

## Historic Building Appraisal

No. 4 Shek O Road,

Shek O, Hong Kong

No. 4 Shek O Road was constructed in 1929 by the Shek O Development Company Limited. Established in 1921, the Company was consisted of 44 English shareholders who were architects, accountants, solicitors and medical practitioners. Most shareholders had very well-off backgrounds such as Godfrey Vernon Bird, Herbert William Bird and Lennox Godfrey Bird, the architects of Palmer and Turner; Cedric Blaker, the Director of the Messrs. Deacons Hong Kong; Frederick Charles Hall, the merchant of the Jardine, Matheson & Company Ltd.; and Colin Cunningham Scott, the merchant of the Butterfield & Swire Hong Kong.

*Historical  
Interest*

The bungalow was part of the first phase of a development scheme of Shek O Development Company, which purchased a large piece of paddy and agricultural land in 1922 from the Shek O villagers to develop the area into a European residential resort with a golf course, clubhouse and other recreational facilities. Developed through the 1920s, many western style country bungalows were built along the golf courses of the Shek O Country Club (石澳鄉村俱樂部), most of which still exist today.

**Mr. Herbert William Bird** (the second son of Colonel Commandant Frederick Vincent Godfrey Bird, and an architect with **Palmer and Turner**) first occupied the bungalow at No. 4 Shek O Road after its completion.

The bungalow was built to an L-shaped plan with a single-storey wing and a two-storey wing. The walls were finished with painted rough cast rendering and the pitched roofs finished with Chinese pan-and-roll tiles painted ochre colour. Several tall chimney stacks projected above the roof line. The front entrance porch was set in the internal angle formed by the two wings. The windows were quite small and French doors opened on to the garden. The simple design of the bungalow could be categorized as **Arts and Crafts**. Auxillary structures included a servants' annex, garage and swimming pool. A neat stone wall, topiary shrubs in the garden and period lanterns enhanced the luxurious style. The use of white walls and Chinese pan tiles gave the bungalow the appearance of a villa on the Mediterranean.

*Architectural  
Merit*

The bungalow was quite a rare type of building in Hong Kong and the Shek O resort development was an innovative concept. The development is part of the history of Shek O and this bungalow together with its neighbours could be considered to be having built heritage value and group value.

*Rarity and  
Built Heritage  
Value*

The bungalow No. 4 Shek O Road has lost much of its original appearance and authenticity in recent times. The exterior has been drastically altered in what could be described as an avant-garde modernist make-over. The original distinctive roofs and most of the chimney stacks have been replaced with roofs of modern pantiles, windows have been blocked up or altered, the garage and entrance porch remodeled and the original garden layout completely altered. The elevations facing the road seem to have been deliberately screened off from view, but the interiors of the main bedroom and the living room (even the bathroom and toilet) on the rear elevation can clearly be seen through glass walls which have replaced the original French doors. Modern security lights are fixed to the walls all around the building, and the front forecourt (once a topiary garden) has been completely paved over.

*Authenticity*

The social value of this bungalow to the local community is limited as the Shek O resort development was designed exclusively for Europeans. It is of local interest as part of the development, but the concept of a reserve for Europeans only belongs to the colonial era. Nevertheless it is part of Hong Kong's history.

*Social Value  
& Local  
Interest*

The Shek O area is mainly a high grade residential, resort and integrates with this country villa's physical and spiritual quality. The surroundings are a rural area of nice green hills and sea views remote from the city. This area is mainly low density residential including some buildings of Arts and Crafts, pre-modern or early modern style.

*Group Value*

The best use for the bungalow is probably for it to continue to be used a retreat. The site is remote, private, quiet and surrounded by a green landscape environment so that the bungalow would make an ideal retreat.

*Adaptive  
Re-use*