

TVB HK Historical Site's Feature Story on water supplies history (16 May 2021)
(English translation of the Chinese transcript)

Mr PANG Kin-wah : We have previously introduced the Pok Fu Lam
(Reporter) Reservoir and the Tai Tam Reservoir, which are among the oldest reservoirs serving the Hong Kong Island. We are now at the Kowloon Reservoir. What is so special about it?

Ms LI Man-yan : Actually the Kowloon Reservoir is not located in
(Reporter) Kowloon – it is in Sha Tin.

In the early days, people living on the Kowloon Peninsula relied solely on underground water and well water as their sources of fresh water supply. The growing population intensified the demand for drinking water. When the New Territories was leased, a topographical survey was undertaken across Kowloon and the newly-leased areas of the New Territories. A tract of land north of the Boundary Street was identified for the construction of a new reservoir to develop the water supply system of Kowloon.

Mr PANG Kin-wah : At that time, Mr Lawrence GIBBS, Assistant
(Reporter) Engineer of the then Public Works Department and his team located a suitable site covering Needle Hill to the south and Beacon Hill to the west for construction of the reservoir at a cost of \$1.2 million. The water supply began in 1906 and the whole project was completed four years later. Being the first reservoir supplying water to Kowloon, the Kowloon

Reservoir was also the first reservoir built in the New Territories.

Mr Season CHAN : The reservoir was surrounded by hills. Hence, its (Engineer, nearby area was designated as the water catchment. Water Supplies At that time, a large amount of manpower was Department) deployed to build the dam with excavation mainly carried out by hand. The Kowloon Water Supply System comprised the construction of reservoir, filter beds and service reservoir. The water stored in the Kowloon Reservoir was first filtered in the sand filtration tank, then delivered to the service reservoir in Kowloon Tong, and finally supplied to the residents nearby.

Ms LI Man-yan : Walking up the ridgeline, there is a boundary stone. (Reporter) What is the story behind this stone?

Mr WONG Hei-nok : The boundary stone is engraved with English (Senior Engineer/ characters which stands for “Kowloon Waterworks”. Reservoir Safety, The stone has been erected here since 1902, and it is Water Supplies the tenth stone. According to the literature review Department) findings, a total of 32 boundary stones have been erected in the water catchment of the Kowloon Reservoir. The boundary stone indicates that the whole area behind the stone is the catchment area, serves as a reminder to members of the public that water in the catchment area should not be contaminated. The rainwater first falls on the ridgeline, which is the highest point of the hill, then flows downhill into the Kowloon Reservoir.

Mr PANG Kin-wah : The expansion of reservoir was carried out in 1922.
(Reporter) Together with the Shek Lei Pui Reservoir, the Kowloon Reception Reservoir, and the Kowloon Byewash Reservoir, which were built later, they became the Kowloon Group of Reservoirs as a whole with a total storage capacity exceeding 2.8 million cubic metres.

Ms LI Man-yan : To devote more resources to construct water supply
(Reporter) facilities, the Government introduced the separate water metering mechanism in the late 19th century and adopted the ‘user-pays’ principle to monitor the amount of water used such that the public would be encouraged to save water. Users would be exempted from paying for the first 2 000 gallons used in every quarter and a rate of 25 cents would be charged for every 1 000 gallons exceeding this amount. However, the water consumption patterns were different between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon.

Mr WONG Hei-nok : (At that time) residents on the Hong Kong Island had
(Senior Engineer/ been enjoying water free of charge by taking water
Reservoir Safety, from public standpipes. It turned out that the
Water Supplies installation of separate water meters on the Hong
Department) Kong Island was not so successful. In contrast, from 1895 onwards, following the commissioning of the Yau Ma Tei Pumping Station as part of the water supply system for the Kowloon region, residents must apply for water supply from the Government. As a result, implementation of the separate water meter mechanism went smoothly in Kowloon. During the

drought in 1929, free water was no longer available from the public standpipes (of the Hong Kong Island) and this facilitated free installation of separate water meters for the public.

Mr PANG Kin-wah : Mr WONG Hei-nok said that the drought in 1929
(Reporter) made the public accept the separate water meter system as they could get hold of water preferentially. The water tariff system was in place until today.

#