

Historic Building Appraisal
Lee Tat Bridge,
Shui Tsan Tin, Pat Heung, Yuen Long, N.T.

Lee Tat Bridge (利達橋) literally means “the bridge built for the convenience of gaining access”. It was built in **1903**, the 29th year of the reign of Emperor Guangxu (光緒) in the Qing Dynasty. It serves to connect Kam Sheung Road (錦上路) with the village of Shui Tsan Tin (水盞田) in Pat Heung (八鄉), Yuen Long. Shui Tsan Tin has been (and still is) inhabited by a population of several surnames, with the Lees (李), the Cheungs (張), the Tsangs (曾), the Laws (羅) and the Chans (陳) being the majority.

*Historical
Interest*

The construction of Lee Tat Bridge was made possible by the donation of a village leader of property and enlightened spirit named **Mr. Lee Luk-hop** (李六合), a member of the Lee clan in Shui Tsan Tin. An inscription stone tablet dated 1903, engraved with Chinese characters to commemorate Mr. Lee Luk-hop who had funded the construction of the bridge for the convenience of pedestrians, remains *in-situ*.

Lee Tat Bridge was originally intended for the use of local villagers who in the former days had to take risk to cross the fast running stream underneath. Indeed, Shui Tsan Tin was so named because the village, in the shape of water laden, captures large amount of rainwater that runs down from the mountains nearby. To this day, the village is always flooded in the event of heavy downpour partly because of the low relief.

Lee Tat Bridge is built of granite. It is supported on one pier and two abutments. Stone slabs are laid horizontally to a width of five slabs, and the ends of the slabs are bedded on top of each pier in lime mortar. The bridge has a span of 14.25 metres and stands two metres above a stream. Its original width was two metres, but in the 1970s it was widened on both sides (with concrete) to three metres to permit the passage of cars. In 2004, further repairs were done. Thus, the original bridge architecture is no longer easily recognizable.

*Architectural
Merit*

Lee Tat Bridge is simple but technically rather sophisticated. Its pier is built with a cutwater (*fen shui jian* 分水尖), an angular edge that serves to divert the flowing water and the material swept along with it through the open span. The actual builder/stonemason remains unknown; however, whoever designed and built the bridge had expert knowledge of bridge architecture. The bridge is thus important both from the architectural and scientific points of view, in providing evidence of the art of stone beam bridge construction.

Lee Tat Bridge is a rare example of its type still remaining in Hong Kong. As of today, at least five other Hong Kong bridges are comparable to Lee Tat Bridge in terms of age but they vary greatly in heritage value. Many other bridges had been reconstructed beyond restoration and/or had their stone tablets lost.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

There have been obvious unsympathetic interventions to the bridge in order to permit the passage of motor vehicles, the alteration works are reversible. The presence of the original stones and old lime mortar in position is very valuable.

For well over a century, Lee Tat Bridge has been (and still is) used for its original purpose, that is, carrying foot traffic and remaining in use as a walkway over a stream. It makes a landscaping focal point, deeply symbolic of the village of Shui Tsan Tin. It is emotionally attached to not a few members of the local community and the Lee clan who funded it.

**Social Value,
& Local
Interest**

Lee Tat Bridge is physically close to a number of historic buildings/structures such as Ling Mui Chong (嶺梅莊), an elegant Hakka-style mansion, Cheung Ancestral Hall (張氏宗祠), Lee Ancestral House (李氏世居), and a century-old brick kiln that has fallen into disuse decades ago.

Group Value