Historic Building Appraisal

Workmen's Quarters
Elliot Pumping Station & Filters
Pok Fu Lam Road, Hong Kong

Historical Interest

Water supply on Hong Kong Island relied solely on wells and streams prior to 1860. The first ever reservoir in the territory was completed in 1863 in Pok Fu Lam to meet the needs in the City of Victoria. In the following decades, to cater for the ever increasing demands, much larger reservoirs and more complex water supplies systems, including ancillary pumping stations and distribution mains to convey augmented water supply to higher levels, were constructed. In order to uphold the quality of water, the Government gradually filtered all reservoir water.

The Elliot Pumping Station and Filters (西區抽水站及濾水廠) were first built in the 1910s to meet the increased demand for water in the Western District of Hong Kong Island . This Workmen's Quarters was built between 1918 and 1919 for the Chinese workmen looking after the pumping station. The Elliot Pumping Station and Filters later became the auxiliary waterworks of the Aberdeen Reservoir (the fourth reservoir, built in 1931) for filtering and channelling water to the western part of Hong Kong Island in the 1930s. Water was transferred from the Aberdeen Upper Reservoir, through Wan Chai Gap Road to Island Road, Victoria Road and via Sandy Bay to the filters situated in the Elliot Pumping Station. With the development of advanced technology, the premises were closed down in 1993.

Architectural Merit

The Workmen's Quarters are situated at the northwest corner of the Elliot Pumping Station compound. The building is a long rectangular single storey structure with red-brick walls and a pitched roof of Chinese tiles. An open verandah with cast iron posts runs along the south elevation. Window and door openings have granite thresholds, cills and lintels. The wooden casements are heavily barred with burglar bars. Doors are wooden, braced and battened. There is a small latrine annex at the rear of the building. Internally, the building is divided into four small separate quarters (two of them seem to have been combined into one). It is Utilitarian in design.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

This style of building is not particularly rare, but it has built heritage value as well as group value. The building does not appear to have been altered very much and seems to retain its original appearance.

Social Value & Local Interest

Having provided services for some 70 years, the Elliot Pumping Station and Filters were closed down in 1993. The Workmen's Quarters now houses the Visitor Centre of The University of Hong Kong.

Group Value

The Elliot Pumping Station & Filters are quite important as a component of a significant architectural and historical complex. The Workmen's Quarters (Grade 3), together with its Senior Staff Quarters (Grade 2) and Treatment Works Building (Grade 3), is quite close to the Bungalow (Grade 1) and two Workmen's Quarters (Grade 2) of the West Point Filters (西環濾水廠) and The University of Hong Kong where declared monuments, namely Main Building (香港大學本部大樓), Hung Hing Ying Building (孔慶熒樓), Tang Chi Ngong Building (鄧志昂樓), Fung Ping Shan Building (馮平山樓), May Hall (梅堂) and Eliot Hall (儀禮堂) stand. Other buildings in the surroundings include the declared monument, King's College (皇仁書院), and Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong Kau Yan Church (救恩堂) (Grade 1).