

**For information
on 20 November 2007**

**BOARD PAPER
AAB/34/2007-08**

**MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF THE
ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD**

**REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF
FORMER POLICE MARRIED QUARTERS SITE AT HOLLYWOOD ROAD**

PURPOSE

To inform Members of the findings of an archaeological investigation at the site of the Former Married Police Quarters at Hollywood Road.

BACKGROUND

2. At the meeting on 6 March 2007, Members were informed that an archaeological investigation would be conducted to ascertain the archaeological potential of the subject site. The investigation, including a subsurface archaeological excavation, was undertaken by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO)'s Field Archaeological Unit between 19 March and 25 July 2007. The excavation analysis research took place afterwards and the final report on the investigation was completed in late October.

THE EXCAVATION

3. The investigation was conducted in accordance with the general practice of field archaeology. The stratigraphic deposits and sequence, and archaeological features were carefully and systematically recorded while the special finds, such as ceramic floor tile, porcelains, etc. were yielded. Prior to the commencement of the excavation, AMO conducted a documentary research to collect archival materials such as historical drawings, photographs and records in respect of the former Central School and the former Police Married Quarters. The investigation was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, test grids/trenches were excavated on the upper platform (car park area) and the lower platform (the playground of the former Central School) of the site. In order to obtain more information about the features identified, subsurface investigation was mainly carried out at the upper platform in the second phase. The total area of excavation was approximately 600 m².

4. Upon the completion of the excavation, all the features identified were properly recorded and preserved in-situ following the practice and guidelines of field archaeology. Since the depth of excavated pits ranged from 1m to 4m below the existing ground level, for the sake of public safety, all trenches excavated during the

investigation were backfilled with a layer of sand, plastic sheets and filling materials in accordance with the requirements of the General Specification for Building and monitored by AMO staff and a registered structural engineer. Future inspection of underground features is still possible by excavating the backfill.

THE FINDINGS

5. A full report of the archaeological investigation is at **Annex A**. The findings of the investigation are summarized as follows:-

- (a) In addition to the historical structures which have already been found in the initial survey of January 2006, remnants of small entrances at Aberdeen Street and Shing Wong Street, quoin stones of retaining walls surrounding the site, etc, were found in the site investigation.
- (b) The original school playground surface has been preserved in good condition about 1m below the existing open space in the lower platform. Old stone steps near existing staircase leading to the original playground were revealed. Consistent stratigraphic deposits in test grids and the height of retaining walls demonstrate that the existing open space was built on the backfill materials.
- (c) Underground structures such as fragments of cement flooring, layer of hard-core, underground drainages, foundation walls (about 0.5m-4m below existing surface), mortar wall and white mortar floor, and inked marks on granite blocks, were uncovered. They in general match the layout and basement floor plans attached to the proposed Central School Report of 1883. It is believed that these features belong to the original foundation of the former Central School.
- (d) It is estimated that approximately 40% of the foundation of the former Central School is still in existence under the car park area. However, some of them have been seriously disturbed by the construction works of the Police Married Quarters buildings and associated services and facilities after the 1950s.
- (e) Apart from structures, a number of special finds were also collected from subsurface investigation ranging from ceramic sherds, bronze coins and ceramic floor tiles. Incidentally, the floor tiles found in the former Central School site bear the same manufacturer mark as the one on the tiles recently found at the former Mountain Lodge at the Peak.
- (f) No remains of Shing Wong Temple could be found. It is most likely that all tiles, bricks, stones and building materials of the temple might have been taken down and disposed of after a public land auction in 1877. Although the name 'Joss House' at No. 10, Shing Wong Street, which might be Shing Wong Temple, was mentioned in the Hong Kong

Government Gazette of 1877, no plan was attached to the Gazette to show its exact location. In view of the stratigraphy of the excavated areas, the possibility of identifying the foundation of Shing Wong Temple under the fill materials of 3m to 7m thick is extremely low.

AMO'S ASSESSMENT OF THE STRUCTURES DISCOVERED

6. The main complex of the former Central School was completely demolished in 1948 to make way for the construction of two residential blocks of police quarters. The findings of the subsurface investigation reveal that the original school foundation is partially preserved at the upper platform area, despite the fact that they have been considerably disturbed by the later construction works at the site. The existing excavation at the car park accounts for a total area of 577m². Based on the findings of the site investigation, the chance of finding better preserved parts within the site through a further site investigation is slim. Taking into account the risk to the tree walls and the stability of underground features, further site excavation work cannot be justified.

7. The heritage value of these remains of the school foundation uncovered can be assessed in terms of their authenticity and integrity. The alignment of the granite blocks of the foundation walls were basically in line with the layout plan of 1883, and generally reveals the configuration of the school foundation. These structures now below ground, together with other above-ground historic structures, constitute an integral historical setting of the site, which could help illustrate the history of the former Central School. However, as the foundations have been considerably disturbed and, as a result, their value for aesthetic appreciation and academic research has been reduced, their overall heritage value has also been diminished to such a degree that the total in-situ preservation cannot be justified. A small portion of the foundations should be preserved intact for integrating into the future development of the site, if that is to take place, subject to technical feasibility and the interface with the development project.

8. The heritage value of the remaining structures within the site mainly lies in their association with the former Central School. The Central School was the first government school giving upper primary and secondary education to the public. Its opening in 1862 marked a new phase in the development of public education in Hong Kong. In the early years, education on Hong Kong Island was afforded in a few small vernacular schools run by the local Chinese with Government's subsidy. Public education was provided by the missionary schools which received practically no financial support from the Government. The establishment of the Central School heralded the Government intention to reform education on a secular basis and to establish her own school under her sole control. Since then, the Government's educational policy was to confine itself to secular instruction and such a policy has been upheld till nowadays. The Central School is noteworthy for the training of brilliant figures who served Hong Kong and China with their bilingual abilities and cross-cultural experiences. Among the graduates, many emerged as Hong Kong community leaders, and many others held high posts in commercial firms and China's administration. Exemplary old boys of the Central School who became important figures in the history of China and Hong Kong included, but were not limited to the Hon

Mr Ho Fook (何福, 1863-1926), Sir Ho Kai (何啓, 1859-1914), Mr Ho Kom Tong (何甘棠, 1866-1950), Sir Robert Ho Tung (何東, 1862-1956), the Hon Mr Lau Chu-pak (劉鑄伯, 1867-1922) and, last but not the least, Dr Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙, 1866-1925) who, after having received an earlier education in Hawaii, gained admission to the Central School in 1884 at the age of eighteen and left in 1886. Although the Central School was moved from Gough Street to Hollywood Road after Dr Sun had left the School, their association with the School would be a valuable memory for Hong Kong.

9. In his 2007-08 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced the removal of the site from the List of Site for Sale by Application for a year and that proposals will be invited on its revitalization. Any revitalization proposals should be based on the premise that the remaining features of Central School mentioned above will be preserved and have full regard to the historical significance of Central School to the development of Hong Kong.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
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