

Heritage Appraisal of Eliot Hall, The University of Hong Kong

Eliot Hall was the second student residential hall under the direct management of The University of Hong Kong (the “University”).¹ It was opened in 1914 and named after Sir Charles Eliot, the first Vice-Chancellor of the University (1912-1918). *Historical
Interest*

Sir Frederick Lugard, the first Chancellor of the University (1911-1912) and the fourteenth Governor of Hong Kong (1907-1912), recognised that in addition to the transmission of knowledge, personal development and moral qualities of the University’s students were equally important. This could be achieved by compulsory residence either in approved colleges or hostels, or in the University itself, and by careful selection of professorial staff.

However, when the University was officially opened on 11 March 1912, its own student residential halls had not yet been built. Sir Frederick Lugard then sought the help from religious organisations whose interest in supporting education and promoting good moral character was in line with the mission of the University. The Church Missionary Society was the first to respond and established St. John’s Hall on Bonham Road to provide student accommodation in time for the University’s formal opening in the same year.

In 1913, Lugard Hall, the first student residential hall under the direct management of the University, was opened. It set a model for the construction of Eliot Hall and May Hall which were constructed on higher terraces in almost identical style. With the assistance of the Department of Public Works, Eliot Hall and May Hall were planned and constructed at a cost of HK\$185,840.

Eliot Hall was designed to house around 60 students together

¹ The first student residential hall under the direct management of the University was Lugard Hall which was opened in 1913 and named after the first Chancellor of the University and the fourteenth Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Frederick Lugard (1907-1912).

with quarters for an English professor and a Chinese assistant in residence who were to provide close supervision to the students. Students' rooms were located on the first and second floors. Refectory, common rooms, servants' quarters and bathrooms were on the ground floor. In 1920, the ground floor at the western end was converted to students' rooms, so that Eliot Hall could accommodate 72 students.

During the Second World War, Lugard Hall and Eliot Hall were used as a relief hospital to provide additional support to Queen Mary Hospital when the former relief hospital operated in the Main Building of the University was damaged. Eliot Hall was soon reopened in 1946 after the war. It was closed and turned into a gymnasium in 1956. Most of the students were removed to Lugard Hall and the newly opened University Hall at No.144 Pok Fu Lam Road. In 1963, Eliot Hall was renovated and resumed as a male student residential hall to accommodate 74 students.

In June 1966, an inexhaustible torrential rain caused a large-scale landslide at the slope adjacent to Eliot Hall and May Hall, which led to an immediate evacuation of the two student residential halls for extensive repairs. The students were temporarily removed to Lugard Hall and other residential halls. Two wardens' quarters at the east end of Eliot Hall and May Hall had to be demolished. The University took this opportunity to combine Lugard Hall, Eliot Hall and May Hall into one large residential unit named Old Halls which was opened in 1969 with three wings, i.e. Lugard Wing, Eliot Wing and May Wing. The three buildings were linked together by covered stairways to accommodate around 200 students. In the same year, the long established compulsory residence implemented since the University's opening in 1912 was lifted and residence in hostel became voluntary. Most of the residents in the Old Halls were Medical or Engineering students while some from the overseas, like those accommodated in Eliot Hall mainly came from Malaysia and Indonesia.

Eliot Wing and May Wing were reverted to their old names (i.e. Eliot Hall and May Hall) when Lugard Wing was demolished in

1992 to cope with the development policy of the University. Nowadays, Eliot Hall has been converted into offices and classrooms.

Eliot Hall is a three-storey structure designed by local Hong Kong architects, Denison, Ram and Gibbs. The red-brick facades laid in “Flemish Bond” feature a rich variety of architectural elements, including curved pediments (hoods) over the entrance doorways, rusticated columns, Doric capitals, window sills, cornices and balustrades. The visual richness of the architecture is widely adopted in the Edwardian period in England. Chinese-style ceramic grilles are also found on the facade to contrast with the red brick wall. The pitched and double-tiled Chinese roofs are a local adaption.

***Architectural
Merit***

Internally, original decorative details to walls and ceilings are basically intact, such as mouldings and cornices, in spite of alterations and renovations carried out over the years. Some fireplaces are still in excellent condition. The open verandahs to the front elevation remain in good condition, particularly the patterned floor tiles which are very typical of the period.

Although successive major internal renovations have substantially altered the internal layout, some original features such as the patterned floor tiles and ceiling mouldings, still remain. The building exterior is largely intact, although the east end of the building has been demolished with addition of concrete buttresses as strengthening due to the major landslide damage in 1966. Also, verandah on the ground floor has been partially enclosed to meet the current use but could be restored when required.

Authenticity

Eliot Hall is one of the oldest structures on the University campus. Also, it is the earliest purpose-built university student residential hall built in Western style and blended with Chinese features that still survives in Hong Kong, reflecting the vision of the University.

Rarity

As one of the purpose-built and the oldest student residential halls of the University, Eliot Hall served as an imperative venue to provide all-round student development and to cultivate the renowned hall culture of the University. Its social value is enhanced due to the

***Social Value
& Local Interest***

change of its usage from a student residential hall to a gymnasium which more students and staff of the University would have more connection to it. As one of the historic buildings with rich variety of architectural elements on the University campus, Eliot Hall has long been the well-known landmark which attracts visitors for appreciation.

Eliot Hall, together with the other historic buildings situated in the University, such as the Main Building, University Hall, Hung Hing Ying Building, Tang Chi Ngong Building, May Hall and Fung Ping Shan Building (the exteriors of these buildings are declared monuments), undoubtedly form a building cluster providing an academic ambience. Other historic buildings in the vicinity, such as King's College (declared monument), Bungalow of West Point Filters (Grade 1), Senior Staff Quarters of Elliot Pumping Station and Filters (Grade 2), also depict the historical and socio-cultural development of the territory.

Group Value