

Historic Building Appraisal
Lai Chi Kok Hospital
No. 800 Castle Peak Road, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon

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Lai Chi Kok Hospital was built between 1921 and 1924 and was originally a prison. In the 1930s, infectious diseases were prevalent and the prison was converted into Lai Chi Kok (Cholera) Hospital and Lai Chi Kok (Relief) Hospital. In 1948 the two hospitals were renamed Lai Chi Kok Hospital (荔枝角醫院), which was one of the two infectious hospitals in Hong Kong in the period 1946-1975. The other infectious hospital was in Sai Ying Pun. After the opening of Princess Margaret Hospital (瑪嘉烈醫院) in 1975, the role of Lai Chi Kok Hospital as an infectious diseases hospital gradually diminished. It was then used for convalescent psychiatric patients transferred from Castle Peak Hospital (青山醫院) and leprosy patients transferred from the Leprosarium at Hei Ling Chau (喜靈洲). In 2001-2006, the hospital was under the management of the Hospital Authority and its funding was provided by the Social Welfare Department. Its name was changed from Lai Chi Kok Hospital to LCKH HACare Home (荔康居) for psychiatric patients. The home had been closed, and the premises had undergone adaptive re-use.

Historical Interest

Historical materials show that the hospital site could be related to use as an early immigration post for Chinese labour heading overseas to South Africa. Moreover, there is a stone tablet inscribed with Chinese characters “Gau-Lung Kwan” (九龍關) right next to the hospital cluster. This is similar to the Qing customs station stone tablet found at the old Ma Wan township.

The old hospital site comprises an upper section and a lower section. The buildings under study are all located in the lower section. They are Blocks F, G, H, I, J, K, and Blocks P, Q, W, W2 and N. The first six blocks were used as wards and Block K as an Administration Block. The other blocks were used for various purposes such as quarters, kitchens, offices and stores.

Architectural Merit

Blocks F, G, H, I, J and K are utilitarian in design. They are all two stories high with external staircases. The brick walls are rendered and painted externally and just painted internally. The walls are strengthened with internal angle buttresses. The roofs are pitched and covered with Chinese tiles. Floor slabs are supported on steel beams. All the original windows have been replaced with aluminium framed windows.

Blocks P, Q, W and W2 are a group of single-storey red-brick structures. The external walls of Blocks P, Q and W are exposed brickwork but Block W2

is painted white. They have pitched roofs of Chinese tiles, open verandahs and wooden doors and windows at regular intervals. The design is utilitarian with Arts and Crafts influence.

Block N is a long and narrow one-storey block with painted walls and a pitched roof. It is utilitarian and not particularly interesting architecturally. At the northwest end of Block N there is a rubble retaining wall, the main gate, and a small rectangular guard house also built with rubble walls.

The buildings are not particularly rare but have historical built heritage value as well as group value. The red-brick buildings seem to retain their original appearance and authenticity, but the other buildings obviously have undergone alterations at various times.

***Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

The social value of the buildings lies in the role they played first as part of a prison and then as part of a hospital. From the historical aspect they are also of local interest. The hospital is located on a small hillside shared by Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre and staff quarters of the Correctional Services Department.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

The historic buildings in the old hospital compound form a rare group of built heritage.

Group Value