

Historic Building Appraisal
University Lodge, The University of Hong Kong
No. 1 University Drive, Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong

University Lodge is the residence of the Vice-Chancellor of The University of Hong Kong (香港大學校長寓所). Completed in 1950, it was first known as the Vice-Chancellor's Lodge or the Vice-Chancellor's House until it was formally named University Lodge in 1995. It replaced the old Principal's House, which was completed sometime after the Main Building was completed in 1912.¹ The Principal's House was located approximately where Hui Oi Chow Science Building (許愛周科學館) now stands. *Historical Interest*

During the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945), the Japanese declared the university estate a temporary internment area for the university's expatriate staff who were not in the Armed Forces. This arrangement lasted until the end of January 1942, when they, including the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Duncan Sloss (1881 – 1964), were moved to the internment camp in Stanley. It is not known how the Principal's House was used during the remainder of occupation. Although the Japanese capitulated on 14 August 1945, Hong Kong was not reoccupied by the British naval force until 30 August. As a consequence, Hong Kong suffered a fortnight of lawless chaos following the capitulation. Looting of woodwork from buildings became widespread. Looters removed the teak floorboards, window frames, doors, staircases and roof joists of the unoccupied buildings on the university estate. According to a letter dated 29 April 1948 from Duncan Sloss, the Principal's House had been reduced to bare walls and a partial roof, and it had been decided to convert it into four flats, two for senior and two for junior men. Therefore, it was considered necessary to build a new house for the Vice-Chancellor.

In a meeting held on 8 September 1949, the university's Council (校務委員會) resolved, on the recommendation of the Building Committee, that the proposed Vice-Chancellor's residence would be sited at the old Victoria Battery, and Chau & Lee Architects & Engineering (周李建築工程師事務所) (hereafter "Chau & Lee") would be instructed to prepare plans and estimates for the proposed building.² In the meeting of 19 January 1950, the Council resolved that the sketch plans prepared by Chau & Lee for the proposed residence should be approved, and the estimate of

¹ Both the Main Building and the Principal's House were in the proposal for the building works of the university, which was accepted by Sir Hormusjee Mody in December 1909. Mody was the major benefactor for the construction of the Main Building and other university buildings. The Main Building was completed in 1912, while the Principal's House sometime after it.

² Chau & Lee was established by Chau Iu-Nin (周耀年) and Richard Lee (李禮之) in 1933. Chau graduated from The University of Hong Kong with a B.Sc. (Engineering) degree while Lee was trained as an architect in the UK. They were the first generation of Chinese architects in Hong Kong. Chau & Lee was a leading Chinese architectural firm in Hong Kong before the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945). St. Mary's Church in Causeway Bay (1937), No. 92 Blue Pool Road in Happy Valley (1950), University Lodge (1950) and No. 86 Stanley Main Street (1951) are examples of Chau & Lee's works.

\$220,000 (including site formation but not furniture) was acceptable. The invoice for the erection of the house including site formation was first submitted in April 1950. Finally, building works were completed at a cost of \$431,098.93.³ According to an occupation permit, the house was completed in October 1950. Sir Lindsay Ride (1898 – 1977) was the first Vice-Chancellor to reside in the new house.⁴

University Lodge occupies the site of the old Victoria Battery. The works for the Victoria Battery started on 11 November 1888 and were completed by 20 October 1890. A 9.2-inch breech-loading Mark IV gun was mounted to guard the western approaches to Hong Kong. In 1898, the Committee on Armaments determined that the gun was superfluous and should be removed; but it actually remained in service until 1911. The gun barrel was uncovered during the foundation works for the new house. Attempts were made in vain to persuade the Armed Forces to reclaim possession of the gun, and it therefore became the property of the university and was erected in the house's garden.

Up to 2019, University Lodge has been home to nine Vice-Chancellors of the university. They are Sir Lindsay Ride, Kenneth Robinson, Rayson Lisung Huang, Wang Gungwu, Cheng Yiu-chung, William Davies, Lap-chee Tsui, Peter Mathieson and Xiang Zhang.⁵ The house provides both a family home and an attractive and relatively informal venue for receptions and other hospitality events hosted by the Vice-Chancellor as part of his official duties. It serves as a meeting place for staff members, students, alumni and friends of the university. It has also been used for concerts and other performances, either stand-alone events or proceeding receptions or dinners.⁶

The residence was designed by the architectural practice of Chau & Lee. This *Architectural Merit* two-storey, beige-painted, smooth stucco rendered building of reinforced concrete

³ Letter dated 18 December 1958 from Whitney H. Shepardson to Colonel Lindsay Ride, Vice-Chancellor of The University of Hong Kong, "Sir Lindsay Ride Collection : Vice-President's Lodge, 1950 – 1958 (04128)", Box 1, Folder 7, University Archives, The University of Hong Kong.

⁴ Ride was a physiologist. In 1928, he was appointed professor of physiology at The University of Hong Kong. In 1931, he was commissioned into the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. In 1941, he commanded the Hong Kong Field Ambulance, but was taken prisoner by the Japanese in December. His escape into Mainland China in January 1942 was recognised by an O.B.E. He then formed and commanded the British Army Aid Group (BAAG), which helped escapees from Hong Kong, provided medical and other assistance to prisoners of war, and gathered intelligence. Ride was awarded C.B.E. in 1944 for his outstanding leadership. In April 1949, Ride was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the university, and set about the rehabilitation and expansion of the university. He was knighted in 1962.

⁵ W.C.G. Knowles and A.J.S. McFadzean, two successive Vice-Chancellors after Sir Lindsay Ride, did not live in the University Lodge, since their appointment was for a transitional period and their term of office was brief. W.C.G. Knowles took up the duty temporarily as Vice-Chancellor on 19 November 1964 until 30 June 1965. A.J.S. McFadzean succeeded Knowles and served as Vice-Chancellor for a year.

⁶ According to some old newspaper reports, the University Lodge has also been a venue for wedding receptions, a welcome dinner given by Sir Lindsay Ride for the Presidents of the Commonwealth Universities, and a reunion breakfast between HKU Marathon Team and the Vice-Chancellor, for instance. A garden party for Princess Alexandra of Kent was also organised in the grounds of the University Lodge in 1961.

structure demonstrates the influences of Streamline Moderne design, which is characterised by curves, horizontal lines and a trace of nautical influence.⁷ It features a curved main entrance portico and curved external walls, with a strong horizontal emphasis of the elevations. The curved theme is continued with the two wings that flank the main entrance. The front elevation thus presents a curved frontage, with a flagpole positioned centrally at roof level. The canopy over the main entrance portico, which has balustrade decorated with horizontal plaster mouldings and wrought ironwork of a classical scroll design, is supported by a pair of plain round columns with bases finished with terrazzo. The columns stand on one of the granite steps leading to the main entrance doorway. In-between the granite steps and the entrance door there is terrazzo flooring. Horizontal motif with Streamline Moderne influences can also be identified in the plaster mouldings of the fence wall's cornice. The main entrance gate, fashioned in wrought ironwork with an abstract design, is also of architectural interest.

The two side elevations of the main building varies in design. The right-hand side elevation incorporates a wide projecting balcony at 1/F level, with a balustrade decorated with horizontal plaster mouldings and wrought ironwork in a classical scroll design. The left-hand side elevation instead has no balcony and features long windows with overhead projections. It is connected to a garage and a utility area formed by decorative screen walls. The folding door of the garage is of high-quality hardwood. The rear elevation also features a horizontal design emphasis. Plain round columns and terrazzo finishes are repeated at the G/F verandah and the balcony above.

Internally, the floor layout, with the main staircase centrally located, uses the circular walls to highlight the principal spaces of the house, including the entrance lobby and the dining room on the G/F, and the master bedroom above the dining room. Both those principal spaces on the G/F and the bedrooms on the 1/F are provided with polished hardwood floorboards and have plaster mouldings on the walls. The hardwood floorboards at the entrance lobby are laid in an intricate “star shaped” pattern, while those in other rooms have a “squared-chequer” or a “herringbone” pattern. All the timber skirtings are also well maintained. Other built-in elements, such as the main entrance door to the entrance lobby and the sliding door to the dining room, the treads, risers and handrail of the main staircase made up of polished hardwood, the elegant wrought ironwork of the main staircase, as well as the fireplace in the study on the G/F all attain a high level of workmanship.

⁷ Streamline Moderne, also known as Art Moderne, was a late variation of the Art Deco movement with curves, horizontal lines and a trace of nautical influence. The 1930s was the heyday of the Art Deco style in architecture, and it dominated virtually all design areas in the Western world, from graphic to industrial products, jewellery, furniture, movies and stage sets, and interior and architectural design. On the other hand, vertical and horizontal emphases on external walls were popular in the modernist movement of the 1950s.

University Lodge has important connections with the personalities involved in the development of The University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong's tertiary education. The 9.2-inch gun barrel of the late nineteenth century is also of some local interest and serves to enrich the historical layering of the site. ***Social Value & Local Interest***

Also situated in the University of Hong Kong campus are declared monuments, namely the exteriors of Main Building (香港大學本部大樓), Hung Hing Ying Building (孔慶熒樓), Tang Chi Ngong Building (鄧志昂樓), Fung Ping Shan Building (馮平山樓), May Hall (梅堂) and Eliot Hall (儀禮堂). Other historic buildings in the area include King's College (英皇書院) (Declared Monument), the Main Building of St. Stephen's Girls' College (聖士提反女子中學主樓) (Declared Monument), Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong Kau Yan Church (香港崇真會救恩堂) (Grade 1) and Stone House (石寓) at No. 15 Kotewall Road (Grade 3). ***Group Value***

University Lodge is a prominent example of Streamline Moderne buildings in Hong Kong. It was built to a very high standard of construction, with carefully composed detailing. No major alterations, which would have diminished the authenticity of the house, can be identified. The only minor alteration was to the original one-storey garage, which had a second floor added in the early 1970s for use as a driver's quarters. The building itself is associated with important figures involved in the development of The University of Hong Kong. Its nearby gun barrel is believed to be the only 9.2-inch gun barrel still surviving in Hong Kong, ***Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity***

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