

In this Newsletter, Jennifer Field Lang writes about the development of the Taikoo Sugar Refinery which by the 1920s had become the largest single unit refinery in the world. As she explains it was an excellent example of a *company town*, housing and providing facilities for staff, as well as incorporating those buildings associated with the manufacturing itself.

The second part of Dan Walter's brief history of Technical Education and Training leads us from the old Technical College in Wanchai in the 1950s to Hung Hom where eventually the 'PolyU' opened as a university in 1994. All the while evolving as Hong Kong changed from a predominantly manufacturing centre to one of expanding service industries and the finance sector.

I would welcome contributions to the Newsletter. I am looking for short (under 300 words) articles on any subject related to the industrial history of HK. Even shorter pieces, just a few lines, about a product, process, person, industrial area, building, would also be very helpful. Non-copyright photos would be an interesting attachment.

If you have a question regarding any aspect of HK's Industrial History send it in. If you can supply information about these queries I will also include this. As you will see there has been a response to the 'Queries and Answers' feature.

Feel free to pass on the Newsletter, my name and email address to anyone you feel may be interested.

Best wishes

Hugh Farmer indhkh@gmail.com

In this issue

- * New Subscribers
- * Hong Kong Industrial History Sources *Hugh Farmer*
- * The Taikoo Sugar Refinery *Jennifer Field Lang*
- * Hong Kong Industrial History: A Brief Account of the Accompanying Role Played by
Technical Education and Training : Part Two *Dan Waters*
- * Queries & Answers
- * Diana Cameras *Hugh Farmer*
- * Bits and Pieces

New Subscribers

Here are those who have expressed interest in our group since the last newsletter:

Don Brech, Principal Consultant, RMI

Edith Chan, Assistant Head of Special Collections, HKU Library

Steven Chui, Graduate, Architectural Conservation Programmes (ACP), HKU

Stacy Gould, University Archivist at the University of Hong Kong

Nigel Ko, Graduate, Architectural Conservation Programmes (ACP) HKU

Lau Chi-Pang, Lingnam University, Director HK Local Records Office

Lee Ho-Yin, Head of the Architectural Conservation Unit, HKU

Elizabeth Sinn, Hong Kong Memory Project, HKU

Thomas Warren, History Manager, HSBC Asia Pacific Archives

Sources: Industrial History of Hong Kong

Hugh Farmer

Group member Don Brech suggested including in the Newsletter a section on source material for research into HK's Industrial History. Here's my list. Please send any more sources for inclusion at a later date.

Google and <http://scholar.google.com>

Gwulo: Old Hong Kong <http://gwulo.com/>

Hong Kong Archives Society <http://www.archives.org.hk>

Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre

http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/Monument/en/discovery_center.php

Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) <http://www.hkpl.gov.hk>

Hong Kong Public Records Office (HKPRO) <http://www.grs.gov.hk>

Includes a collection of 15 HK English and 7 Chinese newspapers

Hong Kong University Library <http://lib.hku.hk/database>

A huge collection of digitalized material

HSBC's Archives <http://www.hsbc.com.hk/1/2/cr/community/artsculture/bankhistory>

Royal Asiatic Society <http://www.royalasiaticsociety.org.hk>

The Collection

The Carl Smith Collection http://www.grs.gov.hk/PRO/srch/english/sys_carlsmith.jsp

Wikipedia

The Taikoo Sugar Refinery – A 19th Century Company Town in North Point, Hong Kong

Jennifer Field Lang



View of the Taikoo Sugar Refinery, Hong Kong circa 1911 (19722)

(Source: G. Warren Swire/ Historic Photographs of China Collection, University of Bristol, England)

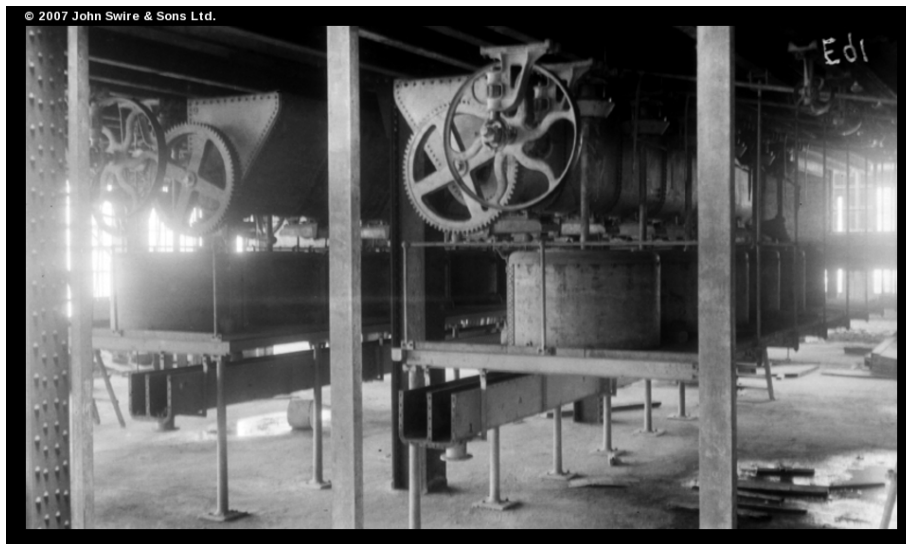
In 1881, Butterfield and Swire (the Far Eastern branch of the British trading firm John Swire and Sons) established the Taikoo¹ Sugar Refinery in Hong Kong. John Swire (1793-1847) the son of a Halifax cloth merchant founded the general merchant trading company in 1816 in Liverpool, with the primary commodity of cotton cloth from North America.² Because of a decline in the cotton textile trade in the 1860s due to the American Civil War, Swire expanded their interests to the market in Asia. Offices were opened in Shanghai in 1866 with a partnership with Richard

¹ *Taikoo* was the adopted Chinese name of John Swire and Company; it's meaning is "great and ancient."

² Swire Pacific Limited History, 2.

Shackleton Butterfield,³ and the business greatly expanded in the Far East as the focus of the firm's activities changed from traditional operations such as textiles and tea, to commission and shipping interests.⁴ Examples of new Swire business focus during the mid-to-late 1800s include the China Navigation Co. set up in 1872, the 1873 Butterfield and Swire acquisition of the assets of the Union Steam Navigation Company, the Coast Boats Ownery set up in 1874, Taikoo Sugar Limited incorporation in 1881, and the 1900 construction commencement of the Taikoo Dockyard (located directly adjacent to the Taikoo Sugar Refinery in Hong Kong).⁵

In 1875, Jardine Matheson & Company, a rival British trading firm in Hong Kong and China, established the China Sugar Company, a small sugar refinery located in East Point, Hong Kong, and in Shantou China in 1878-1886. John Samuel Swire, resolute to compete with Jardine Matheson & Company in response to competition on Swire shipping routes, aimed to create the largest and most up to date sugar-refining factory; indeed, by the 1920s the Taikoo Sugar Refinery became the largest single unit refinery in the world.⁶



Source: G. Warren Swire/ Historic Photographs of China Collection, University of Bristol, England)

³ Ibid

⁴ Shinya Sugiyama, "A British Trading Firm in the Far East: John Swire & Sons, 1867-1914," p. 172, and Shelia Marriner and Frances E. Hyde, *The Senior John Samuel Swire 1825-98; Management in Far Eastern Shipping Trades*, p. 107.

⁵ Swire Group, *The Swire Group – 175 Years*.

⁶ Elizabeth Hook, *A Guide to the Papers of John Swire and Sons Ltd.*, p. 121.

Although the Taikoo Sugar Refinery ceased operation in Hong Kong in the 1970s and the site was dismantled and redeveloped by Swire as a large housing estate with commercial components, Taikoo sugar continues to be manufactured (outside of Hong Kong) today and can be purchased at local Hong Kong grocery stores. The Swire Company further developed the refinery after Japanese occupation of Hong Kong as a sugar processing and packaging operation, thus preparing for the firm's entry into the beverage market in the 1990s.⁷ Today the Swire Group is a corporate organization with international interests in trade relating to transport and its associated service industries, manufacturing and insurance.

The Taikoo Sugar Refinery was a rare and distinctive example not only of industrial architecture of Hong Kong, but also of a *Company Town* constructed and operated in the late 19th century and early 20th century in Hong Kong, and in Asia. When the Taikoo Sugar Refinery began operation in 1884-1885, it featured the most up to date technology enabling it to produce a wide range of sugar products, the largest being white refined sugar, but also powdered sugar (which was supplied to Chinese cake makers to make cakeskin or pudding) and various other grades of sugar and sugar products (brown sugar, golden syrup, treacle, and sugar crystals).⁸

The cost of the construction of the sugar refinery in Hong Kong undertaken between 1881-1884 was approximately £200,000 (Pounds Sterling), with an additional £500,000, added over the next ten years.⁹ Swire carefully studied the industry and economics of setting up a sugar refining business in Hong Kong before moving forward; they reviewed plans of one of the most technologically advanced sugar refineries in Scotland and documented the resources required for the raw materials (raw sugar, water, and coal) and the staffing and management of

⁷ Geoffrey Jones, *Merchants to Multinationals: British Trading Companies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, p. 305

⁸ Ibid., p. 301 and Zhang Zhongli, *Swire Group in Old China*, p. 45

⁹ Shelia Marriner and Frances E. Hyde, *The Senior John Samuel Swire 1825-98; Management in Far Eastern Shipping Trades*, p. 107.

workers.¹⁰ Planning for the refinery began in 1881, and by 1884-1885, it began production with a capacity of seven hundred tons of refined sugar a week.¹¹ The initial business plan included the purchase of raw sugar from Java and the Philippines and the selling of refined sugar products to China and Japan (although initially sugar sales included Australia, India and California).¹²

In addition to the modern and technologically updated industrial machinery and plant buildings at the Taikoo Sugar Refinery which included deep water docks and piers for ships, cranes, warehouses (or Godowns as they were called in Hong Kong), store buildings, coal bins (the refinery was fired by coal), and rail systems, the refinery also included a *Company Town* village with housing for local Chinese workers and their families, housing for European managers and their families, and social and community facilities such as schools, recreational facilities and fields, a sanitarium located on the mountain behind the refinery (and accessible by way of a cable car) for the European managers and their families to escape heat and disease in the



The cable lift connecting the refinery and the company bungalows, 1911

Source: G. Warren Swire/ Historic Photographs of China Collection, University of Bristol, England)

¹⁰ Ibid., 99.

¹¹ Ibid., 100.

¹² Ibid., 99.

summer, and a reservoir and water channel systems to transport water from the mountains down to the refinery. Together, these features were constructed as a modern *Company Town*.

Journalist John Stuart Thomson visiting Hong Kong in 1909 described the Taikoo Sugar Refinery as:

"The largest cane refinery in the world is the noted Taikoo at Quarry Bay owned by Butterfield and Swire...The Taikoo refinery is a marvelous study in Scotch sociology. There is a Company reservoir and hospital in the hills; a cable to carry the European overseers five hundred feet over the gullies to the fever-free Company bungalows on the cliffs; Company model tenements at inexpensive rents; a Company loan fund for overseers to bring out Scotch wives, running track, athletic associations ... launches for picnics, and a seven-hundred-foot graving-dock and repair yard for Company ships. Employees are encouraged to join yacht, golf, water polo, gunning, cricket and riding clubs, as to be athletically happy even in enervating South China."¹³

¹³ John Stuart Thompson, *The Chinese*. Pages 7-8.

[Editor's Note: The £200,000 construction costs mentioned would have been approximately £14 million today and the additional £500,000 , £35,000,000]

*

Hong Kong Industrial History: A Brief Account of the Accompanying Role Played by Technical Education and Training - Part Two

Dan Walters

In the 1950s, it had long been said the old Technical College was not large enough to meet the needs of Hong Kong and the Principal, SJG Burt, managed to secure a donation of HK\$1 million (a considerable sum in those days) from the Chinese Manufacturers' Association on the understanding the Government would match the offer. This it duly did. Many other generous business houses came forward with donations in cash or in kind. The Principal, Sydney Burt, did not receive the pseudonym, the 'Grandfather of Technical Education', for nothing. He proved to be an excellent fund raiser.

As a result the Technical College moved in November 1957 from Wood Road, Wan Chai, to the then newly reclaimed land at Hung Hom. The College continued to expand and new disciplines included Marine Engineering, Production Engineering and Management. The Textile Department was expanded to embrace Spinning, and Dyeing and Finishing.

In 1965 the Industrial Training Advisory Committee (ITAC) was established. Besides a main committee on which educationalists, industrialists and civil servants sat, there were committees for each main industry as well as functional committees catering for apprenticeships, technical institutes, vocational training and so on. ITAC, although advisory, did a great deal to promote the needs of industry and technical education. I sat on the main committee as well as on other committees. Eventually ITAC was succeeded, in 1973, by the Hong Kong Training Council which amounted to an enlarged version of the old ITAC. But again it was advisory.



Another group of Technical College building students on a site visit again about half a century ago. I sometimes meet those students, of far off days, for lunch. Many have already retired. They have taken part in the 'building of Hong Kong'. It has indeed been a great transformation.

In 1965 the Industrial Training Advisory Committee (ITAC) was established. Besides a main committee on which educationalists, industrialists and civil servants sat, there were committees for each main industry as well as functional committees catering for apprenticeships, technical institutes, vocational training and so on. ITAC, although advisory, did a great deal to promote the needs of industry and technical education. I sat on the main committee as well as on other committees. Eventually ITAC was succeeded, in 1973, by the Hong Kong Training Council which amounted to an enlarged version of the old ITAC. But again it was advisory.

In the late 1960s it was proposed by Westminster that Hong Kong should have a polytechnic. A decision had to be taken as to whether it should be a new establishment, but it was eventually decided the Technical College at Hung Hom should be upgraded. Its formal establishment actually came about on 1 August 1972. During Keith Legg's term as Director development was rapid and few institutions anywhere in the world can have expanded at such a pace. Eventually 'PolyU' (as it is now known) was accorded university status in 1994.

The first Technical Institute was established at Morrison Hill in 1969 although the first year was spent in borrowed premises on the campus of the Technical College at Hung Hom. I had the honour of being the founding principal. During the 1970s the development of the technical institutes matched that of the Polytechnic, and, by 1980, there were institutes not only at Morrison Hill but also at Kwai Chung, Kwun Tong, Cheung Sha Wan (Haking Wong Institute) and Kowloon Tong (Lee Wai Lee Institute).

Largely in parallel with the setting up of the technical institutes a registered apprenticeship scheme was organized by the Government Department of Labour. The training of these apprentices was supervised and they attended part-time day classes in technical institutes. This was a big improvement on the old idea of Chinese apprenticeships where there was little or no formal learning. In such cases learning tended to be largely 'sitting by Nellie', and apprentices were sometimes regarded as the general 'dogsboddy' of the master craftsman. For the first couple of years or so they did little other than 'fetch and carry'.

More recent developments:

Previously, technical institutes were government institution staffed by government servants. This ended with the formation of the Vocational Training Council which was established on 1 April 1982. I had retired from Hong Kong Government service in 1980.

But of course the technical institutes have had to change with the times. In the 1960s and 1970s, as previously explained, Hong Kong was very much a manufacturing centre. Today, manufacturing has largely moved to 'pastures new' where labour is less expensive and Hong Kong now tends to concentrate on service industries and the financial sector. What were workshops in technical institutes have now frequently been adapted to other uses.

To do justice to the development of technical education and training in Hong Kong, in a short article like this, is an almost impossible task.

An account of the development of the more recently established Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the Polytechnic University will have to be left for another article.

Bibliography:

Waters, D. D. *The Planning of Craft and Technician Education in Hong Kong 1957 to 1982*, A Doctoral Thesis, Loughborough University (UK), 1985.

Waters, Dan, 'A Brief History of Technical Education in Hong Kong', *RASHKBJ*, vol. 28, 1988, pp.10--15.

'Waters, D. D. 'Financing Craft and Technician Education 1967—1987

Queries and Answers

2. Rickshaws

Kevin Hall wrote to ask where the rickshaws used in Hong Kong were made. James Chan responds. Rickshaws were first imported into Hong Kong from Japan in 1874. There is no evidence that they were manufactured anywhere else. However, while there is considerable information about their use in Hong Kong, and worldwide, there is little about where they were made outside Japan. Can anyone provide clarification about whether all Hong Kong rickshaws were indeed made in Japan?



Rickshaws in Queens Road, Central (date unknown)

3. Location of Glass Works Hospital

Frank Watson has been reading about the Plague outbreak in 1894. There is mention of a "Glass Works Hospital" which had been hastily converted from a glass works factory. He thinks this may have been in Kennedy Town. Can anyone confirm this, provide the exact location and any further information?

4. Tai O – Central land values

Eric Spain read Colin Davidson's article in Newsletter 4 about salt production in Tai O. Eric remembers having heard that at some period, land was more valuable in Tai O than in Central. He wonders if this extraordinary suggestion can be confirmed.

5. Mui Wo salt pans

Eric Spain also has an enquiry about salt production in Mui Wo. He remembers seeing some RAF aerial photographs which showed salt pans there. [presumably immediately before, during or shortly after WW2?] Does anyone have any information about the pans and/or these photographs? Eric thinks they may be in a HK government archive.

Diana Cameras

Hugh Farmer

During the 1960's and 70's there were several companies manufacturing cameras and binoculars in Hong Kong. Perhaps the most well-known was W. Haking Enterprises, founded by Dr Hanking Wong and Dr Paulina Chan who combined their names to form the brand name *Halina*. Several of these cameras can be seen in the Hong Kong Museum of History.



Here, however, I am going to briefly mention the *Diana* brand made by the 'Great Wall Plastic Factory' which was established in 1955 in Hong Kong. The cameras were manufactured in Kowloon Bay.

The *Diana* first appeared in the early 60s as a very inexpensive box camera. There was also the *Diana F* with a built-in flash. Essentially a toy it was made entirely of plastic including the lens. Quality control was lacking and they were considered to be primitive in the extreme. They had ill-fitting housing, images were often slightly blurred with vignetting and light leaks.



OPEN HOUSE SPECIAL

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, March 28 - 29 - 30

FREE 120 CAMERA

- ☆ Adjusts Instantly For Portrait • Group • Scenery
- ☆ Takes 16 Exposures—Color or Black and White
- ☆ Uses Standard 120 Film

Black and White 120 Film 3 Rolls Only \$1.00 Flash Attachment - 49c

WITH PURCHASE OF 8 OR MORE GALLONS OF GASOLINE

Ask About Our FREE Genuine Cut Glass Offer Which Starts Next Week

Helm's Atlantic Service

E. MAIN ST. & GRAND AVE. MIDDLETOWN, NEW YORK

The majority were exported to the US and the UK. The *Diana* was imported into the former by the 'Power Sales Company' of Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. In the 60s PSC wholesaled by the case, 144 cameras at about 50 US cents per camera. Even 50 years ago that was very cheap and most *Diana* cameras were given away or sold at nominal sums as novelties or prizes at fairs, product promotions or at raffles. For a time the camera was also regularly advertised for sale in periodicals through mail order vendors.

However the development of cheap, higher quality cameras such as the Kodak Instamatic led to a decline in demand for the *Diana*, even as gift.

Production of the *Diana* stopped in the 1970s.

While considered a failure at the time, some photographers relish the *Diana's* soft, unpredictable and dream-like images and it has taken on something of a cult status. As a result an original *Diana* in good condition can sell for "premium collector dollars".

*

Bits and Pieces

Group member Amelia Allsop, Collections Manager, kindly invited me to visit her at The Hong Kong Heritage Project. This was commissioned by Sir Michael Kadoorie in May 2007 to consolidate the Kadoorie family business records in an archive.

Records of HK Industrial companies kept at the archive include The HK and Whampoa Dock Co., Ltd, The HK and Kowloon Wharf and Godown Co., Ltd, The HK Rope Manufacturing Co. Ltd., Nanyang Cotton Mill Ltd. and Tai Ping Carpets as well those in utilities, hospitality, construction, land development and aviation.

As well as a website there is also a blog.

<https://www.hongkongheritage.org>

<http://hongkongheritageproject.blogspot.hk>

HF

*

I attended the second meeting of The Hong Kong Archives Society: Oral History Group. Presentations were given by Dr Lau Chi-pang of Lingnan University. He is currently involved in a project recording the oral history of those working in industrial areas of East Kowloon, especially Kwun Tong and Kowloon Bay.

Dr Wong Wai-ling spoke about the Hong Kong Memory Project

<http://www.hkmemory.hk/>

Further details about the Oral History Group can be found in the blogspot above

HF

*

Colin Davidson's article on salt production in Tai O in Newsletter 4 mentioned that "from 1936 onwards, the Japanese blockade of the coast of China removed foreign salt from the coastal areas of China, which encouraged a vast increase in the salt-smuggling trade out of Tai O."

The *Hongkong Telegraph* 17th April 1890 suggests that this practice was carried on much earlier, "There was recently a sharp conflict between the revenue cruiser *Kulu* and some salt smugglers near Whampoa. The cruiser opened fire upon the smugglers, who replied and made a desperate struggle to prevent capture, and save their cargo, but the contrabandists, being outnumbered, had to give up the battle after a struggle of about half an hour, leaving all their salt to the revenue cruiser's people. Some 20,000 catties of salt were seized. But the smugglers themselves managed to escape."

*

The first land sales on Hong Kong island were held by auction in June 1841. Most of these purchasers bought their lots along the seashore, in what is now the Central area, Jardine, Matheson & Co bought land in East Point where they established the company headquarters in the same year and built offices, "dwelling houses" and godowns.

East Point was a cape or pointed headland that extended from Jardine's Hill towards Kellet Island on which there is now the Royal Hong Kong Club. Reclamation over a period of a hundred years has changed the original landscape.

The term 'godown' or warehouse, originates from 16th Century Portuguese, 'gudão' or possibly an Indian language. Godown remains a common term in many parts of India.

*

