

THE MEDICAL MUSEUM IN PICTURES



Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences

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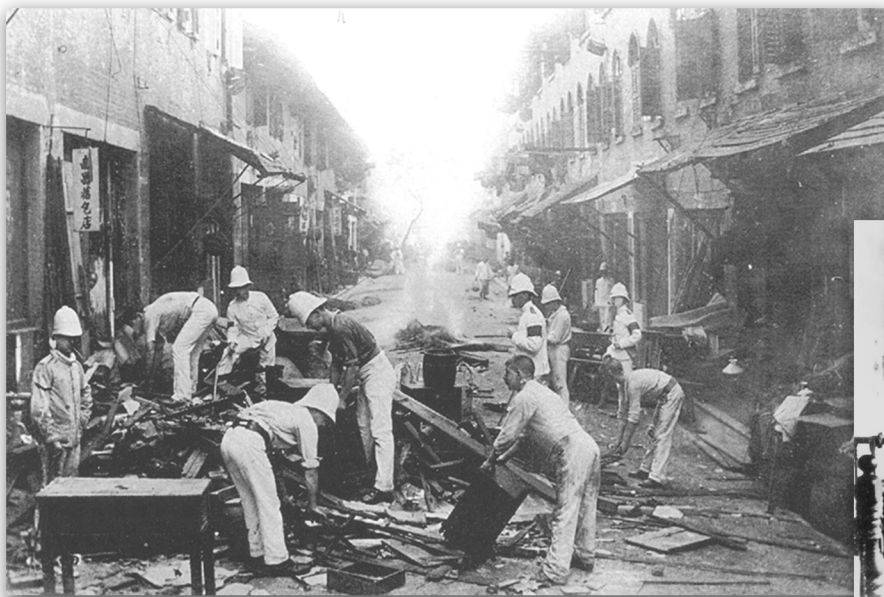
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When epidemics raged

When it comes to preventing epidemics, everyone nowadays would think of wearing masks, washing hands frequently and cleaning with 1:99 diluted bleach... Not so, a century ago in Hong Kong. Public understanding of personal and environmental hygiene was then inadequate. By 1894, in the Taipingshan district in Sheung Wan, sanitary condition was so poor that a huge epidemic, the bubonic plague, broke out and claimed over 2000 lives.



All the houses were considered to be contaminated and unfit for human habitation, and demolished in order to thoroughly clean the area.



1. Soldiers removing furniture from plague-infected houses for disinfection



2. Temporary make-shift plague hospital in Kennedy Town during the plague outbreak in 1894.

Acknowledgement:

1: Shropshire Regimental Museum 2: Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences Collection, donated by Mrs Francis Ashburner

Protecting the health of the community

As a result of the Plague, the Bacteriological Institute was established in 1906. It was Hong Kong's first clinical and public health laboratory.



Work of the Institute:

Plague Prevention

Systematic monitoring of plague in the rat population by dissecting and examining rats collected; and implementing rodent control measures. During peak years, over 10,000 rats were dissected annually. After 1923, there was no further large scale outbreak of bubonic plague in Hong Kong.

Examination of water, milk and milk products

Regular testing of samples collected from reservoirs, wells, public taps, dairy products and other sources to ensure that potable water is safe for drinking, beaches are suitable for swimming in, milk and dairy products (e.g. ice cream) are free from *E. coli* and other pathogens so as to prevent food-poisoning.

Protecting the health of the community



Production of vaccines

Vaccine production was one of the primary responsibilities of the Institute. Smallpox vaccine was an important one. After 1952, due to the effectiveness of the vaccine and the vaccination programme, there were no new smallpox cases in Hong Kong. In 1979, the World Health Organisation announced the global eradication of smallpox.

Conducting pathology tests

These tests help to find out the cause of disease. For example, identifying bacteria through culture, testing for specific antibodies in serum, examining tissue samples obtained during surgery or dissection, using microscopes to look for malaria parasites.



Had there not been the Bacteriological Institute, what would have become of the sanitary condition of Hong Kong?

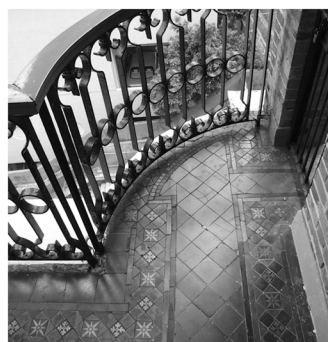
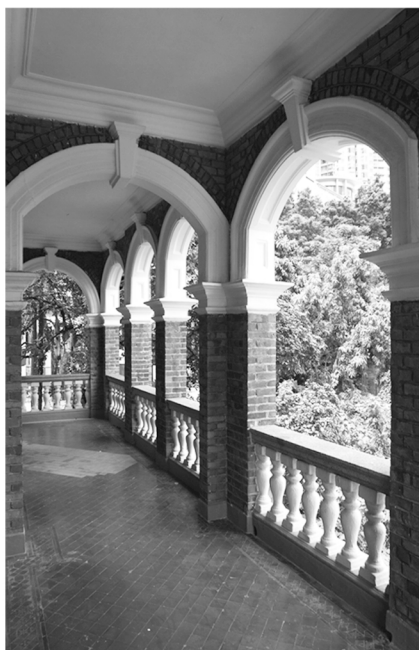


Many infectious diseases such as bird flu are still threatening us. To prevent infection, what can we do in terms of personal and environmental hygiene?



Building features

The design of the facades is clearly British Edwardian architectural style, incorporating classical elements (e.g., pediment, pilasters and arches), Chinese elements (e.g. Chinese roof tiles), and local British features (e.g. wooden shutters and open verandas). Constructed with red bricks and durable materials, the building not only suited Hong Kong's climate but also testify to the Institute's attention to environmental hygiene (e.g. deep verandas, bright and well-ventilated rooms, and floor tiles).



Can you find these architectural features?

- 1. Stained glass window***
- 2. Wooden staircase***
- 3. Fire place***
- 4. Chinese roof tiles***
- 5. Floor tiles***
- 6. Flask-shaped finial***

The Medical Museum



In 1990, the building was designated a declared monument, thus protected by law from demolition and other destructive acts. In 1996, it was successfully revitalized by the Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences Society, a non-profit charitable organisation, into The Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences. The museum retains the monument's original external and internal features, and is acknowledged as an excellent example of built-heritage conservation.



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