

Heritage Appraisal of King's College

King's College, built in 1923-1926, is one of the six *Historical Interest* surviving pre-war government school buildings in Hong Kong.¹ The name of King's College was first adopted in 1922 when the present Bonham campus was chosen for construction of a secondary school.

The foundation stone of King's College was laid in 1923. Site formation, foundation works and construction of retaining walls were undertaken by Messrs. Foo Loong & Co. in the same year and the superstructure was erected by Messrs. Kin Lee & Co. in 1924. The works were completed in 1926. The *Hongkong Administrative Report* of 1926 described King's College as "one of the finest and most modern of school buildings" with "29 classrooms, staff and common rooms, the latest sanitary arrangements, hat and cloak rooms, a museum and library, an art room, physics and chemistry laboratories, a workshop, swimming pool and dressing rooms, gymnasium, covered playground, fire fighting appliances and the usual complement of store-rooms and offices".

The school building was, however, requisitioned by the Military Authorities as the quarters and hospital for the British Shanghai Defence Force from February to December 1927. The Force was deployed to protect British nationals in Shanghai during the Northern Expedition. On 5 March 1928, the school was officially opened by the then Governor Sir Cecil Clementi.

With the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941, King's College was used as the first-aid station as it had its St. John's Ambulance equipment set up by the first Principal, Mr. Alfred Morris. During the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945), the school was used as a military mule and horse stable for the Japanese Army.

The school building was badly damaged during the Japanese Occupation. The roof was destroyed. All timber window frames, banisters and floorboards were looted for firewood. After refurbishment, the school was re-opened in 1950 as a bi-sessional

¹ King's College was formerly known as Saiyingpun School, which was established by the Government on Third Street in 1879. A newspaper clipping dated 6th March 1928 from *The China Mail* stated that "At this juncture it will be of interest to trace the past history and development of the Saiyingpun School, of which King's College is the outgrowth." and "Saiyingpun School dates back to 1879, in which year the Government decided to establish a Free School at West Point". In the *Hongkong Administrative Report for the Year 1926*, it also stated that King's College was formerly the Saiyingpun School.

primary school, which only operated in the afternoon and shared the school premises with the Northcote Training College Attached School and the Government Vernacular Middle School. It was restored as a morning secondary school in the next year. The total enrolment of King's College reached 640 pupils in 1951.

In 1953, the school underwent its first extension by adding two laboratories, a preparation room, a lecture room, an art room and five classrooms. The need for further expansion of the school resulted in the addition of an extra floor to the South and East Wings, and two more floors above the gymnasium of the North Wing. With the completion of the next stage of extension in 1960, King's College became a full-time secondary school with a total of 26 classrooms, ten special rooms and seven laboratories. In 2000, a new wing, namely the West Wing, with well-equipped classrooms and laboratories was added to the school building.

The red-brick school building was originally built around the three sides of a square in 1926 and the whole building comprised a North Wing, a South Wing and an East Wing with a bell tower (now removed) above the colonnaded curved entrance porch at the junction of Bonham Road and Western Street. The three wings of the school building are arranged in collegiate style around a central courtyard which serves as the school playground to form a quadrangle. The dainty school garden at the lower ground level facing Bonham Road with a small fountain and an arched colonnaded curvilinear side wall further enhanced the beauty of the school building.

***Architectural
Merit***

Red-brick arched colonnades are applied along the facade and corridor on the ground floor of the South Wing and paired columns form loggias on the first and second floors. Arched colonnades are also found on the front elevations of the East and North Wings.

Clerestory windows are found on the upper part of the bricked-up arches of the North Wing. Some doorways have arches or flattened arches with fanlight glazing. The red-brick wall angles are emphasised with quoins.

The most impressive part of the school building is its curved entrance porch at the junction of Bonham Road and Western Street. The porch is supported by granite paired columns with Ionic Order capitals featuring volute brackets and side openings. A groin vault can be seen on the top floor of the entrance block which is rarely found in other school buildings. This gives the school building a distinctive Classical feature which requires high quality workmanship.

The school building has undergone several extensive refurbishment and alterations over the years. During the Japanese Occupation, most part of the swimming pool, including its filter-system, was damaged. Repair and reconstruction works to the school building were carried out after the Japanese Occupation. The bell tower and chimneys at the entrance block were removed in 1950 to make way for the erection of an extra floor to the South and East Wings. Reconstruction of the swimming pool was carried out from 1971 to 1972 with funding from the Old Boy's Association. The school garden was also refurbished and the fountain was reconstructed and upgraded around 2004. The authenticity of the school building has been compromised to some extent but its main architectural characters still remain without affecting its high architectural value. ***Authenticity***

According to the *Hongkong Administrative Report* of 1926, at the time of the establishment of King's College in 1926, there were 19 government schools in Hong Kong providing primary and secondary education for more than 3 500 pupils in Hong Kong. Queen's College and King's College for Chinese, Belilios Public School for Chinese girls, Kowloon Junior School, Victoria School and Quarry Bay School for children of British parentage are some examples of the government schools at that time. With the rapid development of the city, most of the premier government school buildings were either demolished or ceased to operate. At present, only six pre-war government school buildings survive, namely the Former Kowloon British School (built in 1900-1902), the Former Peak School (built in 1915), the Former Quarry Bay School (built in ***Rarity***

1926), King's College (built in 1926), Cheung Chau Government Secondary School (built in 1928) and King George V School (built in 1936). King's College is now the oldest surviving pre-war government school building which still serves its original usage.

In addition, the use of red bricks in school architecture decorated with relatively rich Neo-classical style features is rare in Hong Kong. The architectural features such as arched colonnades, colonnaded verandahs, rusticated quoins, moulded cornices and classical stone surrounds to the windows are found in King's College, making it an interesting piece of built heritage and a rare piece school architecture of its kind in Hong Kong.

The school's social value lies in its contribution to the community and education as well as the historical/ famous figures associated with it. With its long history, many community leaders, such as Jin Yingxi (1919-1991), Lau Din-cheuk (1921-2010), Sir Harry Fang Sin-yang (1923-2009), Dr. Simon Li Fook-sean, the Hon Dr. Leung Chun-ying, are alumni of the college. The school building served as a community venue due to the lack of meeting places in Hong Kong in the 1960s. It was constantly reserved for activities by various organisations, such as the Government Clerical Service, the Auxiliary Medical Services, the Police Reserve, the Civil Aid Services and St. John Ambulance Division of the Old Boys' Association.

***Social Value
& Local Interest***

Due to its prominent position and high reputation, King's College is a landmark in the area. Many old purpose-built educational buildings in the vicinity, including St. Stephen's Girls' College (built in 1923); and the Main Building (built in 1910-1912), Hung Hing Ying Building (built in 1919) and Tang Chi Ngong Building (built in 1929) of The University of Hong Kong, which have already been declared as monuments, form a cluster of historic school buildings in the Mid-Levels.

Group Value

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