

Historic Building Appraisal
Old Wan Chai Police Station
No. 123 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

The Old Wan Chai Police Station (舊灣仔警署), also previously known as *Historical Interest* No. 2 Police Station (二號差館) or Eastern Police Station, is situated at No. 123 Gloucester Road. It was built in **1932** to replace the then No. 2 Police Station which was constructed in 1868 at the junction of Wan Chai Road and Johnston Road (Praya East Road). The existing building is located on land reclaimed under the Praya East Reclamation Scheme carried out in 1921-29. In its early years, it served not only as a police station, but also a garage for fire brigade, and police officers' hostel. The building was heavily bombarded during the Japanese invasion of December 1941 and was substantially renovated before operation was resumed. It was used as the Wan Chai District Headquarters and District Station (灣仔區總部及分區警署) before adaptive re-use.

From the 1930s to the 1960s, the police station was facing directly onto Victoria Harbour. Such location enabled the station to overlook both land and sea. From 1976 onwards, the reclamation to the north of Gloucester Road commenced. The police station began to lose its prominence as a structure bordering the harbour's shoreline. Due to the rapid development of Wan Chai during the last quarter of the 20th century, many pre-World War II buildings on the reclaimed land were demolished and replaced by high-rise buildings.

The Old Wan Chai Police Station is a symmetrical U-shape four-storey *Architectural Merit* high building in **Neo-Classical** style with possibly some **Art Deco** influence. The front façade consisting of open verandahs projects over the public footpath and has rectangular and square columns at regular intervals forming thirteen bays. There are horizontal projecting cornices running the full length of the façade at first and third floor level and at parapet level. The second floor verandah has metal railings as balustrades between the columns. There is a rectangular pediment in the centre of the roof parapet. Windows in the other elevations are placed in regular rows or bands. The walls of the police station are rendered and painted and the ground floor storey is grooved to imitate stonework. The architectural style is a very stylized form of Neo-Classical. Interesting fluted column capitals can be seen on the second floor verandahs. Internally although there have been many alterations over the years to suit operational requirements period fireplaces and staircases can still be found. Many of the original windows appear to still exist.

This old police station is one of the few remaining pre-war police stations *Rarity, Built Heritage* in Hong Kong. It is the largest government historic building in Wan Chai and

the only historic structure remaining along the former waterfront. Although it has undergone many renovations it still retains much of its authenticity. ***Value & Authenticity***

The social value of the building lies in its function as a police station and role in keeping law and order. Although now no longer on the waterfront and surrounded by high-rise buildings it is a well known landmark in Wan Chai of local interest. ***Social Value & Local Interest***

The Old Wan Chai Police Station, together with the Old Wan Chai Post Office (舊灣仔郵局) (built in 1932, declared monument) and the façade of the Old Wan Chai Market (舊灣仔街市) (built in 1937) are the only remaining historic government buildings in Wan Chai District. They form a significant architectural and historical complex group the local community. ***Group Value***

The floor plans of the police station show that there are a series of rooms or offices sewed by corridors indicating that it could possibly be used for many other purposes. ***Adaptive Re-use***