hospital was urgently needed.

During the Japanese Occupation, the hospital served as a nursery and a shelter for child refugees. According to the recollections of guerrilla members, the residents of Cheung Chau established a local self-defence corps, with the headquarters of its Second Squad located at the hospital. The corps secretly stored weapons and supplies collected in the hospital, which were later transported via Tai Long Wan Tsuen on Lantau Island to Yuen Long for use by the Hong Kong Independent Battalion of the Dongjiang Column (東江縱隊港九獨立大隊).¹

The hospital was originally built as a missionary hospital. But after the Second World War, it was by agreement staffed and maintained by the

¹"St. John Hospital: the Former Site Used by the Cheung Chau Branch of the Communist Party of China for Operations", website for the 80th Anniversary of Victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, <https://www.80avictory.gov.hk/en/site-content.html?id=40>, accessed on 26 September 2025.

Government to serve as a rural hospital for the local community and as a tuberculosis sanatorium for light or convalescent cases. Since the closure of The Cheung Chau Fong Bin Hospital in 1988, it remains the only hospital in Cheung Chau. It is now a member of Hong Kong East Cluster (港島東聯網) under the administration of the Hospital Authority.

The hospital is a three-storey building built to a symmetrical E-shaped plan. The architectural style is **Neo-Classical** with Chinese influence. The walls are rendered and painted with horizontal band courses at each storey level. Windows are regularly spaced. The façades feature arched and colonnaded verandahs some open and some enclosed with glazing or blocked up. Square columns with stylised capitals and chequered patterned balustrades are strongly featured. The roof is flat with a plain parapet set above a projecting moulded cornice. Chinese influence can be seen in the ‘moon-gate’ door at the entrance hall, which also features columns decorated with *dougong* style brackets.

Architectural Merit

This style of architecture is quite rare especially in the rural environment of Cheung Chau. Now over 70 years old, the hospital has important built heritage value. Many refurbishment projects have been undertaken at the hospital over the years including replacement of internal finishes, removal of internal walls, erection of new partitions, installation of window mounted room coolers, and replacement of windows, etc. An Outpatients’ Clinic was built next to the hospital in 1974.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

The social value of the hospital lies in the role it has played in the field of medical services. As well as having a clinic for outpatients, the hospital runs general and specialist clinics, has 93 beds, and provides a round-the-clock accident and emergency service. Providing important Western medical services to the community means that the hospital is of considerable local interest to the residents of Cheung Chau.

Social Value & Local Interest

It is physically close to other graded buildings, namely Cheung Chau Government Secondary School, Cheung Chau Police Station (長洲警署) and The Cheung Chau Fong Bin Hospital, to which St John Hospital once gave funding.

Group Value

As the hospital, which is the only one on Cheung Chau, is unlikely to close down the question of adaptive re-use does not really arise.

Adaptive Re-use