

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Ex-Royal Air Force Station (Kai Tak)**  
**Nos. 50 & 51 Kwun Tong Road, Kowloon Bay, Kowloon**

The history of the Royal Air Force (RAF) in Hong Kong dates back to *Historical Interest* 1924 when the first group of RAF personnel arrived in Hong Kong as members of the Fleet Air Arm. In 1927 the RAF Base was formed at Kai Tak. Their first duty was to undertake the first full-scale aerial photographic survey of Hong Kong, Kowloon and the outlying islands. The first buildings were constructed of timber with matshed hangars. Others lived down in Ma Tau Kok (馬頭角) about a mile to the west in a building which was destroyed in a fire in 1930.

The three buildings of the Ex-Royal Air Force Station that now remain were built in 1934. No.50 was the former **RAF Headquarters**. It became the Kai Tak Vietnamese Refugee Camp (啓德越南難民營) between 1979 and 1981 and continued to be used for detaining Vietnamese refugees under different names until 1997. It then became the Caritas Family Crisis Support Centre (明愛向晴軒) since March 2002.

No.51 was the **Officers' Quarters Compound** (which include **RAF Officers Mess** and an **Annex Block**). It was handed over to the Government in 1978 and converted into a Detective Training School of the Hong Kong Police Force, and remained in use until 2001. Nowadays, it is the site of the Academy of Visual Arts (視覺藝術院) of Hong Kong Baptist University.

The former **RAF Headquarters** block is a two-storey **Colonial Neo-Classical** style building with elegant colonnaded verandahs all round it. *Architectural Merit* The columns are square with simple bases and capitals. The balustrade panels are cross-braced ornamental ironwork panels in **Regency** style. The roof is flat with a simple projecting cornice at parapet level. The building is a long rectangular block strictly symmetrical in design. Internally, there are no architectural features of note. Doors and windows have been modernised.

The former **RAF Officers Mess** is situated on a plateau or platform cut into the hillside. The architectural style is also **Colonial Neo-Classical**. It is a two-storey building with colonnaded verandahs like the Headquarters Block. The main part of the building is symmetrical with end projecting bays and a central entrance porch approached by a wide flight of granite steps. Both the porch and steps show **Art Deco** influence in their design. There is a projecting kitchen wing at the rear of the building and an additional wing and ablutions block at the southeast end of the building. Internally, architectural features include period fireplaces, covings to ceilings, and stylised capitals to columns. Most of the original wooden doors and windows which are fitted with jalousies or louvered shutters still remain. The original main wood panelled entrance

doors still remain and the RAF eagle emblem is still in position over the doors.

The **Annex Block** is situated at the northwest end of the former Officers Mess on a small lower platform. There is a small bridge connecting it to the road. The architectural style again is **Colonial Neo-Classical**. A stone tablet engraved “1934” can be found built into the wall at the northwest corner of the building. Most of the original doors and windows still survive. Like the Headquarters Block and the Officers Mess, the roof is flat.

The three main buildings are rare examples of 1930s Neo-Classical style buildings with historical as well as built heritage value. Modernisation has affected their authenticity to some extent, but they still retain their original architectural appearance.

*Rarity,  
Built Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity*

The social value of the buildings lies in the uses to which they have been put which have all benefited the community in some way. They have never however been in the public eye so that they are not well known.

*Social Value  
& Local  
Interest*

The compound also has several other structures including a former barrack office, a squash court, air raid shelter, dust bin store, Nissen Hut, mini-range, latrine block and incinerator. There is also a basketball court, flight of granite steps, and ornamental railings to the road. A disused tunnel portal can also be seen built into the slope below the former barrack office. It is believed that this was the entrance to an underground tele-communications centre. Together with the surrounding military structures, the three buildings create an interrelated environment of the Ex-Royal Air Force Station. The site is physically close to graded buildings such as Sam Shan Kwok Wong Temple (三山國王廟) and the Ma Wan Tsuen Tin Hau Temple (馬環村天后廟).

*Group Value*

The buildings have been re-used for different purposes.

*Adaptive Re-use*