

Historic Building Appraisal
Aberdeen Technical School,
No. 1 Wong Chuk Hang School, Aberdeen, Hong Kong

Aberdeen Technical School (香港仔工業學校) was built in **1935** for the purpose of providing vocational training to boys from poor families. The cost of the construction was donated by community leaders including the **Hon. Fung Ping Shan** (馮平山) and **Sir Robert Ho Tung** (何東爵士). In 1935 the then Governor Sir William Peel (貝潞港督) officiated at the inauguration ceremony, which was attended by more than 90 celebrities including Sir Robert Hotung (何東爵士), Rev. Henry Bishop (恩理覺主教) and Sir Man-kam Lo (羅文錦爵士).

*Historical
Interest*

The management of the School was entrusted to the Salesians of Don Bosco (Society of St. Francis of Sales) (鮑思高慈幼會). Originating in Italy, the Society was founded in 1859 for Saint Francis of Sales, and its primary objective was to educate the youth. The first Principal of Aberdeen Industrial School was Fr. Vincent Bernardini (金以義神父), who had previously been the Superior of St. Louis School (聖類斯中學).

During the Second World War, the School was requisitioned by the British as a naval base. When the School was used as a naval base, Madame Chiang Kai-shek (宋美玲) paid an incognito visit to the School in 1940. After the fall of Hong Kong in 1941, the Japanese used it as a seaplane base guarding the south of the Hong Kong Island. In 1942, the Japanese allowed the reopening of Tailoring and Shoe-making departments and declared the School as a “Free School” (自由學校).

Aberdeen Technical School **Main Building** is one of the early examples of modern architecture in Hong Kong, being built in the **International Modern** style. It consists of several linear blocks of different design three stories high staggered and arranged in an L-shaped plan onto an elongated site at the foot of a steep slope. There is a certain **Art Deco** influence in the design. Architectural features are long open verandahs, porthole windows, stylised columns or *pilotis*, and a square tower incorporating the main entrance. The long linear balconies are features of this architectural style. Internally the **Art Deco** influence can be seen in the design of the Main Hall and the Main Staircase. The Shanghai plaster and polished terrazzo finishes used externally and internally respectively are typical of the period.

*Architectural
Merit*

The **Annex Block** is situated at the rear of the school. It is used as a dormitory for the Fathers who serve at the school. It is three storeys high with rendered and painted walls, a flat roof and regularly spaced metal windows. Architectural features are limited to moulded cills, a moulded string course and a projecting cornice at parapet level. Internally some original wooden glazed and

panelled doors still remain as well as the original staircase. Although built in 1935 at the same time as the school, the architectural style is more **Neo-Classical** or **Neo-Georgian** in appearance.

Aberdeen Technical School was the first local technical school and therefore has a rarity value as well as a built heritage value. Some alterations have been made internally and **new wings have been built at the back and at the end** but in a similar modern style. Nevertheless the main building manages to retain much of its authenticity.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

The social value of the School lies in the historical pioneering role it played in technical education in Hong Kong. The extra-curricular activities of drill, gymnastics, music, choral and theatrical training were regarded as an important part of the Salesian educational system. The School's bands, choral and gymnastic groups have gained good reputations in local school competitions. In approaching to the Wong Chuk Hang area via Pok Fu Lam Road, this school serves as an icon to the industrial area.

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

The school has group value with **Holy Spirit Seminary** (聖神修院) in No.6 Welfare Road, Wong Chuk Hang. The Wong Chuk Hang area, on the east side of Aberdeen Technical School, is mainly made up of old industrial buildings of simple modern design that juxtapose with the school in natural and physical fabrics.

Group Value

As the School is likely to continue as such for the foreseeable future, the question of adaptive re-use does not really arise.

**Adaptive
Re-use**