

Historic Building Appraisal
The Cheung Chau Fong Bin Hospital
Cheung Chau

The Cheung Chau Fong Bin Hospital (長洲方便醫院) was originally called the Asylum (棲留所) which would function as a dying house for the poor homeless patients and a mortuary for those killed in shipwrecks especially during typhoon seasons. Although it was not a hospital in the modern sense, it played a key role in offering a refuge for destitute Chinese to die in peace and dignity. This Asylum was established in 1872 by a businessman named **Choi Leung** (蔡良) when Cheung Chau was still under the administration of the Xin'an County (新安縣) of the Qing dynasty. *Historical Interest*

In 1915, the Asylum was expanded by an local organization known as the Cheung Chau Kai Fong Hui (長洲街坊會), and was subsequently renamed as The Cheung Chau Fong Bin Hospital. The word Fong Bin (方便) means convenience in Chinese. This suggests that the hospital was meant to serve the medical needs of all. The Hospital underwent substantial renovations in 1931 and 1951 to meet the rising demand for medical care in Cheung Chau and the nearby outlying islands.

In 1945, the Hospital changed hands to the Cheung Chau Residents' Association (長洲居民協會). Reputable Chinese doctors on the Island looked after the patients in turns. The quality services provided by the Hospital even attracted patients from other outlying islands. The premises of the old Hospital has fallen into disuse and abandoned since 1988.

The Hospital is made up of a motley collection of old village houses built in various styles with features derived from traditional **Chinese Vernacular** and **Colonial** architecture which can be classified as **Chinese Eclectic**. The architectural arrangement of the main building can be identified observing from the side elevation – a single-storey front with a flat roof, followed by a pitched-roof space, linked to a two-storey structure and, at the back, a single-storey hall. The gabled front entrance has a porch supported by round columns. The walls are rendered and were once painted but have now seriously deteriorated. Windows are a mixture of rusty steel framed units and traditional wooden casements. The main building comprises a simple two-storey courtyard house with an atrium for admission of natural light and ventilation. Historic relics include tablets and stone plaques with inscriptions. *Architectural Merit*

To the further right of the main building is a small hut used as a mortuary.

To the north-west of the Hospital site is a staff quarters which is a Chinese-tiled roof, one-storey building. An arch is erected at each of the two entrances to the Hospital, to the north and to the east. The northern arch is inscribed with characters that read in English and Chinese, as follows: The Cheung Chau Fong Bin Hospital 長洲方便醫院 showing the bilingual names of the Hospital.

This complex of Chinese and Colonial style houses which have been combined to form the Hospital is a rare building type in Hong Kong and quite rare especially in Cheung Chau. Being probably over 100 years old the complex has obvious built heritage value. The mixture of styles and the obvious alterations and additions make authenticity difficult to determine.

The social value of the Hospital lies in the key role it played in the medical history of Cheung Chau by providing cheap medical treatment and free Chinese medicine to those admitted to the Hospital. The Hospital now stands empty and abandoned ignored by local residents, but still a place of interest to historians.

Most of the immediate surroundings of The Cheung Chau Fong Bin Hospital have been developed into modern three-storey residences. The main building, being a vandalized structure, is therefore not so integral with its environment. However, it is physically close to other graded historic items, including Cheung Chau Government Secondary School (長洲官立中學), Cheung Chau Police Station (長洲警署), Hung Shing Temple (洪聖廟) and Yuk Hui Temple (玉虛宮).

Adaptive re-use should reflect the Hospital's past history and cultural significance as far as possible.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

Group Value

**Adaptive
Re-use**