

Historic Building Appraisal
Former Royal Air Force Hangar
Diamond Hill, Kowloon

Erected and opened for use in 1935, the existing Former Royal Air Force (RAF) Hangar (前皇家空軍飛機庫) was built at the western end of Kai Tak Airport as a civilian hanger. Three years ago, in early 1932, an aircraft hangar of a slightly different type had been first built at the eastern perimeter of Kai Tak Airport as a shared civilian/RAF facility, being used by RAF and some private airlines such as the Far East Aviation Company and Imperial Airways. Due to proposed expansion work at Kai Tak Airport, the hangar built in 1932 was dismantled in June 1941.

During the Second World War, the Japanese took control of the territory of Hong Kong. During their expansion work of Kai Tak Airport, the Japanese dismantled the entire original civilian hangar built at Kai Tak Airport in 1935 and re-erected it on the present site of the former Tai Hom Village, Diamond Hill, in 1943, using P.O.W. labour. The existing hangar, which was constructed to the latest structural engineering design standards of the time, was believed to have housed Japanese military aircraft (mainly Zero-Sen fighters) during the wartime.

After the War, it was used by various organizations and government departments as a store. For example, it was once used as storage for relief commodities received from the United States by various relief agencies. Also, the Urban Services Department used the Hangar for packing food parcels with the Cooperative For American Relief Everywhere (CARE, 美國經援協會, a relief organization for the purpose of overseeing food crusade packages for local distribution). It was then used by a private company Hing Muk Animal Foodstuff Company (興牧飼料有限公司) for producing animal foodstuff. It is now abandoned. With the clearance of Tai Hom Village (大磡村) in the late 1990s, it was one of three items that were not demolished in this squatter area in view of their historical and architectural merits.

Hangars were mainly used for aircraft storage, maintenance and general service purposes. There were many hangar types developed in the 1930s. The Former RAF Hangar is probably a style known as the “Bellman Hangar”. It is a large rectangular steel framed structure with a pitched roof clad with steel corrugated sheeting. The pre-fabricated steel sections were shipped in from the United Kingdom. The roof trusses are of Pratt configuration, also known as Linville or N-trusses. The trusses span across the full width of the Hangar and are supported on steel columns, which take the loads to the ground on concrete footings. The sliding doors are full height fitted with wheels and tracks at the

base. The Hangar is surrounded on three sides by a concrete earth retaining wall. It is more of an engineering structure than an architectural building and may be categorised in the **Utilitarian** classification.

The Hangar is a rare type of building in Hong Kong and the only surviving pre-war military aircraft hangar after the 1932 aircraft hangar was dismantled in June 1941. It therefore is a rare structure and has built heritage value as representing the development of aviation in Hong Kong. Some additional steel structural members appear to have been fitted at some time, but generally the Hangar retains its original authentic appearance.

In addition to its military use, the Hangar was used for various relief agencies in the 1960s for storage, packaging and distribution of relief commodities from the United States. Later it was used by a local animal foodstuff company. The Hangar therefore has historical social value and is also of interest to local aviation enthusiasts.

Within the former RAF base, another military structure, an Old Pillbox (機槍庫) is also preserved. A Stone House (石寓) is found at the old site of Tai Hom Village opposite to the Hangar. It is physically close to the big religious complex, Wong Tai Sin Temple (黃大仙祠舊色園). St. Joseph's Home for the Aged (聖約瑟安老院) is located at the Clear Water Bay Road nearby.

Due to its construction, the Hangar can easily be dismantled and re-erected. The main problem is finding a site large enough to accommodate it. Due to its large internal capacity it could be used as the basis for an aviation museum or a museum for veteran and vintage cars.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

Group Value

**Adaptive
Re-use**