

Fanling - Sha Tau Kok Branch Line

The year 1910 saw the inauguration of the British section of the Kowloon-Canton Railway, a new means of transport which transformed communications between Canton and Hong Kong. About this time the District Office (North), proposed that a branch line be built linking Fanling to Sha Tau Kok on the border with China. This would facilitate transportation to the northeastern part of the New Territories, and might one day be linked up with the western part, including Castle Peak and Tuen Mun. The Hong Kong Government accepted the proposal in April 1911. The track, to run from Fanling to Sha Tau Kok, was to be a narrow gauge only two feet in width. As the quantities of material left over from the building of the KCR could be deployed for its construction, the branch line was completed in December 1911 within a short time. The full service was inaugurated in April 1912.



Map of Hong Kong showing the Kowloon-Canton Railway and the Fanling Branch

Only 7.25 miles long, the Fanling-Sha Tau Kok Branch Line had three stops, each with a simple overhead structure which provided waiting passengers with shelter from the rain. There were conductors on the trains. The average journey took 55 minutes, a long time for such a short distance. The roofless carriages were open to the elements, which did not make for a comfortable ride in very hot or stormy weather.

The branch line was in service for a mere 17 years, closing on 1 April 1928 when the Sha Tau Kok road was completed.

Narrow Gauge Steam Locomotive W.G. Bagnall 0-4-4T



Narrow Gauge Steam Train

In 1923 the Kowloon-Canton Railway placed an order for two steam locomotives from the manufacturer W.G. Bagnall Ltd. of England. The wheel arrangement of both engines was 0-4-4T . These were to replace some of the aging engines running on the Fanling-Sha Tau Kok Branch Line. In the same year, the Hong Kong Government commenced construction of the road to Sha Tau Kok with a view to dispensing with the branch line. The two locomotives were delivered to Hong Kong in July 1924. They began service in September and continued until the closure of the branch line on 1 April 1928.

The two locomotives were sold in 1928 and 1930 to the sugar cane plantation, Victorias Milling Co. Inc. of the Philippines, where they remained in service until the early 1990s.

The abandoned 0-4-4T locomotive
in the Philippines



Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation and museum personnel conducted protracted negotiations with the Filipino owners, and finally succeeded in securing the locomotives' return to Hong Kong in 1995, after an absence of nearly 70 years. One has been completely restored to its original appearance and is on exhibition in the Hong Kong Railway Museum.



Under restoration in the Ho Tung Lau Maintenance Workshop of KCRC



The restored locomotive