

Historic Building Appraisal

Watchtower

Hok Tau Wai, Fanling

Hok Tau Wai (鶴藪圍) is a village in the east of Lau Shui Heung (流水響), *Historical Interest* Fanling. It is quite a distance from the main access road, the Sha Tau Kok Road (沙頭角公路), in its north. The village was inhabited by the Tangs (鄧) and Laus (劉), the former being the majority. The Tangs are Hakkas (客家). The three connected old village houses at Nos. 15, 16 and 17 and the watchtower by the left rear end of No.15 were built by two brothers, Tang Tai-man (鄧大文) and Tang Tai-woon (鄧大煥), in 1929. The watchtower was built as bandits and pirates from the mainland were active in the area in the first decades of the 20th century. Tai-man and his younger brother Tai-woon worked as an herbal doctor and a businessman respectively in Malaysia. At the age of around 50, they returned to the village and built the houses, Nos. 15, 16 and the tower belonged to Tai-woon and No.17 to Tai-man. The Tangs, including Ying-yin (應言), son of Tai-man, and Mau (茂), son of Ying-yin, lived in the houses until the 1960s when they moved to Ma Mei Ha (馬尾下), further north of the village near Ping Che (坪輦). The houses and the tower have been left vacated since then.

The row of three houses is in the rear row of two rows of houses in the village. The row is at the left end with another row of nine houses on its right. *Architectural Merit* The watchtower on the left end is a three-storey tall structure, the tallest in the village facing north. The row of three houses is of the same direction. The watchtower is a Qing (清) vernacular building having its own entrance in the front and another entrance at the first floor of house No.15. The tower has a rectangular-shaped plan. It is constructed of green bricks and rammed earth with its walls to support its flat roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and the floors cement-screeded. Small windows with granite frames and iron bars are on four sides of the tower. Tiny gun holes are at the top level.

It is a watchtower connected to the three houses of the Tangs to witness their settlement in the village. *Rarity*

It has high built heritage value.

Built Heritage Value

Its authenticity is kept.

Authenticity

It has group value with the three houses next door.

Group Value

The Tangs had their family gatherings and celebrations at the houses for their weddings, birthdays and at festivals. They had their ancestral worship at the ancestral hall at the front row of houses in the village. They had their Dim Dang (點燈) ritual for new born baby boys of previous year on the 15th to 20th days of the first lunar month by lighting a hexagonal lantern at the ancestral hall. They would also have Yam Ding Jou (飲丁酒), a banquet for celebrating the new born baby, in the village. The ritual was discontinued after 1946. The Tangs had their guns and gunpowder kept in the tower. At the Japanese Occupation (1941-45), the houses and the tower were looted by the Japanese soldiers.

*Social Value,
& Local
Interest*