

Historic Building Appraisal
Former Kindergarten Block of Ying Wa Girls' School
No. 76 Robinson Road, Mid-Levels, H.K.

Ying Wa Girls' School was founded in 1900 by Miss Helen Davies (牒喜蓮) of the London Missionary Society. In 1911, during her time as Headmistress, a kindergarten was introduced into the school organisation. Originally housed in a makeshift mat-shed, the kindergarten later moved into the existing block which was built in 1926.¹ This kindergarten block is now the oldest surviving building in Ying Wa Girls' School, bearing witness to almost a century of Ying Wa's development.

***Historical
Interest***

The establishment of a kindergarten was ground-breaking in early 20th century Hong Kong, at a time when kindergarten education was little understood by many parents. Imbibed with a mission to preach and to educate, the teachers were keen to visit the parents at home and held a parents' day once a year since 1920. They also introduced a Sunday school to include the brothers and sisters of those enrolled, as well as other children within the district. The Headmistress' report for 1920 includes the following message:

“Our kindergarten has lived up to its name, a real garden of children, and very happy children, throughout the year. The Kindergarten is the foundation of the school and none are better scholars than those who come at four or five years of age into the kindergarten to pass up afterward to our higher classes.”²

The kindergarten block is important as an example of the early presence of the missionaries who came from abroad to serve. It has a significance with regard to the role of Hong Kong as a centre of cultural exchange, as it used to be a place for the transmission of English education and religious faith to the local Chinese.

¹ Ying Wa Girls' School, *Ying Wa Girls' School: The Blessed Years 1900-2000*, Hong Kong: Ying Wa Girls' School, 2001, p. 60

² Ibid, p. 59

The kindergarten block is a single-storey irregularly shaped building. It resembles a Chinese pavilion with a roof pitched and hipped with double-layered Chinese pan-and-roll tiles supported on trusses. An ornamental ball finial is at the apex of the roof, while the wide overhanging eaves are supported by ornamental brackets.

***Architectural
Merit***

The design of the building displays the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement which was popular in the early years of the 20th century. The bottom of the building is lined externally with red bricks all around. Red bricks can also be found on the windowsills. The wall is covered with rough cast rendering. These red bricks were once covered in paint from previous alterations but this was removed during a recent restoration. Similarly, the doors and windows which were previously converted into modern flush doors and glass louver panels have been restored to the original glazed doors and casement windows respectively.

The building has a role in the field of education, and as a reminder of the contributions made by the missionaries to the well-being and development of Hong Kong through their work of preaching, teaching and healing. The building has a sentimental association for the school's alumnae and students. It is described as “Ying Wa's oldest architectural asset” in a publication to commemorate the school's centenary in 2001.³

***Social Value &
Local Interest***

The kindergarten block reminds people not only of the contributions of the missionaries, but also of the achievements of the old girls, who fill responsible positions in the public and private sectors in Hong Kong. The kindergarten block was renamed the “1926 Heritage Block” after the completion of the school redevelopment in 2019.

The building is situated close to several buildings with heritage interest, including the London Mission Building (倫敦傳道會大樓) at Nos. 78 & 80 Robinson Road, Hop Yat Church (合一堂) at No. 2 Bonham Road, the Old Pathological Institute (舊病理學院) at No. 2 Caine Lane (Declared Monument) and the former government staff quarters at No. 4 Hospital Road.

Group Value

³ Ibid, p. 60

Buildings displaying the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement are quite rare now in Hong Kong, as not many are left. The Former Peak School (now the Peak Fire Station) at No. 7 Gough Hill Path is one such example. The layout and roof profile of the building appear to be authentic and it has been successfully renovated and restored.

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

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