

Historic Building Appraisal
Old Dairy Farm –
Old Wall between the Bethanie and Old Dairy Farm
No. 139 and No. 141 Pok Fu Lam Road, H.K.

The Old Dairy Farm in Pok Fu Lam was once an extensive complex of farm buildings erected by the Dairy Farm Company. The Dairy Farm was founded in 1886 when Dr Patrick Manson (a Scottish surgeon and a pioneer in the fields of hygiene and tropical medicine) persuaded five influential businessmen in the city, including Paul Chater, to invest in a local dairy farm. While in Hong Kong, Manson also spearheaded the founding of the Hong Kong College of Medicine, which in turn evolved into Faculty of Medicine of The University of Hong Kong. He was also a distinguished parasitologist and the first to state the hypothesis that the mosquito is the host of the malarial parasite and thus an active agent in diffusing the disease. The Dairy Farm Company's declared purposes were threefold: (i) to provide a regular supply of hygienic fresh milk for Hong Kong people; (ii) to reduce the price of cow's milk so as to make it affordable by the city's growing population; and (iii) to realize a profit for the company shareholders.

*Historical
Interest*

The Old Dairy Farm occupied a 120-hectare hilly site in Pok Fu Lam, with an initial capital of \$30,000 and a herd of 80 dairy cows imported from America (and later from Australia, Scotland and Holland).¹ In spite of the hilly nature of the land, Pok Fu Lam was selected as the site for dairy farming for a number of reasons. First of all, Pok Fu Lam was isolated from the disease-ridden slums in Sheung Wan, but was only four miles away from the central district of Hong Kong Island. It was sloping seaward on a piece of land rising to 500 feet above sea level, making the site receive cool breezes which were especially important for dairy farming during the sub-tropical summer in Hong Kong.

The cows had to be kept as cool as possible if they were to stay healthy and produce the maximum quantity of milk. Heat, together with humidity, described by a farm manager of the Old Dairy Farm as "discomfort index", could adversely affect milk yield and breeding cycle. Furthermore, the location had a reliable water supply and good drainage. The site condition was good for the cows because cows consumed a lot of water every day; water was also required, for cleaning the cowsheds and the related buildings as well as

¹ Native buffaloes were poor milk providers. Their milk was very rich in fats and thus difficult to be digested. Ayrshires from Scotland and Holsteins (or Holstein-Friesians) from Holland, however, could produce a large yield of milk with a high percentage of butter fat. The milk from Holsteins was most easily digested and Holsteins was also a good butcher's animal.

dairy utensils.

In 1899, to prevent the spread of disease from one part of the herd to another, Granville Sharp, who had served on the Board of Directors of the Dairy Farm Company since 1886, initiated the idea of dividing the herd, instead of having it all in one group. By 1899, four octagonal cowsheds were in operation, and it was proposed to erect more. Following Sharp's initiative, the construction of segregated cowsheds in Sassoon Road commenced. In addition, each cowshed had its own separate team of workers, in order to reduce the risk of carrying diseases from one shed to another, and to facilitate isolation during any outbreak of disease. The farm was mainly composed of cowsheds, paddocks, silos, manure pits, living quarters for cowboys, etc. Silos were used to store surplus fodder during the summer and supplied as silage in the winter to the herd; whereas manure pits were for collecting cow manure for use as fertilizer. Manure was kept in the pits until it was ready to spread on the surrounding grassland as fertilizer. By 1910, there were 35 cowsheds on the Pok Fu Lam farm; and by 1955, the number had risen to 47. According to a study of the farm in 1957, about 50 cowsheds at the time were separated from each other by at least 100 yards. The business of the Dairy Farm was so prosperous that in 1936 it was reported to be the fifth or the sixth in the size of the herd in the world.

The outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941 paralyzed the Dairy Farm Company along with the rest of Hong Kong. During the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945), the farm was taken over by the Japanese troops; only several key staff members, including the farm manager and his assistant, the company's veterinary surgeon and an engineer remained on the farm. Milk was reserved for Japanese consumption, mainly for the military hospital; also to internment camps. 1,312 out of the 1,900 animals of the farm were shipped to various parts of Mainland China, including 200 cows to Guangzhou between 29 December 1944 and 12 July 1945, for providing fresh milk to the Japanese troops. By the end of the Japanese Occupation, the herd at Pok Fu Lam had only about 300 cows; many of them were in very poor condition as a result of malnutrition. After the war, farm buildings were repaired and dairy farming at Pok Fu Lam was revived. By the 1950s, Europeans and Indians were still the main consumers of fresh milk, although the number of Chinese customers was gradually increasing, among the wealthier and middle-class families. Schools, particularly army schools, The University of Hong Kong and hotels, all ordered for fresh milk.

In the post-war years, the government needed land for vast new housing projects in order to meet the drastic and huge increase in population. By the early 1960s, a large amount of farmland had been resumed by the government, and residential developments began. Vast new housing estates, such as Baguio Villa, Wah Fu Estate, and Chi Fu Fa Yuen, were built on the original farmlands of some 300 acres. As a result, many Dairy Farm premises were abandoned or demolished. To meet the demand for milk, the supply was supplemented with the milk delivered by Dairy Farm's tankers from Kwong Ming Farm in Shenzhen every day. In 1981, a new business policy was established: core businesses were defined as retailing, wholesaling, food and ice manufacturing, and catering. It was for the first time in the company's history that dairy farming was excluded from mainstream business. In 1983, the Dairy Farm Company sold off the herd and more farmland was redeveloped for residential use.² The Old Dairy Farm buildings which still exist include a Senior Staff Quarters (Grade 1), the Main Office Building (Grade 2), a Cowshed (Grade 2) and other structures such as silos, manure pits, piggeries and paddocks.

Today, the existing structures of the Old Dairy Farm, which include structures, buildings, together with those graded historic buildings, are located near the Bethanie, Vocational Training Council (VTC), Pok Fu Lam Village, Baguio Villa, Chi Fu Fa Yuen, Wah Fu Estate, Queen Mary Hospital and Ebenezer School & Home for the Visually Impaired (心光盲人院暨學校).

The Old Wall (Serial No. N314), situated between the Bethanie and a former octagonal cowshed (now the Wellcome Theatre), is a perimeter wall and was erected probably in an early stage of the farm development, say around the late 1880s to separate the Bethanie and the farm site. The wall was constructed of old red bricks topped with rounded cement coping, to an average height of approximately 2m. At a later period, a fence was added to the top of the wall for additional security, and although the fence had gone, the concrete fence posts still remain in place. Each fence post was built on top of a brick pier. The red brick wall sits on a retaining wall; most of the latter is modern construction.

***Architectural
Merit***

In the mid-1950s, there were 19 dairy farms, mostly run by Chinese and one by Indian, mainly in Kowloon and two in Tsuen Wan, New Territories. They were much smaller in scale than the Dairy Farm. Among them, The

***Rarity and
Authenticity***

² The old farm lots roughly cover the present land bounded by Bisney Road and Sassoon Road as well as its adjoining piece of land bounded by Sassoon Road and Victoria Road, both below Queen Mary Hospital (Lot D.F.L. No. 1); Baguio Villa and the land near Ebenezer School (Lot D.F.L. No. 2); the slope near the Vocational Training Council Pokfulam Complex and the land where Wah Fu Estate, Chi Fu Fa Yuen, Pokfulam Gardens and Bel-Air on the Peak (Lot D.F.L. No. 3) are now located, and the slopes near Pok Fu Lam Village (Lot D.F.L. No. 4).

Kowloon Dairy Farm (九龍維記牛奶有限公司), established on Boundary Street in 1904 and relocated to Clear Water Bay in 1930, was the only dairy farm operated on a scientific basis comparable to the Dairy Farm in Pok Fu Lam.³ In 1972, The Kowloon Dairy Farm was relocated to Yuen Long; and in 1984 it further moved to Guangzhou.

Trappist Dairy (十字牌鮮奶) is another famous brand of fresh milk in Hong Kong but much shorter in history than the Old Dairy Farm. It was firstly a small dairy farm operating under the Trappist Monastery (神樂院) on Lantau Island in the early 1960s. It expanded and moved to Yuen Long in the early 1980s and has then been running by the Trappist Dairy Limited (神樂院牛奶有限公司).

Part of the Old Wall was removed to make way for the provision of road access to the Bethanie in 2006 when the building was converted into the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) campus. The wall is still in good condition.

Dairy Farm was an important part of Hong Kong's history. It is a tale of men who developed a company not with the sole intent of making money, but with a commitment to help establish a thriving community in this part of the world. Today, more than 130 years since 1886, "Dairy Farm" is still a well-known brand of fresh milk for Hong Kong. The cowsheds, together with their adjoining paddocks, were important structures on the estate, because they housed and supported the company's greatest asset for milk production, which was the dairy herd and these animals relied upon the availability of large areas for healthy exercise.

*Social Value
& Local Interest*

The Old Dairy Farm provided jobs for the villagers from nearby, like Pok Fu Lam Village.⁴ Villagers worked as cowboys, watchmen and so on.

The surviving structures of the Old Dairy Farm at Pok Fu Lam include cowsheds, paddocks, silos, manure pits, piggeries, stream crossings, staff quarters and ancillary structures, although some of them are in poor condition. The farm site provides an example of dairy farming industry in Hong Kong.

Group Value

³ Most of these farms were located in Diamond Hill and two in Tsuen Wan. Each of the farms at Diamond Hill owned only one or two cowsheds and kept an average of 40 cows. The two farms in Tsuen Wan had only one and two cowsheds respectively.

⁴ The growth of the population of the village had led to the scarcity of cultivated land by the 1950s and subsistence farming could no longer be relied on as a means of living.

Other heritage buildings near the Old Dairy Farm include the Bethanie (Declared Monument), University Hall of The University of Hong Kong (the exterior is a Declared Monument), Jessville at No. 128 Pok Fu Lam Road (Grade 3), waterworks structures of Pok Fu Lam Reservoir (Declared Monument/ Grade 2/ Grade 3) and No. 97 Pok Fu Lam Village (Grade 3).

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