The Rotary Club of Kowloon Projects

Arran Street Trachoma Clinic in 1951
Arran Street Child Assessment Center in 1977
Arran Street Centre for Music Children Foundation in 2017
Arran Street HKAYD Youth Hostel in 2023

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The No.9 Arran Street single-storey premises erected by Kowloon Rotary Club in 1951

In the April 1952 Issue of《*The Rotarian*》magazine, there is a one-page report on "Rotary in Hong Kong" describing the Rotary activities in the then British Crown Colony Hong Kong after the Pacific War (1941-1945). During those years, there were in the Colony only 2 Rotary clubs "Hong Kong" and "Kowloon". One of the features mentioned in the article was that both of the clubs had launched their own community service projects by establishment and operating of their own "trachoma treatment" clinics in both sides of the Victoria Harbour (維多利亞港).

Trachoma Endemic in China

Trachoma (砂眼) is an infectious disease caused by bacterium Chlamydia trachomatis. The infection causes a roughening of the inner surface of the eyelids. This roughening can lead to pain in the eyes, breakdown of the outer surface or cornea of the eyes, and eventual blindness. Untreated, repeated trachoma infections can result in a form of permanent blindness when the eyelids turn inward.

The bacteria that cause the disease can be spread by both direct and indirect contact with an affected person's eyes or nose. Indirect contact includes through clothing or flies that have come into contact with an affected person's eyes or nose. Children spread the disease more often than adults. Poor sanitation, crowded living conditions, and not enough clean water and toilets also increase spread. Efforts to prevent the disease include improving access to clean water and treatment with antibiotics to decrease the number of people infected with the bacterium. This may include treating, all at once, whole groups of people in whom the disease is known to be common.

During the 1930s to the 1950s in the Chinese mainland, trachoma was quite common in many of the highly populated cities with poorest populations who lived in rural and remote areas. Hence, Rotary clubs in China were encouraged to launch anti-trachoma projects, from Shanghai (上海) in the eastern coast far to Chungking (*Chongqing*) (重慶), Lanchow (*Lanzhou*) (蘭州) in the western inland. The national leader of Rotary in China, then, during and after the Pacific War, was Dr. Chengting T. Wang (王正廷博士) (*Chungking*), and who was also the President of the National Society of China Red Cross (中華民國紅十字總會會長). He later moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong in 1949 and joined the Hong Kong Rotary Club (香港扶輪社).

Trachoma Clinic launched in Kowloon Peninsula

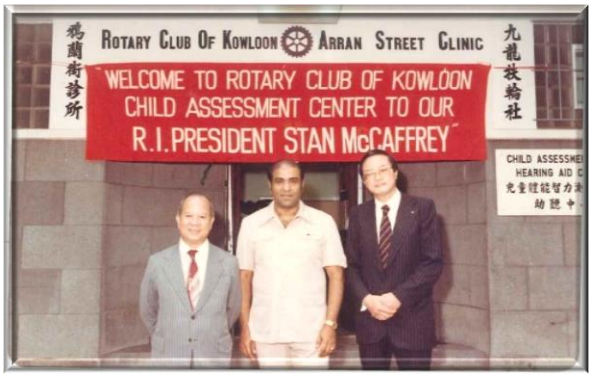
《*The Rotarian*》magazine reported in March 1951 that a trachoma clinic was built at the cost of HK$80,000 and was operated by the Rotary Club of Kowloon (九龍扶輪社) (newly chartered on 28 June 1948). The building is, still standing today, single-storey with an area of 30 X 98 ft. (*see photo at top*), and featured an air-conditioned consultation office and operating room. Before the Clinic was completed, the Club made it possible for patients to be treated at doctors' offices free of charge. During a 19-month period, 55,000 patients received medical care through the Rotary Club at a cost to the Club of HK$7,300.

Members of the Kowloon Rotary Club stand before their trachoma clinic.《The Rotarian》April 1952

Pioneer of Child Assessment Service

Upon the change of community needs in the later years, the Rotary Club of Kowloon transformed the Arran Street premises into a child assessment center. Back in 1973, the then Government Medical and Health Department (醫務衞生署) invited Professor Kenneth Holt of the University of London to report on the feasibility of a child assessment service in Hong Kong. He recommended setting up a specialist team to provide assessment and remedial services for children with developmental problems so as to increase their chance of success in rehabilitation. Addressing to these needs, the Rotary Club of Kowloon came into operation with its first child assessment center in 1977 at the former trachoma clinic premises located at No.9 Arran Street, Mong Kok, Kowloon (九龍旺角鴉蘭街 9 號). In this Arran Street Child Assessment Centre (鴉蘭街兒童體能智力測驗中心), the assessment team comprised various professional disciplines, providing comprehensive assessment to children with special needs.

In order to learn more about the back-side stories of the above-mentioned 2 projects, it is better to read the chapter written by the Club's historian, of which the text is excerpted below:



Arran Street Child Assessment Center

Perhaps the single most impressive community project undertaken by the Rotary Club of Kowloon has been the Arran Street Child Assessment Center; a project which continues to play a significant role in the Club's activities today. "The thing that impresses me most", comments Ira Kaye, "is to think of the foresight (Club) people had in 1948 to put up this building". He also expresses the hope that: "We too will be remembered for contributions to the community that are so advanced in thinking and would enable a project to last through three, four and five decades".

In fact, the Arran Street clinic did not start life in Arran Street, but rather in a loaned building in Yaumatei. The original intention was to commemorate the inauguration of the Rotary Club of Kowloon with a solid piece of community work, and the Club's board of directors recommended to its members that a clinic be established for the treatment of local fishermen suffering from the eye disease, trachoma.

The clinic was administered, as Bill Grimsdale's letter to Ira Kaye indicated, "by Captain J. Macfarlane, then manager of Holts Wharf, who attended to the clerical work, principally maintenance of patients' cards, while the doctors who gave their services entirely free were Dr. T. J. Hua, his partner (who was not a Rotarian) Dr. K. T. Lui and Rotarians Dr. Olinto de Souza, Dr. Y. S. Lam and Dr. C. W. Lam". The Club financed the purchase of drugs, enabling patients to be treated for the magnificent sum of fifty cents each. The incidence of trachoma was apparently so severe that, had it not been for the clinic, many of the patients could have lost their sight completely.

Evidently on to something that was proving tremendously successful, the Club then, under the guidance of Fred Clemo, applied to the Government to deed a site on Arran Street in Mongkok. Such a site was granted --- the Club continues to hold a deed of trust on the property for which it pays HK$1 per year --- and in 1950 the Club held a gala ball to raise HK$75,000 to cover the cost of building a multi-storey clinic.

While one might imagine shining pairs of scissors cutting brightly coloured ribbons to the sound of popping corks, all that is remembered of the official opening is the recollection passed on by Grimsdale. He simply wrote that the opening ceremony was "performed by Fred Clemo on a rather miserable day, weather-wise", and that "shortly afterwards an approach was made to Government to take over the running of the clinic under the management of Dr. Dancet Browning, the Senior Government Ophthalmic Surgeon. The Club carried the burden of operating costs during the early years.

During the presidency of Jimmy Keir (1975/76), when the need for a trachoma clinic was less pressing, the Club was approached by the Government with a special plan. The Government wished to set up a child assessment center as a pilot scheme to see if comprehensive assessment of children with physical, mental and emotional disabilities would prove worthwhile. Club members were asked to raise money for the refurbishment of the clinic's interior and for the provision of necessary equipment. The government-appointed consultant paediatrician for the center, Dr. Lillian Ko, was invited to address a meeting of the Rotary Club of Kowloon. Her address apparently touched Rotarians to such an extent that a sum close to HK$238,000 was subsequently invested in equipment. When Ko left the clinic, she was awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship. Her place was taken by paediatrician Dr. Rose Mak.

The clinic opened its doors in October 1977. It was the first clinic of its kind in the Far East, and many similar centers have since been set up. More than three thousand children were assessed for birth defects, retardation and psychological problems, and over the years the Club has continued to expand the level of its service by, for example, financing a visit by the Clinic's paediatricians to the Wolfson Centre London to further their training in speech therapy. The Club also equipped the Center with Reynell Developmental Language Scales in Cantonese, the first in the world outside English-speaking countries.

In 1983, Club members established the Hong Kong Society for Child Health and Development, the financial support arm for the clinic. Up to this point all requests for funds had been met by the Club itself, but the Society was established to facilitate the raising of funds in the community. Since that time fifty percent of the executive committee membership has comprised Rotary Club of Kowloon members, allowing the clinic to be "closely observed". Annual donations have continued to be made by the Club to the Society. Explains Kaye: "The Society provides funds for Hong Kong professionals engaged in child assessment to go abroad, to learn new techniques and to return to Hong Kong to disseminate those new techniques to the professional community and in particular for use in the Child Assessment Centre". Part of the cost of such development would probably emanate from the Rotary Club of Kowloon Endowment Fund. The fund, set up in 1948 with around HK$18,000, has become a major part of the Club's service to the community. It was originally established to assist the assimilation back into the community of young people discharged from detention centers, at a time when funds were not available from social welfare.

Music Children Foundation Arran Street Centre

Following the closure of the child assessment clinic in 2007, the Arran Street property underwent its most significant reinvention yet. Despite lease restrictions limiting its use to medical purposes, under President Chester Hoang (黃廣榮) (2014-2015-2016) the Rotary Club of Kowloon pioneered innovative projects ensuring the property continues to benefit the community for decades to come. Notably, the Music Children Foundation (音樂兒童基金會) (MCF)---a new organization led by professional musicians---which was established in August 2013 to provide free musical instruments and vocal skills training to underprivileged children aged 16 or under who are from families receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, full student aid, or low-income families.

By 2017, this Arran Street property became the second location of the Music for Children Foundation, and the added floor was demolished shortly thereafter. The Rotary Club of Kowloon provided a home for MCF for 5 years. The Club assisted with daily operations and provided financial support to help with running costs. The Club also supported MCF with expert advice in their endeavour to build a new club house and teaching centre in Mong Kok.

And the story goes on with the site to be transformed into a youth hostel under construction…

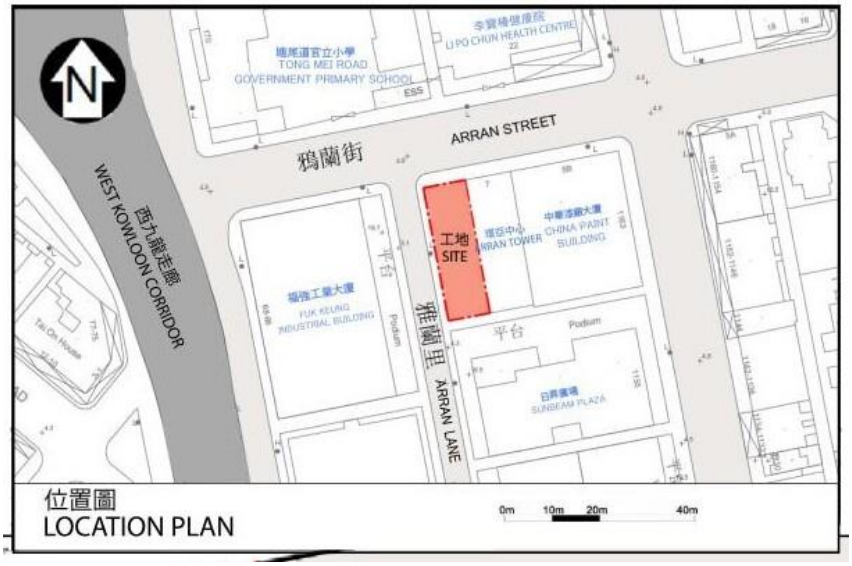
Arran Street HKAYD Youth Hostel

This Youth Hostel project was put on the agenda of the Hong Kong Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs held on 19 April 2022, followed by ground breaking ceremony on 1 August 2023:

- To meet the aspirations of some working youth in having their own living spaces and to unleash the potential of development sites, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government announced the introduction of the Youth Hostel Scheme (YHS) in the 2011-2012 Policy Address. Under the YHS, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will be fully funded by the Government to construct youth hostels on under-utilized sites and, upon completion, operate the youth hostels on a self-financing basis.
- To enable young people to accumulate savings for pursuing their medium term aspirations in personal development, NGOs are required to set the rental at a level which does not exceed 60% of the market rent of flats of similar size in nearby areas. The first tenancy should be for at least two years, which can be renewed for an aggregate of no more than five years. Working youths who are Hong Kong permanent residents aged 18 to 30 are eligible to apply as tenants and they shall be subject to income and asset tests at the time of application. They should not own any residential properties in Hong Kong. In addition, the Chief Executive has already announced in the 2019 Policy Address to relax the prevailing arrangement and allow YHS tenants to submit/retain their applications for public rental housing and continue to accumulate points under the Quota and Points System.
- Proposed by The Hong Kong Association of Youth Development (香港青少年發展聯會) (HKAYD), the project site is located at No.9 Arran Street, Mong Kok. It is currently an idle

site held by the Rotary Club of Kowloon (RCK). To make optimal use of the site concerned, the RCK and HKAYD would collaborate and develop a youth hostel on the site. Upon completion of the construction works, HKAYD will operate the youth hostel on a self-financing basis under the policy framework of the YHS. The executive members of the HKAYD and representatives of the RCK will also jointly form a steering committee to supervise the operation of the hostel.

- The proposed project comprises demolition of the existing structure on the Arran Street site, site formation and the construction of a 22-storey youth hostel building with total Construction Floor Area of about 2,900 Sq.M. thereon. Around 72 youth hostel units (including 54 single rooms (with 2 of them being barrier-free units) and 18 double rooms, i.e. a total of around 90 hostel places, a management office and other communal facilities (including communal laundry rooms, pantries and common area) will be provided.
- The proposed construction works will not involve any tree removal proposal. HKAYD will incorporate planting proposals as part of the project, including estimated quantities of 3 trees, 93 shrubs, 48 climbers and 245 groundcovers.
- It is estimated that the proposed works will create 50 jobs (40 for labourers and another 10 for professional or technical staff), providing a total employment of 1,400 man-months.



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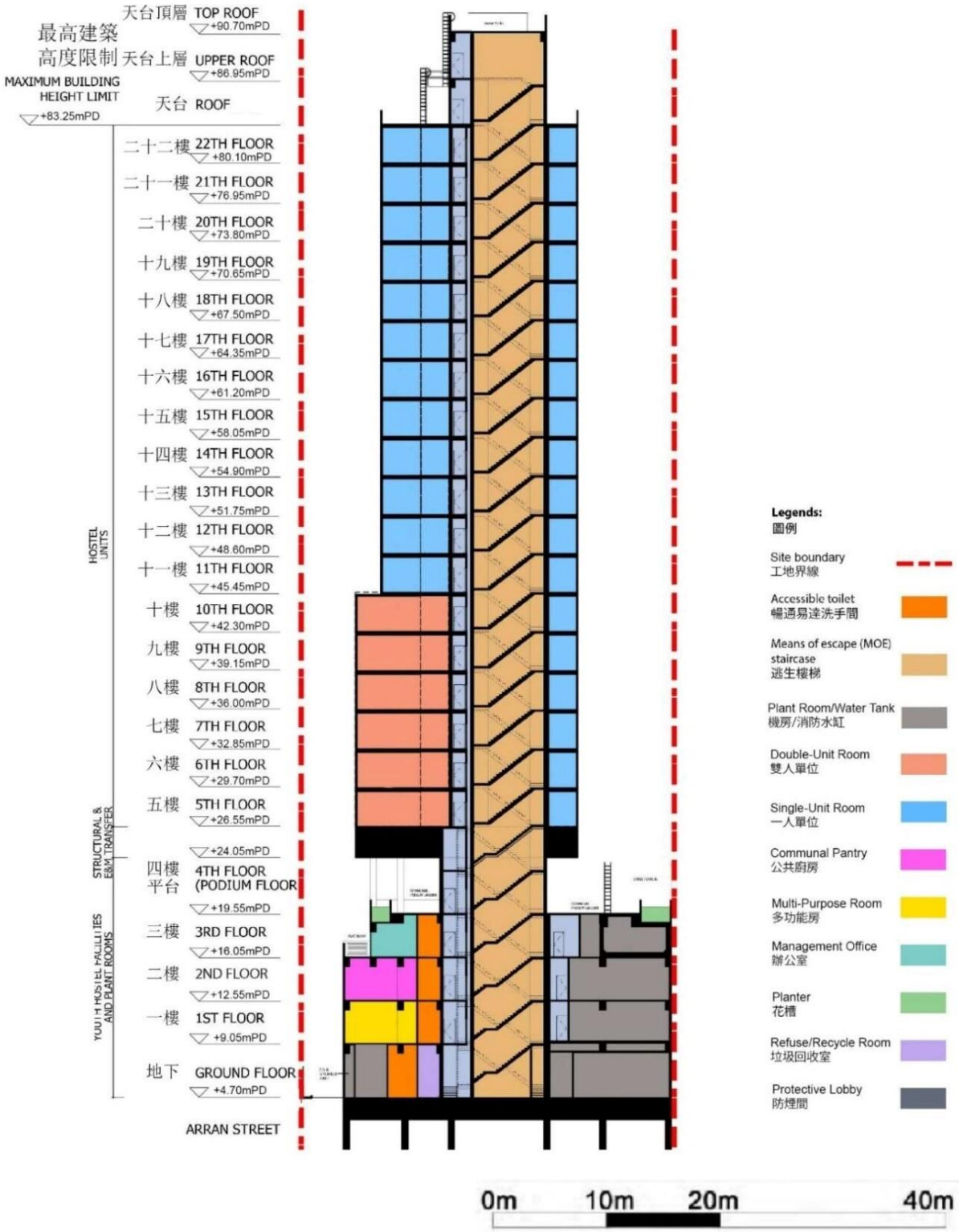
天台頂層 TOP ROOF
+90.70mPD
最高建築
高度限制
天台上層 UPPER ROOF
+86.95mPD
MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT LIMIT
+83.25mPD
天台 ROOF
二十二樓 22TH FLOOR
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二十一樓 21TH FLOOR
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三樓 3RD FLOOR
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二樓 2ND FLOOR
+12.55mPD
一樓 1ST FLOOR
+9.05mPD
地下 GROUND FLOOR
+4.70mPD
ARRAN STREET
HOSTEL UNITS
STRUCTURAL & E&M TRANSFER
YOUTH HOSTEL FACILITIES AND PLANT ROOMS
Legends:
圖例
Site boundary
工地界線
Accessible toilet
暢通易達洗手間
Means of escape (MOE) staircase
逃生樓梯
Plant Room/Water Tank
機房/消防水缸
Double-Unit Room
雙人單位
Single-Unit Room
一人單位
Communal Pantry
公共廚房
Multi-Purpose Room
多功能房
Management Office
辦公室
Planter
花槽
Refuse/Recycle Room
垃圾回收室
Protective Lobby
防煙間
0m
10m
20m
40m