

## Historic Building Appraisal

### Fanling Lodge

Kwu Tung, Sheung Shui, N.T.

The Fanling Lodge (粉嶺別墅) was a retreat where Hong Kong's Governors (now Chief Executives) could spend weekends and holidays. When Sir William Peel (貝璐) was Governor (1930-35), there emerged a suggestion that the Governor's weekend retreat on the Peak, Mountain Lodge, be relinquished and a new country residence be built in the New Territories. The purpose of the new residence was for the Governor to retreat from the cares of his position and to symbolize the government's recognition of the New Territories' greater contribution to the crown colony. The result was Fanling Lodge, designed in 1933 by Stanley Crathern Feltham of the then Public Works Department.

*Historical  
Interest*

The construction of the Fanling Lodge was completed in **1934** at a cost of HK\$140,000. It is a two-storey bungalow set in the middle of the Hong Kong Golf Club in Fanling, just 3.5 kilometres from the border with the Chinese mainland. Surrounded by pleasant open environs and right near the golf course, Fanling Lodge came to be used by Hong Kong's Governors far more than the Mountain Lodge on the Peak for weekend breaks away from town. In fact, the Mountain Lodge after its completion had been largely ignored by several successive Governors on account of its damp and general inconvenience.

The Fanling Lodge was taken over by the Japanese during the World War II period. In 1946, after his return to Hong Kong after being a prisoner of war, Governor Sir Mark Young (楊慕琦) (1941, 1946-1947) made inquiries about the conditions of both lodges to establish whether they were fit for habitation. After the surveys, the Government decided to demolish Mountain Lodge and retain Fanling Lodge. Governor Young chose not to use Fanling Lodge himself, however. Instead, he turned it over to the Rural Teachers' Training College (香港官立鄉村師範專科學校) for use as a campus between 1946 and 1948.

Thereafter, the Fanling Lodge experienced further changes of use. During the term of Governor Sir Alexander Grantham (葛量洪) (1947-1957), the Fanling Lodge was made available to the British military. In 1960, Governor Sir Robert Black (柏立基) (1958-1964), seeing a way to spend more time with his family, retrieved it from the military and returned it to its original purpose. Subsequent colonial Governors and Chief Executives of Hong Kong used it as a holiday retreat and a venue to host visiting dignitaries. Former British Prime Minister John Major stayed there in 1996 when Chris Patten was the Governor.

The fact, albeit little known, is that the Fanling Lodge served as a venue for secret discussions held in Hong Kong between China and Britain, outside of the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group, on issues of importance during Hong Kong's transition to 1997, for example, new accounting arrangements for monetary control, the linked exchange rate system, the establishment of a monetary authority for Hong Kong which was eventually established in 1993, and issues arising from a Sino-British Memorandum of Understanding signed concerning the construction of a new airport, now the Chek Lap Kok Airport.

Designed and built in the 1930s, the main building of Fanling Lodge is a two-storey bungalow which is an eclectic mixture of Arts and Crafts, Spanish Mission Revival and "Hollywood Moderne" architectural styles, together with some classical elements such as **Corinthian columns and Serlian arches**. Topped by a **pitched roof with pan-and-roll tiles**, the main building features verandas at the front and back. Local materials, such as glazed green screen blocks, were used in its construction. *Architectural Merit*

The architectural style of the main building is very similar to a block of flats in Hampstead Garden Suburb in the U.K. called "The Pantiles" built in 1945-35 and designed by British architect James Bertie Francis Cowper (1887-1944). "The Pantiles" was listed as a historic building of special architectural interest in 2003.

The interior of the main building follows the minimalist style of the 1930s. All the rooms have panelled doors and brass fittings; the floors are boarded and varnished. Staircases are made of polished terrazzo. The upper floor comprises four bedrooms, a dressing room and bathrooms, while the lower floor includes a front hall, living room, dining room, study, kitchen and staff quarters.

The garden, in the **Arts and Crafts** style of the influential British landscape designer Gertrude Jekyll, features woodland with tall trees, vistas and terraced lawns front and back. Also on the 2.3-hectare site are a swimming pool, a wood-and-stone pergola, a tennis court, a guard house on the approach road, and other outbuildings, including a Chinese-style pavilion. The retaining walls around the back garden are a mix of local grey bricks and masonry.

The Fanling Lodge is an attractive looking colonial residence in its own grounds which is quite rare in Hong Kong. To all intents and purposes, it is a most desirable residence in the old colonial style. Its built heritage value and history are rather substantial. As far as can be seen, the main building is well maintained and alterations have been carried out sympathetically. *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

The social value of Fanling Lodge lies in its historical role as a *Social Value & Local Interest* retreat/country residence of Hong Kong's Governors/ Chief Executives and their families. It is part of the Fanling environment. The main building is surrounded by greenery. The area is made up of low density high grade residences. The overall atmosphere matches with the heritage quality of the building.

The Fanling Lodge is part of a group of historic villas/mansions which are *Group Value* located in the area of Kwu Tung, Sheung Shui (上水古洞) recalling the lifestyle of the well-to-do people in Hong Kong. The luxurious historic residences nearby include, for example, a classical colonial bungalow known as Oi Yuen Villa (愛園別墅) which was originally owned by the Jardine, Matheson & Co. Ltd. and eventually acquired in 1957 by Hui Oi-chow (許愛周), as well as Yan Wah Lo (仁華廬), Yeung Yuen (楊園), Manor House (將軍府),