

Historic Building Appraisal
Old British Military Hospital, Gatehouse and Gate Pillars
Nos. 8 and 12 Borrett Road, Hong Kong

The Old British Military Hospital was built between 1903 and 1906 and officially opened in 1907. The two roads which encompass the old hospital site, Bowen Road and Borrett Road, are named after historical figures. Bowen Road is named after **Sir George Ferguson Bowen** who served as Governor from 1883 to 1885. During his tenure Bowen established the Royal Observatory. He also ordered the construction of the Causeway Bay typhoon shelter and the Government Civil Hospital in Sai Ying Pun. Borrett Road is named after a military figure – **Lt. Gen. O.C. Borrett** who was GOC British Troops in China from 1932 to 1935. *Historical Interest*

The Gatehouse and Gate Pillars are situated at the main entrance to the Old British Military Hospital at the junction of Borrett Road and Bowen Road. As shown in old map and photographic record, the Gatehouse and Gate Pillars were built almost at the same time when the Old British Military Hospital site was earmarked and developed into an area for hospital purpose.

The Gatehouse and Gate Pillars are built in the **Classical Revival** style. *Architectural Merit*
 The Gatehouse is a small single storey pentagonal building with rock-faced coursed masonry walls with brick backing built in an angle of a retaining wall but independent of it. It has a flat roof with a corner chimney stack and a moulded stone cornice at roof level. It has a rectangular window opening facing the road with a plain stone surround and a metal grille but no window. The doorway has a similar plain stone surround and a metal grille gate but no door. A simple arcade of four regular repetitive stone voussoired arches supported on columns is attached to one side of the Lodge forming an open covered verandah or colonnade. The roof cannot be seen because it is overgrown with vegetation.

The Gatehouse is described in a 1906 English-language newspaper article as a “porter’s lodge”. Gatehouses were small decorative buildings at the gateways of estates or large houses, serving as the accommodation and office for a gatekeeper or porter. Such buildings were often in pairs disposed symmetrically on either side of the gates such as can be seen at Government House. Park Gatehouses and gate pillars were notable features of 18th and 19th century English architecture and can be of great interest and quality often bearing a resemblance to the building they served.

Next to the window there is a cast iron rainwater pipe fitted with a rectangular hopper head inscribed “E.R.I.” which stands for the Latin title “Edwardus Rex Imperious” meaning “Edward King Emperor” (i.e. King

Edward VII who reigned from 1901 to 1910. Internally there is a small corner fireplace but little else. The floor is screeded. The concrete roof slab is cracked and is supported by rusty iron I-beams. Plaster is falling off the walls revealing the brick backing to the masonry.

Of the two Gate Pillars only one is complete, the other one having the upper section missing. The complete pier is built of ashlar masonry in Classical Revival style with a moulded base, four paneled sides, a plain frieze, four triangular pediments and a square moulded capping. The boundary wall to the road is built of coursed rock-faced masonry blocks with stepped moulded granite coping stones. At the end of the wall a wall tree has established itself with a spreading root system. A granite War Department boundary stone marked “W ↑ D” can be seen entangled in the root system. The section of the boundary wall in front of the Gatehouse is missing.

The Gatehouse and Gate Pillars are considered to have considerable built heritage value. One other example is the former Gate Lodge of the former Mountain Lodge in Mount Austin Road, The Peak (Declared Monument).

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

Regarding the present case, apart from the damaged one, the two Gate Pillars of the Old British Military Hospital seem to be authentic and have not been altered in any way.

The Gatehouse and Gate Pillars are components of the Old British Military Hospital, which has contributed to the well-being and development of society and the local community having been used firstly as a hospital, and then for school premises and NGOs for charitable social purposes. They are a reminder of the past and if restored may well generate local interest in the community.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

The Gatehouse and Gate Pillars are part of the complex of the Old British Military Hospital – including the Main Building and the Annex Block – which has been accorded a Grade 1 status by the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB). They are situated close to the historic compound of the Old Victoria Barracks, with the Flagstaff House being a declared monument and the others graded by the AAB. Together they form a significant group of built structures that served the former British military garrison.

Group Value