The Conservation

The adaptive reuse project follows the Burra Charter, choosing a compatible new use while retaining its spirit of place. In order to convert the site into a boutique hotel, new designs that are compatible and sensitive to the heritage setting have been introduced. Conservation works should be reversible. To pay absolute respect to the original architecture, all conservation works are reversible so that the site can be reverted back to a bare shell if needed. For example, we put up new walls in front of the original walls so as to protect the latter from being damaged when rooms are renovated into hotel guest rooms.

The project’s goal is to adapt a 110-year-old building into a hotel that meets the modern codes and needs, while paying absolute respect to the original fabric and spirit of place. In order to retain and restore the original fabric, temporary, later added features that are graded as at least significant have been removed, room structures remain the same. Modern hotel and barrier free access facilities have been added to the back elevations of the buildings, to ensure the front facade is not disturbed by the alternations made to comply with modern building ordinances.

Heritage Interpretation and Cultural Mapping

HCF has conducted extensive heritage documentation and interpretation exercises to capture the history and anecdotes of Old Tai O Police Station and the Tai O fishing village since 2009. Numerous video interviews with retired marine police officers who have stationed at the Old Tai O Police Station have been conducted. Tai O festivities have also been documented. Besides video documentation, we have also collected valuable historic photos, which have given us a glimpse of what Tai O and Old Tai O Police Station were like in the past, and have conducted architectural and historical research on the heritage site. HCF published the book “Old Tai O Police Station: The Evolution of a Centenary Monument” as part of its heritage interpretation exercises.

A Social Enterprise

Tai O Heritage Hotel operates as a non-profit social enterprise, with surpluses being used for conservation and maintenance of historic buildings, and promote the conservation and appreciation of heritage and historic places, and their importance in the life of the community.

Visit Tai O Heritage Hotel

HERITAGE TOURS

To present the heritage significance of Old Tai O Police Station, Tai O Heritage Hotel conducts a free heritage guided tour daily. To join the tour, register at www.taioheritagehotel.com or at the hotel reception.

OPENING HOURS

Tai O Heritage Hotel is open for public visits at 9am – 6pm daily.

About HCF

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THE ARCHITECTURE

Old Tai O Police Station

constructed in 1902, the main building is the station’s earliest structure. Both floors have five rooms respectively. The ground floor included a report room, two cells and an armoury. The first floor has quarters for expatriate inspectors and a turret protruding from the roof. Initially, the two staff quarters on the first floor were used by European police officers. During the early days of the police station, Chinese officers were not allowed to be on the first floor, as it was used by expatriate inspectors only.

Later extension Block

constructed at the same time as the main building, as evident from its connected to the annex addition when the annex was built in 1962.

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Prior to 1997, Tai O Bay represented the boundary between the British and Chinese governments, making it a point of strategic importance. The area was also frequently threatened by piracy. The Tai O Police Station was therefore equipped with cast-iron cannons for military and defence purposes. The base of the cannons and the mounts are made of concrete. The cannons and their mounts are significant components of the station’s history.

The Main Building was built in 1902. Heavy, metal shutters were installed to protect the officers from attacks. At this corner we have removed the weapon unloading area, which was a later-added, temporary structure, because it would affect the original appearance, covering the original metal shutters.

In order to maintain law and order at the sea, the police installed a searchlight here, which allowed the night duty officer to check on surrounding Chinese waters and the Tai O village.

Located directly opposite the station’s main entrance on the ground floor, the charge room was where the criminal cases were reported and recorded. Since Tai O’s crime rate remained remarkably low, the two cells located at the back of the charge room were usually vacant—but when used, the police would hold a maximum of 10 people in each cell. The Room is now used as the Hotel Reception.

We aimed to restore the Old Tai O Police Station back to its appearance in 1902. During the latter days of operation, the police had installed windows to cover up the verandahs at the Main Building. However, verandahs were meant to be opened up to serve as a barrier of temperature. Given the sub-tropical maritime climate in Hong Kong, open verandah was a common feature in buildings to maximise natural ventilation and natural lighting for the internal space regardless of the weather. Hence, the later-added windows have been removed to open up the verandahs once again.

This pond is a replica from the original built in 1967. The pond was built by a local police officer as punishment, after he was found to have prank his superintendent.

The rooftop of the one-storey Later Extension Block has been covered with a glass canopy so as to turn the space into the hotel restaurant, Tai O Lookout. The antique furniture at the restaurant has been donated from legendary member’s club China Tea Club in Central.