At Tathong Point, also known as Nam Tong Mei, a small rocky peninsular at the extreme southern tip of Tung Lung Island, there still exists the remains of a little known war-time Japanese gun emplacement. Its purpose was probably to protect the south-eastern approaches to Victoria Harbour. This gun emplacement is not mentioned in the book *Ruins of War* by Tim Ko and Jason Wordie and is not listed in the Gazetteer of the Batteries of the Fixed Defences of Hong Kong in Denis Rollo’s book *The Guns and Gunners of Hong Kong*, although Rollo does mention an observation post for the Devil’s Peak Battery at the southern end of Tung Lung Island built in 1935/36. From information in an old Public Works Department file it appears that the gun emplacement was built by the Japanese during the Occupation (1941-1945).

In 1965, the gun emplacement was converted by the Public Works Department’s Architectural Office into an engine room for the Marine Department’s Tathong Point Lighthouse Station to house the electric marine light, foghorn engines, light standby engine and switchboard. The staff quarters adjacent to the engine room were built later in 1973/74 to replace the old lighthouse keeper’s quarters built in 1949 lower down near the jetty and landing stage. The old vacated quarters were used as stores for some time then later demolished. The remains of the concrete platforms on which these old buildings were built can still be seen amongst the rocks.

From the original P.W.D. drawings for the conversion works, it is possible to learn something about the construction of the gun emplacement. It was built of concrete with a floor area of about 40 square metres. The walls are about one metre thick but the roof is much thicker especially over the rear part which contained the expense magazines. The chamber which housed the gun consists of a rectangular room with a semi-circular bow front in which the wide angle embrasure for the gun was formed. The armament is not known but from the size of the gun embrasure it was probably a large coastal defence gun.
equivalent to the 9.2 inch guns at Mount Davis and Stanley Fort Batteries. The gun embrasure was bricked up as part of the 1974 conversion works and steel dead shoring erected to provide extra support for the overhanging cantilevered canopy. A new door opening was also formed in 1974 in the rear wall. The original door opening is still there and leads to a small rear compartment with three recesses in the wall noted on the P.W.D. drawing as ‘voids’ which would have been the expense magazines. The original rear entrance staircase to the gun emplacement was filled in with compacted earth and slabbed over with concrete.

The 1968 Hong Kong Government 1:1,000 scale Survey Sheet (Sheet Number 16-NW-2D) shows several small rectangular structures near the gun emplacement, but there is no indication what they were originally. One was probably a searchlight emplacement and another one near the cliff edge may have been a forward observation post. Another rectangle marked ‘R’ for ruin on the inland side of the hill may have been the main magazine as it appears to have what looks like a separate blast wall constructed along one side of it. Still yet another structure further down the hillside may have been a barrack block for the gun crew. All this is of course conjecture and independent verification and further research are needed.

A report on the gun emplacement was prepared in 1999 by the writer and submitted to the Antiquities and Monuments Office for record purposes. It is however unlikely that the structure will be graded as a historical building or receive cultural heritage status. Due to its remoteness Tathong Point is not easily accessible and with its dangerous steep and rocky cliffs it is not recommended to encourage the general public to visit the site. Permission from the Marine Department would be necessary anyway.

To illustrate the hazards involved in visiting Tathong Point, an incident recorded in the Public Works Department file should be mentioned. The file contains a memorandum (Memo) from the Director of Marine to the Director of Public Works reporting that at 11:00 hours in September 1966 (exact date not given) the launch “Ming Kee” carrying 12 ‘light-house workers’ capsized off the Tathong Point Light House. All were saved by a sampan which was fishing in the vicinity. Enquiries revealed that the workers were employed by the Fook Lee
Construction Company, a contractor engaged by the Maintenance Section of the Public Works Department. The launch "Ming Kee" was normally used to carry the workers to and from Tathong Point. The Director of Marine respectfully - but ominously - requested the Director of Public Works to arrange for the coxswain of the "Ming Kee" to report to the Licensing Office, Marine Department, Hong Kong. Unfortunately the P.W.D. file contains no further information on the incident.

Acknowledgements

On 1st April 1982 the function of the old Public Works Department (P.W.D.) was replaced by the Lands and Works Branch, and the Architectural Office of the P.W.D. became part of the Building Development Department. In April 1986 the Building Development Department was dissolved and the Architectural Services Department established. In 1990 the name of the Maintenance Branch of the Architectural Services Department was changed to the Property Services Branch to whom acknowledgements are due for inspection of their files.
Tathong Point - General views of the staff quarters and the former Japanese gun emplacement