

Historic Building Appraisal
Nos. 72, 72A, 74 and 74A Stone Nullah Lane,
Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Laid out in 1855, Stone Nullah Lane (石水渠街) takes its name from an old stream or nullah that ran below Hospital Hill (醫院山，即今律敦治醫院一帶). It has long been occupied by the Chinese community with the establishment of two important Chinese social institutions, Yuk Hui Temple (玉虛宮) (Pak Tai Temple 北帝廟) and the Headquarters of the “Patrol Guards of the Four Circuits” (四環更練). The Yuk Hui Temple was built in 1863 near to the southern end of the lane to worship Pak Tai and was once managed by the Wan Chai Kaifong Committee (灣仔街坊會). The Patrol Guards of the Four Circuits were situated at the present site of St. James’ Settlement (聖雅各福群會), opposite the shophouses.

**Historical
Interest**

The four shophouses at Nos.72-74A Stone Nullah Lane were built in the 1920s. As well as providing living accommodation for the lower class Chinese community, the shophouses also provided accommodation for organizations providing medical services and education. The ground floor units were occupied by shops selling wine and groceries, and the Chamber of Commerce for Fishmongers (鮮魚商會) also had a meeting room and office on one of the floors.

The ground floor of No.72 was once occupied by Wah To Hospital (華陀醫院) set up in the sixth year of Tongzhi (1867) (同治丁卯). Around the 1950s, Lam Cho (林祖), the nephew of Lam Sai-wing (林世榮), one of the followers of the famous *kung fu* (功夫) master Wong Fei-hung (黃飛鴻), rented the flat for use as a *Wuguan* (martial art school, 武館). In the 1960s, Lam Chun-hin (林震顯), the son of Lam Cho, succeeded the business and changed the *Wuguan* to an osteopathy clinic (醫館).

The upper floors of the shophouses were also once used as the Kang Ham Free School (鏡涵義學) before the Second World War offering free education.

Architecturally, the shophouses are typical of the **Balcony Type**, taking their name from the cantilevered balconies on the front elevations. The balconies, which overhang the street, are supported on shaped cantilevered brackets and have ornamental ironwork balustrades or railings. Pairs of panelled and glazed doors open onto the verandahs. The side elevations are plain rendered walls with rows of casement windows at each floor level, each storey delineated by plain projecting band courses. The windows are protected from the weather by projecting hoods. Windows in the rear kitchen annexes are few (perhaps blocked up), the ones that do exist having curved heads and label mouldings.

**Architectural
Merit**

**Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

Internally, floors and stairs are constructed of timber and ornamentation is minimal. Although alterations have been made over the years the shophouses retain much of their authenticity and being now a rare type of building have built heritage value and local interest as well as social value because of their contribution to the community.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest,
Rarity***

Stone Nullah Lane is mainly made up of old residences built before the 1960s with shops and other commercial functions on the ground floor. Street activities are still going on as they were when the shophouses were built. The shophouses on Nos. 2, 4, 6 and 8 Hing Wan Street (慶雲街), Hung Shing Temple (洪聖古廟) on Nos. 129-131 Queen's Road East and Wan Chai Market (灣仔街市) and Old Wan Chai Post Office 舊灣仔郵政局(Declared Monument) are also other important heritage buildings nearby.

Group Value

Adaptive re-use should reflect their importance as part of the local urban fabric.

***Adaptive
Re-use***