

Historic Building Appraisal
Masonry Bridge
Pok Fu Lam Reservoir, Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Road, Hong Kong

Pok Fu Lam Reservoir (薄扶林水塘) is the oldest reservoir in Hong Kong. **Historical Interest** The construction of the reservoir commenced in 1860 and water supplies began to reach the city at the end of 1863, making it the very first public reservoir in Hong Kong. It was connected by an aqueduct along Conduit Road to two tanks above Tai Ping Shan to provide water supplies to Central and Western districts. Because of government budget constraints, the funding originally allocated for the construction of the Pok Fu Lam Reservoir was eventually reduced. The storage capacity of the reservoir was only 2-million gallons, which was highly inadequate as the daily water consumption in 1863 was 500,000 gallons. This limited capacity meant that it could only supply four days of water to the community per week. To alleviate the situation, improvements in the form of several reservoir extensions were undertaken between 1866 and 1871. Prior to the construction of the Tai Tam Reservoir in the 1880s, Pok Fu Lam Reservoir was the only reservoir providing fresh water supplies to Central and Western districts.

This masonry arched bridge is situated at the east end of the reservoir and carries Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Road, which runs along the north side of the reservoir. It spans the mouth of one of the feeder streams that run off the surrounding hillsides. This bridge, together with another four masonry bridges on Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Road, provides not only a linkage with the reservoir's other waterworks facilities, but also access for maintenance and visitation. It is constructed of granite with a semi-circular arch, and has neatly finished granite copings with chamfered margins. The road surface on top of the bridge has been paved with cement. **Architectural Merit**

As one of the oldest surviving items of Pok Fu Lam Reservoir, which is itself the oldest reservoir in Hong Kong, the masonry bridge has high built heritage value. The structure does not appear to have been altered and therefore retains its authenticity. **Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity**

This masonry bridge, together with the other surviving historic waterworks structures of Pok Fu Lam Reservoir, such as the other four masonry bridges, an embankment and an old masonry dam, bears witness to a pioneering waterworks project that played a significant role in the socio-economic development of Hong Kong during the early years of the city's development. It also serves to demonstrate the government's determination to provide a permanent water supply. **Social Value & Local Interest**

system in the early colonial period. Now within the Pok Fu Lam Country Park and on the Hong Kong Trail, the reservoir is well known and often visited by hikers and morning walkers.

The bridge has significant group value with other historic waterworks structures of the reservoir, namely a Gauge Basin (量水站), the former Watchman's Cottage (前看守員房舍) and four Masonry Bridges which have been declared monuments, as well as a Box Culvert (方形暗渠) (Grade 2), an Embankment (土堤) (Grade 2), an Old Masonry Dam (Grade 2) and Air Vents at the Service Reservoir (配水庫通風口) (Grade 3). The reservoir is also near to other historic buildings, including the Bethanie (伯達尼修院) and the University Hall (香港大學大學堂宿舍), both are declared monuments, as well as some remaining structures of the old Dairy Farm.

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Historic Building Appraisal
Tunnel Portal of Water Mains from No. 5 Dam, Former Braemar Reservoir
Choi Sai Woo Park, Braemar Hill Road, North Point, H.K.

At present, the surviving tunnel portal of the water mains from No. 5 dam of the former Braemar Reservoir of Taikoo Sugar Refinery is situated within the Choi Sai Woo Park (賽西湖公園) of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department on Braemar Hill Road.¹ The Braemar Reservoir (known as Tsat Tsz Mui Reservoir (七姊妹水塘) or “Choi Sai Woo Reservoir” (賽西湖水塘) in Chinese) was in fact one of a group of private reservoirs built by Butterfield & Swire (now known as John Swire & Sons Ltd.) in the 1880s and 1890s to supply water for the operation of the Taikoo Sugar Refining Company Limited (太古糖廠/太古車糖公司/太古煉糖廠).

The Taikoo Sugar Refining Company Limited was established in the UK in 1881, with the aim of setting up a production plant in Hong Kong that would sell its sugar to Mainland China and Japan. The factory premises with stores, offices and a wharf were established at the present site of Taikoo Place (太古坊) on King’s Road in Quarry Bay,² while the staff quarters and two reservoirs were located at the present site of Kornhill (康怡花園) and Mount Parker Lodge (柏架山花園). The sugar refinery went into operation in 1884. To keep pace with the growth of the sugar-refining business and the number of Taikoo’s employees, the Braemar Reservoir, also known as No. 5 Reservoir, was built to the west of Mount Parker in 1894. It was situated on a plot of land formerly recorded as “Inland Lot 1336”, which was held by Butterfield & Swire on a 999-year Crown Lease from 1891. The Braemar Reservoir, which had a capacity of 137,700,000 gallons of water, was the largest and most important reservoir owned by the company. The reservoir was so scenic that people compared it with the West Lake (Sai Woo, 西湖) of Hangzhou (杭州) in Mainland China. Therefore, it was also locally known as Choi Sai Woo (賽西湖) in Chinese, meaning “comparable to West Lake”.

As its name suggests, the district of Quarry Bay, in which the sugar refinery was established, was well known for quarrying and many residents were

¹ Braemar Hill and Braemar Hill Road were named after Sir James John Gordon Bremer (1786 – 1850). Bremer served the Royal Navy from 1794 to 1849. He twice commanded British naval forces in the first Opium War (1839 – 1842), and was awarded the Knight Commander (KCB) for his work in 1841. Moreover, Hong Kong Island was occupied on 26 January 1842 by a naval force under Commodore Sir James John Gordon Bremer which landed and raised the flag at Possession Point near Possession Street. For unknown reasons, his family name “Bremer” was spelt as “Braemar” for the hill and road named after him.

² The former sugar refinery is at the site of the Taikoo Place group of office buildings. These buildings face a street named Tong Chong Street (literally meaning sugar factory street) (糖廠街).

quarrymen. The population of Quarry Bay increased rapidly after the Taikoo Sugar Refinery went into operation in 1884 followed by the adjoining Taikoo Dockyard & Engineering Company of Hongkong Limited (太古船塢公司) between 1908 and 1909. For instance, when it began operating, the sugar refining company recruited some 3,000 employees, while the dockyard brought in some 5,000 newcomers to the district.³ Swire built reservoirs to supply water for sugar production, as well as for the employees and their families residing in the staff quarters at the sugar refinery and dockyard compounds.

Apart from maintaining the daily operations of the sugar refinery and dockyard, Butterfield & Swire's reservoirs also assisted the government with its supply of water. In 1908, the government entered an "Agreement for the Supply of Water to Quarry Bay" with the company when the construction of the dockyard was still under way. The company thereby undertook to supply water not only to the sugar refining and dockyard compounds, but also to the entire population of Quarry Bay. In return, no rates would be levied on the company's properties relating to water supply.⁴ A second agreement with the same terms and conditions was entered into in 1910, after the construction of the dockyard was completed and some of the marine lots within its boundary were re-numbered. According to official records, Butterfield & Swire met their commitments under this agreement "by means of a number of reservoirs standing in the Taikoo Valley and in particular the Braemar Reservoir above North Point".⁵ In fact, during droughts, the government also sought the assistance of Butterfield & Swire regarding the supply of water to other districts beyond Quarry Bay.⁶

In December 1941, the Japanese invaded Hong Kong Island by taking control of the Taikoo Dockyard on the northern coast of Hong Kong Island. Both the dockyard and Taikoo sugar refinery were then occupied by the Japanese.⁷ The name of the latter was changed to the Hong Kong Sugar Refining Company (香港

³ These some 5,000 new residents were the employees of the dockyard and their family members.

⁴ The agreement covered the reservoirs built for the sugar refining company and the dockyard.

⁵ Public Records Office, Memo dated 11 December 1962 (Ref. HKRS 287-4-1, Appendix II to Enclosure 50).

⁶ For instance, Swire supplied 990,000 gallons of water to the neighbouring Shau Kei Wan district before the rainy season in 1920 and 620,000 in 1921. From February to June 1929, the sugar refinery alone had provided 21.35 million gallons, equal to an average daily quantity of 157,000 gallons, for the Whitfield area in Causeway Bay. Around June that year, the refinery had restricted to supply to government 100,000 gallons a day.

Besides, in 1894 when the reservoir was built, Hong Kong suffered one of the greatest disasters in her history – the outbreak of the epidemic "Bubonic Plague" in the Taipingshan District in Sheung Wan. The plague was further aggravated by droughts. During the water famine from 1894 to 1895, Swire was able to furnish large supplies of water from the No. 5 dam, conveying water to the city in the company's large iron lighters, which were temporarily fitted up as water boats.

⁷ All the expatriate employees were sent to the Stanley internment camp.

精糖廠). Since the dockyard was used to repair Japanese naval vessels during the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945), both the dockyard and the adjoining sugar refinery were bombed by the Allied Forces. As a consequence, repairs to the compounds had to be carried out after the war.

Butterfield & Swire's sugar refinery business declined from the 1950s onwards, mainly due to its loss of the Mainland Chinese market and the rising cost of production. In 1965, the company purchased the Hongkong Bottlers Federal Inc. (香港汽水廠) (renamed Swire Bottlers (太古汽水廠) in 1974) and invested in the production of soft drinks, including Coca Cola, which were very popular at that time. The sugar refinery gradually became marginalised, and finally ceased operation in 1972.⁸ The Braemar Reservoir was later replaced by the present Braemar Hill Mansions, which was completed in 1978. The masonry tunnel portal of the water mains from the former sugar refinery's No. 5 dam has been preserved and is now part of the Choi Sai Woo Park, which was officially opened on 16 January 1987.

The tunnel portal is built in the Classical Revival architectural style using random rubble and dressed ashlar masonry with a heavy granite coping. Its most outstanding features are the stepped and projecting voussoirs in vermiculated rustification at its recessed archway or portal. At the granite base of the portal is a valve pit with a surrounding stepped wall and concrete curb, while the pit itself contains large flanged iron draw-off pipes and wheel-valves. The rear part of the valve pit is set back into the recessed archway.

The Neo-classical pilasters on either side of the archway support a classical entablature, moulded cornice, parapet and triangular pediment bearing the following inscription: "NO. 5 DAM", "TAIKOO SUGAR REFINING COMPANY LIMITED" and the year "1894". The masonry is stained with the patina of age but otherwise appears to be in good condition.

The tunnel portal is the only surviving waterworks structure of the former Taikoo Sugar Refining Company Limited, which was a well-known company in the sugar-refining industry in Hong Kong and Asia. The delicate masonry work is of considerable architectural merit. Only routine maintenance works have been carried out during the decades since the reservoir was converted into Choi Sai Woo

Architectural Merit

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

⁸ Swire had in fact also started selling off part of the Quarry Bay Marine Lot No. 1 (Q.B.M.L. 1) along the coast, within which the Taikoo sugar refinery was situated, for residential, commercial or industrial uses in the 1950s. Besides, during the early 1960s' building boom, Swire considered filling in the Braemar Reservoir and selling the land for housing, but the proposal was later temporarily shelved due to the decline in building demand.

Park in 1987, but the authenticity of the surviving tunnel portal has been retained.

The tunnel portal is thus an important historical reminder of the early history of Hong Kong's manufacturing industries.⁹ The former sites of the Taikoo refinery and Taikoo dockyard have been redeveloped into a large commercial and residential district known as Taikoo, with an MTR station also bearing the same name.¹⁰ The street, Tong Chong Street (糖廠街, which literally means "sugar factory street"), is indeed named after the sugar refinery, as it is situated on its former site. Although the refinery is gone, "Taikoo Sugar" (太古糖) remains a famous brand name. Besides, it is also worth mentioning the contribution made by a group of private reservoirs, including Taikoo's Braemar Reservoir, to the supply of public drinking water to Quarry Bay and other districts. The tunnel portal associated with the Braemar Reservoir is thus also an important historical reminder of the early history of drinking water supplies in Hong Kong.

The Mansion and Garage of Woodside (林邊屋) at No. 50 Mount Parker Road to the east of Braemar Hill, also built by the Taikoo Sugar Refinery as quarters for European staff, is a Grade 2 historic building.

Social Value & Local Interest

Group Value

⁹ After the refinery section closed in 1972, the company focused on sugar packing. At present, Taikoo Sugar packages sugar products in Mainland China, and no longer refines or produces sugar.

¹⁰ The Braemar Reservoir was also a famous scenic spot, both before and after the Second World War.

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Historic Building Appraisal
Tin Hau Temple
San Tsuen, Tai O, Lantau Island, N.T.

The Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) in San Tsuen (新村), Tai O (大澳), is dedicated to the Goddess of the Sea (Tin Hau) and was built in the early Qing (清) dynasty (1644 – 1911).¹ Tai O encompasses a coastal plain and a small island, which are separated by a watercourse known as Tai O Tai Chung (大澳大涌). Wing On Street (永安街) and Tai Ping Street (太平街) on the plain and Shek Tsai Po Street (石仔埗街), Market Street (街市街), Kat Hing Street (吉慶街) and Kat Hing Back Street (吉慶後街) on the island are the oldest main streets of Tai O. San Tsuen is situated to the south of Wing On Street and Tai Ping Street. In-between those streets and San Tsuen are the old salt pans and former paddy fields, which in the latter case are now home to mangroves. Fishing, salt-making and rice-growing formed the backbone of the local economy until their decline from the 1970s onwards.

While both the boat and land populations (水陸居民) of Tai O worshipped at the Tin Hau Temple in San Tsuen, over the years the land population (mainly the residents of Wing On Street and Tai Ping Street) were primarily responsible for the operation and management of the temple. Indeed, Wing On Street and Tai Ping Street were established on a section of the embankment purposely built for developing salt production and rice cultivation during the Qianlong (乾隆) reign of the Qing dynasty (1736-1795).² The streets also formed the oldest commercial centre of Tai O. Aerial photos dating back to the 1950s show that salt pans and agricultural land were situated in the coastal areas near Wing On Street, Tai Ping Street, San Tsuen, Leung Uk Tsuen (梁屋村) and Nam Chung Tsuen (南涌村). According to villagers, rice was grown there in the old days. The Tin Hau Temple was sited to have an unobstructed view of the salt pans and paddy fields protected by the goddess.³ Two round granite pillars, now placed near the

¹ According to a stone inscription on the renovation of the temple in the 18th year of the Daoguang reign (道光十八年) of the Qing dynasty (1838), the temple was built around 1644, i.e. the first year of the Shunzhi reign (順治元年). However, according to another stone inscription on the renovation of the temple in 1972, the temple was built in 1713 during the Kangxi reign (康熙之癸巳).

² Stone inscription on the renovation of the temple carried out in the 18th year of the Daoguang reign (道光十八年) of the Qing dynasty (1838).

³ Legend has it that Tai O is protected by four mythical animals (大澳四靈獸), namely a tiger in the north (near Po Chue Tam), an elephant and a lion in the east and a phoenix in the south. The mountains symbolising them were locally known as Fu Shan (mountain of the tiger) (虎山), Cheung Shan (mountain of the elephant) (象山), Sze Shan (mountain of the lion) (獅山) and Fung Shan (mountain of the phoenix) (鳳山), and collectively referred to as the four sacred mountains of Tai O (大澳四靈山). The inscriptions of “地接鳳山” identified from the two stone inscriptions on the renovations of this Tin Hau Temple in 1838 and 1895 narrate that the temple was situated on the land connected with Fung Shan. The maps of the present day show the names of Fu Shan, Cheung Shan and Sze Shan. It is said that today's Tsim Fung Shan (尖峰山) is the then Fung Shan.

temple's main entrance, were used to crush the larger salt crystals produced by the salt pans. Worshippers are mainly the residents of Wing On Street, Tai Ping Street, San Tsuen, Leung Uk Tsuen and Nam Chung Tsuen, which are all near the temple.

There are a number of historic artefacts in the temple. They include the stone inscriptions recording the renovations carried out in 1838 and 1895. It is worth mentioning that salt makers (鹽廠) were among the donors for the 1838 renovation. Besides, other examples of historic artefacts surviving in the temple include a bronze bell dating from 1713, a bronze tripod vessel dated 1725, as well as timber plaques presented by shops and individuals as gifts for Tin Hau in 1838, 1892 and 1946.⁴

The temple was built with a two-hall-one-courtyard plan, with side chambers to the left and right of the halls. An annex is attached to the right chamber.⁵ The halls are covered by traditional pitched roofs with pan and roll tiles as well as gable walls. The roof ridge of the entrance hall is decorated with exquisite ceramic figurines depicting Chinese folk tales, with a pearl in the middle, and a pair of dragon-fish (鰐魚) and a pair of phoenix at either end of the ridge. The Chinese characters “石灣均玉造” and “光緒十八年” reveal that the ceramic ridge was produced by Junyu (均玉), a famous brand name of the contemporary Shiwan (石灣) ceramics industry dating from the eighteenth year of the Guangxu reign (1892) of the Qing dynasty. It is noteworthy that the ceramic ridge is the oldest example of work by Junyu identified in Hong Kong.⁶ A pair of ceramic lions stand on the tips of the entrance hall's gable ridges. The roof ridge of the end hall has a pair of simple geometric dragons, with a pearl in the middle and a ceramic dragon-fish at either end. On the gable walls to either side of the entrance hall are plaster mouldings of flowers, a vase and a bat, which have been painted white.⁷ The painted murals featuring peonies and images from traditional folklores, together with the exquisitely carved fascia board and plaster mouldings of auspicious motifs on the facade, are all typical of traditional temple decorations.

Architectural Merit

The main entrance comprises a doorway with steps, a door cill and a

⁴ 1713 was the 52nd year of the Kangxi reign (康熙五十二年), 1725 the 3rd year of the Yongzheng reign (雍正三年), 1838 the 18th year of the Daoguang reign (道光十八年), 1895 (the 21st year of the Guangxu reign (光緒二十一年) and 1946 the 35th Republican year (民國三十五年).

A pair of metal joss stick holders, in the form of a carved figurine in traditional costumes, can also be identified from the door frame of the main entrance.

⁵ The quarters and kitchen (disused) of the ex-temple-keeper are housed in the annex. While the exact construction year of the annex is not known, aerial photos show that this annex has been in existence before 1956.

⁶ 馬素梅， 《屋脊上的戲台：香港的石灣瓦脊》，頁 92 -93。

⁷ The decorative features at the top end of a gable wall are collectively known as “懸魚” in Chinese.

threshold, all in granite, and a timber door with Door God painted on it. Above the main entrance are the engraved characters of the temple's name “天后古廟” in Chinese. The timber couplet on either side of the main entrance (島國渡慈航幸有神靈扶水陸；新村存聖蹟故留廟貌壯山河), which date back to 1921 (according to the characters of “民國辛酉年”), expresses the deep gratitude of the boat and land populations to Tin Hau for her blessings and protection, and their deep affection for the temple and its preservation, as well as their wish for prosperity. The engraved characters of the temple's name and the couplet as well as the wood carvings of the fascia board are all gilded.

Internally, a timber screen door, which is locally known as *dong chung* (檔中), was erected behind the main entrance doorway.⁸ To the left of the screen door is Tin Hau's “bedroom”. The courtyard in-between the front and end halls is covered by a pavilion comprising a timber-built roof structure with pan and roll tiles. However, the concrete parapet walls supporting to the pavilion suggest that it is a later addition. The roof of the end hall is supported by a pair of timber columns with granite bases. Altars are placed in the front and end halls, with the main central altar in the end hall for Tin Hau, one for the God of Fortune (財帛星君) and Hau Wong (侯王) to the left and another for Lady Golden Flower (金花娘娘)⁹ in the right-hand bay. Che Kung (車公) and the Earth God (土地), also known as Fuk Tak (福德), are worshipped in the front hall.

The temple, with its two halls and one courtyard with three bays is the largest Tin Hau Temple in Tai O.¹⁰ It underwent renovations from time to time, including those carried out in 1838, 1895 and 1972, as indicated by the stone inscriptions inside the temple.¹¹ According to villagers, the walls built of grey brickwork with lower sections made of granite blocks were plastered in 1972. White lines imitating brick joints were painted on the front elevation. The granite paving slabs in the covered courtyard and the granite steps leading from the courtyard to the end hall were also covered by modern cement and mosaic tiles during the 1972 renovation. Fortunately, elements reflecting traditional craftsmanship, such as ceramic figurines on the roofs, the wood carvings of the fascia board and other decorative features such as plaster mouldings and murals, remain intact. The historic ceramic main roof ridge, as well as the historic sea-oriented setting, make the temple a rather rare piece of built heritage.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

⁸ It is believed that *dong chung* can ward off evil spirits. Therefore, it is kept closed all year round, except on the auspicious day of the Birthday of Tin Hau on the 23rd day of the third lunar month.

⁹ Worshippers believe that Lady Golden Flower can grant descendants.

¹⁰ Another Tin Hau Temple is situated at Kat Hing Back Street (Grade 3). It is a one-bay and two-hall-one-courtyard temple.

¹¹ 1838 was the 18th year of the Daoguang reign (道光十八年) and 1895 the 21st year of the Guangxu reign (光緒廿一年).

The Tin Hau Temple in San Tsuen has borne witness to the development of Tai O and remains as one of the major temples in Tai O. It was surrounded by paddy fields and salt pans which were important to the local economy before the 1970s. Both the boat and land populations worshipped the Goddess of the Sea in San Tsuen. The performance of Cantonese opera (神功戲) was organized to celebrate the Birthday of Tin Hau (天后誕) on the 23rd day of the third lunar month.¹² However, many villagers began moving to the urban areas from the 1970s onwards, and thus it became difficult to secure sufficient resources to organize the Cantonese opera performances, which eventually ceased around 2000.¹³ Despite that, the Birthday of Tin Hau is still celebrated by the presentation of offerings, and the celebration is organized by a local association named Hop Chung Fa Pau Hui (合眾花炮會), whose members are Tin Hau's disciples.¹⁴

Besides, the social significance of the Tin Hau Temple is also demonstrated in local festive events, such as the annual Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade (大澳遊涌) during the Dragon Boat Festival (端午節) on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month.¹⁵ The parade was inscribed onto the third national list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2011 and the Tin Hau Temple is one of the significant ritual venues visited during the parade. According to villagers, the statue of Tin Hau in San Tsuen will also be carried to the bamboo mat-shed theatre for the performance of Cantonese opera during the celebration of the Birthday of Hau Wong (侯王誕) in the sixth lunar month. The same arrangement is also applicable to other festivals in Tai O, such as the Birthdays of the Earth God, Kwan Tai and Hung Shing.

The Tin Hau Temple in San Tsuen has group value with other historic temples and buildings in Tai O, such as the Yeung Hau Temple at Po Chue Tam (寶珠潭楊侯古廟) (Declared Monument), Kwan Tai Temple (關帝古廟) (Grade 2) and Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) (Grade 3) at Kat Hing Back Street (吉慶後街), as well as the Old Tai O Police Station (舊大澳警署) (Grade 2) and Fong Bin

¹² The two concrete blocks in a pot-like shape, now placed near the main entrance of the temple, were used as the bases for setting up a temporary entrance gateway to the bamboo shelter for the performance of Cantonese opera.

¹³ In 2018, villagers recalled that the performance of Cantonese opera had not organized for around 20 years.

¹⁴ Tung Hing Tong (同慶堂) is another local association whose members are the Tin Hau's disciples. Its members are mainly the residents of Wing On Street and Tai Ping Street. Every year it obtains a licence from police for organizing lion dance for the second and third days of the Lunar New Year. The "lion" parades the streets of the market town of Tai O to bring fortune to the shops there. The lion and lion-dancers will worship at the Tin Hau Temple at San Tsuen before the parade starts.

¹⁵ On the morning before the festival, the three responsible fishermen's associations will firstly receive the statues of Yeung Hau at Yeung Hau Temple (楊侯古廟) (Declared Monument), then the statue of Tin Hau at San Tsuen and later on Kwai Tei and Hung Shing at other temples. They will carry the statues back to their associations' hall for worship. On the day of the festival, the deity statues will be put on sacred sampans towed by the associations' dragon boats to parade through Tai O's waters. After the ritual, the statues will be returned to the respective temples in the afternoon. This unique religious activity has been inherited for more than a century.

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Historic Building Appraisal
Nos. 301 & 303 Castle Peak Road
Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

Nos. 301 and 303 Castle Peak Road (青山道) in Sham Shui Po (深水埗), which form a single large building on the site (the “Building”), were built in 1933. The villages of Sham Shui Po (深水埗) and Cheung Sha Wan (長沙灣) were established before the twenty-fourth year of the Jiaqing (嘉慶) reign (1819) of the Qing (清) dynasty. With the extension of their authority to the entire Kowloon Peninsula in 1898, the British named the areas to the north of Boundary Street (界限街) as “New Kowloon”.¹ At present, the Building is situated on a corner site at the junction of Castle Peak Road and Fat Tseung Street (發祥街), comprising two plots of land marked as “Section A of New Kowloon Inland Lot No. 1521” (or N.K.I.L.1521 S.A., for No. 301) and the “Remaining Portion of New Kowloon Inland Lot No. 1521” (or N.K.I.L.1521 R.P., for No. 303), which were indeed sub-divided from parent lot “N.K.I.L. 1521” in 1937.

*Historical
Interest*

The survey plans of 1903 and 1918 show that the government planned to develop the land where the Building now stands and its surroundings along the coast of Sham Shui Po and Cheung Sha Wan. The names of “Fat Tseung Street” and the section of “Castle Peak Road” that intersects with one end of it were both marked on the 1903 plan. Later in 1918, Fat Tseung Street and the section of Castle Peak Road commencing at Kweilin Street, together with other nearby streets, were indicated with dashed lines as proposed thoroughfares on the plan. Those dashed lines remained on the plan of 1923. The next historical plan available was one dated 1934, which shows that Fat Tseung Street and the aforesaid section of Castle Peak Road had been completed. The building lot “N.K.I.L. 1521” was first identified on this plan as well.

The aforesaid section of Castle Peak Road, on which the Building is still situated, was formally named in the Government Gazette of 1926 and was joined by Fat Tseung Street in 1934.² Moreover, according to the

¹ The boundary of New Kowloon was marked on a map dated 1937. Places like Cheung Sha Wan, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon Tong (九龍塘), Tai Hom (大磡), Kowloon City (九龍城), Ngau Chi Wan (牛池灣), Ngau Tau Kok (牛頭角), Sai Tso Wan (晒草灣) and Cha Kwo Ling (茶果嶺) fell within the boundary.

² It was the section of Castle Peak Road commencing at the junction of Kweilin Street and Tai Po Road, and running in a north-westerly direction to a point at the east end of New Kowloon Inland Lot No. 421 and thence in a westerly direction to where it met the Castle Peak Road at Lai Chi Kok.

Government Gazette dated 20 October 1933, which contains a list of houses from Nos. 1 to 684 Castle Peak Road commencing at Kweilin Street, Nos. 301 and 303 were two of the first 11 new houses among those 684 house lots at that time.³

The plot of land registered as “N.K.I.L.1521” was first leased to The Heung On Insurance Company Limited (香安保險有限公司) on 8 May 1931 at a premium of \$1,091 and an annual Crown Rent of \$32.⁴ According to Crown Lease conditions, the company (or the “Lessee”) was required “to build and finish, fit for occupation, before the expiration of 24 calendar months from the date on which possession shall be given to the Lessee”.⁵ On 16 November 1932, the company entered into an indenture for the sale of N.K.I.L.1521 to Mew Wah-sum (繆華琛) for \$2,613.60.

On 28 February 1933, Mew entered into a mortgage for a sum of \$8,500 “to erect two Chinese type of messuages or buildings” on a plot of land registered as New Kowloon Inland Lot No. 1521 (or N.K.I.L.1521).⁶ It was also stipulated in the indenture of mortgage that the Building would be made up of cement concrete flooring at the first and the second floor levels, with cement concrete roofs. According to official records dated 7 June 1933, construction was still in progress at that time, with a permit to erect verandahs issued on the second day of that month. The Building was eventually

Chau Road (連州道), Kwong Lee Road (廣利道), Wing Hong Street (永康街), Kowloon Road (九龍道), Camp Street (營盤街), Pratas Street (東沙島街), Tonkin Street (東京街), Wing Lung Street (永隆街), Cheung Fat Street (長發街), Hing Wah Street (興華街), Cheung Wah Street (昌華街), Hainan Street (海南街) and Hung Cheung Street (鴻昌街).

³ Most of the house lots were recorded as vacant land and a few as factories.

⁴ The Heung On Insurance Company Limited was established in 1914 by the directors of two well-known department stores, namely The Sincere Co. Ltd. (先施有限公司) and Wing On Co. Ltd. (永安有限公司), which were respectively founded in 1900 and 1907. Those directors included Choy Hing (蔡興, 1869 – 1957) and Ma Cho-yung (馬祖容, ? – ?) of Sincere and Philip Gockchin (郭泉, 1876 – 1966) of Wing On, who were overseas Chinese from Australia, whose motherland was in Heung Shan (香山), now known as Zhongshan (中山), in Mainland China. Later in 1910, Choy Hing established his own department store, The Sun Co. Ltd. (大新有限公司). The Sincere, Wing On and The Sun were three great department stores in Hong Kong. Their founders were prominent businessmen and philanthropists. For instance, Choy Hing (1918) served on the Board of Directors of Tung Wah Hospital (東華醫院), while Gockchin was on the Board of Directors of Tung Wah Hospital (1926) and Po Leung Kuk (保良局, 1921 – 1922).

It is not known whether Choy Hing, Ma Cho-yung and Gockchin remained the directors of The Heung On Insurance Company Limited between May 1931 and November 1932 when it owned N.K.I.L. No. 1521. However, the legal document for the sale of the land to Mew Wah-sum was signed by Wong Kwok-shuen (王國璇, 1880 – 1974) in the capacity as a director of the company. Wong was also a director of The Sincere Co. Ltd. and The National Commercial Savings Bank Ltd. (國民商業儲蓄銀行) at that time. Besides, in 1905, he was elected as a deacon of the Baptist Church in Hong Kong and served in that capacity for 68 years. In 1916, he also served on the Board of Directors of Tung Wah Hospital, and was one of the founders of Pui Ching Primary School (香港培正小學) in Hong Kong, which opened in 1933.

⁵ Public Records Office, *Conditions of Exchange of New Kowloon Inland Lot No. 1521* (HKRS 265-11C-1537(1)).

⁶ Public Records Office, *Mew Wah Sum to Lau Yue Pui & Ng Lit Long, Building Mortgage of New Kowloon Inland Lot No. 1521*, dated 28 February 1933 (HKRS 265-11C-1537(3)).

completed in 1933, with a domestic permit issued on 25 September, which described the Building as “two Chinese houses”.

The Building changed hands from time to time after it was completed in 1933. For instance, in August 1934, Mew Wah-sum sold it to Chow Cheung-hing (周長興).⁷ In April 1935, it was further sold by public auction to Chu Lung (朱龍).⁸ On 15 August 1936, Chu formally entered into a “Lease of N.K.I.L. 1521” with the government. In January 1937, he sold No. 301 to Yue Lin-wo (余連和),⁹ and in May 1938, No. 303 to Tang Ping-hang (鄧炳衡).¹⁰ No. 303 was later successively sold to a Mrs Ng (also known as Ng Cheng Shi, 吳鄭氏) in March 1939 and Lo Kam-shui (also known as Low Kam-shui, 羅金水) in October 1941.¹¹

The Building survived the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945). According to the Japanese Title Deed (家屋所有權登錄申請書) of N.K.I.L. 1521 R.P. dated 31 August 1942,¹² Lo Kam-shui resided on the second floor (or 1/F) of No. 303, which was recorded as a Chinese-type (中國式) residence-cum-shop (住宅及商店) in a three-storey (參階) reinforced concrete structure (鐵筋混凝土), with a party wall (公用壁) and a staircase in shared use (公用階段) with the adjoining No. 301.¹³ An additional floor (3/F) was built in the late 1950s, with building plans approved between August 1955 and February 1956. In a “Deed of Covenant” dated 28 February 1957, No. 301 was described as a building of four storeys in height.¹⁴

Yue Lin-wo owned the first three floors (G/F to 2/F) of No. 301 from

⁷ The vendor was a merchant, Mew Wah-sum (繆華琛) of No. 33 Fuk Tsun Street (福全街). The purchaser was another merchant, Chow Cheung-hing (周長興) of No. 312 Castle Peak Road Shamsuipo.

⁸ The purchaser was Chu Lung (朱龍) of No. 199 Tai Nam Street First Floor, Shamsuipo.

⁹ The vendor was a merchant, Chu Lung (朱龍) of No. 199 Tai Nam Street, Shamsuipo. The purchaser was a gentleman, Yue Lin-wo of No. 198 Tai Nam Street, Shamsuipo.

¹⁰ The vendor was a merchant, Chu Lung (朱龍) of No. 20 Bonham Strand. The purchaser was a merchant, Tang Ping-hang (鄧炳衡) of No. 39 Wong Chuk Street.

¹¹ In March 1939, the vendor was a merchant, Tang Ping-hang (鄧炳衡) of No. 39 Wong Chuk Street. The purchaser was a married woman, Ng Cheng Shi (吳鄭氏) of No. 303 Castle Peak Road, Kowloon.

In October 1941, the vendor was a married woman, Ng Cheng Shi of No. 303 Castle Peak Road, Kowloon. The purchaser was a gentleman, Lo Kam-sue of No. 292 Castle Peak Road, Kowloon.

¹² It is the only identifiable record of the kind for the Building.

¹³ Sham Shui Po and Castle Peak Road remained to be “深水埗” and “青山道” in Chinese during the Japanese Occupation.

¹⁴ This additional floor comprised living spaces, a washing room and a lavatory built of brick walls, and a water tank in reinforced concrete.

January 1937 to July 1961. From August 1961 onwards, they were sub-divided into undivided shares for further transactions. The three floors changed hands in 1962 and 2015, with all floors collectively purchased by the same person(s) each time. But from 2016 onwards, each floor has been separately owned by an individual company. As for the roof floor, it was a later addition in the late 1950s and purchased by the aforesaid Lo Kam-shui of No. 303 in January 1957. It was owned by the Los from then on until it was sold to a company in October 2018.

Regarding No. 303, it was not sub-divided into undivided shares, and was owned by Lo Kam-shui and the Los from October 1941 onwards until it, together with the roof floor of No. 301, was sold to a company in October 2018.

Over the years, the Building has been in mixed use for commercial and residential purposes. Retail shops, such as a watch company, electrical shops and a grocery store, were opened on the G/F of No. 301. A Chinese barbecue restaurant has been operating on the G/F of No. 303 from the early 1970s onwards. The upper floors have been put to domestic and non-domestic uses. For example, the rear portion of the 1/F of No. 301 was once rented by a barber's shop in the 1980s and a skin specialist in the 1990s, while the 2/F was rented by a company in the 1980s and a training centre in the 1990s.

George W. Grey (1878 – 1954) was the architect of the Building.¹⁵ It is situated on a prominent corner site at the junction of Fat Tseung Street and Castle Peak Road, and in plan it has an irregular shape to the rear but a curved (segmental) shape at the front. The front elevation is in the form of a symmetrical and rounded “arrow head” with prominent external verandahs on each floor. The original open verandahs have been enclosed by windows, although the 1/F is presently open as originally built, which gives an idea of the old appearance of the Building.¹⁶

¹⁵ George W. Grey, Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA) and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (FRICS), was President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (Hong Kong and China Branch) in 1950. He was also a member of the Institute of Structural Engineers. Since 1926, Grey was in charge of the Architectural Department of the Hongkong Realty and Trust Co. Ltd. This firm designed the Exchange Building in Des Voeux Road Central in 1924 (now demolished and become the site of The Landmark) and the Peninsula Hotel (Grade 1) in Tsim Sha Tsui in 1928. It also constructed bungalows at Repulse Bay. Grey also designed the then Empire Theatre (璇宮戲院) in North Point, which was opened in 1952 and changed to State Theatre (皇都戲院) in 1959. The former State Theatre is a Grade 1 historic building.

¹⁶ Due to the heavy noise and pollution now produced by the busy streets outside, the use of an open verandah as a living space is no longer viable; so that in most cases these verandahs now need to be enclosed in order to provide useful living/work areas.

The Building is a typical shophouse of the 1930s, with long front verandahs extending over the public footway below, supported on square columns, which gives protection from the weather, and forms a covered walkway or arcade for the public. The staircase was entered directly from the street outside and there was no access from within the shop itself.

The Building, which enjoys a prominent corner location, has been designed with an attractive curved main elevation. It is also decorated with some classical design features, such as the curved classical corner brackets on the beams, the deep overhanging roof cornice, and the decorative balustrades to the external verandahs at 1/F and 2/F levels, which are of an “arrow” design. Besides, there are unusual decorative plaster mouldings, which depict a form of classical “garland” of “fish-scale” design, on the main wall. The corner brackets at the verandahs are shaped in classical manner with a multiple curved design. Internally, the single staircase serving the Building is constructed of concrete with a decorative finish of yellow terrazzo. The cement handrail, finished with green terrazzo, and the balustrade of the staircase are of a curved design with Art Deco influences.

The Building is now one of the few surviving pre-war corner buildings with verandahs supported by piers in Hong Kong. It survives as an historical reminder of the development of the district from the earliest days of shophouse development until the present time, with its many high-rise commercial blocks, shopping malls and busy traffic. With its curved facade fronting an intersection and classical design features, the Building is quite different from the modern neighbouring blocks, and is a landmark for residents and visitors to the area. The enclosure of the open verandahs at the front elevation and the addition of a floor are the major alterations to the exterior of the Building.

The Building provides an important historical and social connection to the modern commercial development of Sham Shui Po beginning in the early 1930s. It was built in a historical context of rapid growth of both the population and economy of Sham Shui Po and New Kowloon at that time, and has thus borne witness to not only the development of Sham Shui Po, but also New Kowloon.

The Building is within walking distance from other residential-cum-commercial buildings in Sham Shui Po, including Nos. 51 and 53 Yen Chow Street (欽州街) (Grade 1), No. 58 Pei Ho Street (北河街) (Grade 2), No. 96 Apliu Street (鴨寮街) (Grade 2), No. 75 Un Chau Street (元

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

Group Value

州街) (Grade 3) and Nos. 117 Nam Cheong Street (南昌街) (Grade 3).

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