

Historic Building Appraisal
Bokhara Battery
(PCCW Cape D' Aguilar HF Radio Transmitting Station)
D' Aguilar Peninsula, Hong Kong

The present site of the PCCW Cape D' Aguilar HF Radio Transmitting Station, at the south-eastern end of D' Aguilar, was formerly a coast defence gun battery called Bokhara Battery (博加拉炮台). The Battery, with two gun emplacements and a number of bunkers and searchlight positions, defended the southern part of Hong Kong Island together with Stanley Battery and Chung Hom Kok Battery (春磡角炮台). The Battery was built in the **1930s** and construction was completed just before the Japanese attack in 1941. *Historical Interest*

At 10:00 on the 8 December 1941, two hours after the Japanese attack on Kai Tai Airfield, Bokhara Battery engaged a Japanese patrol vessel at extreme range. This was however more in the nature of a settling-down shoot, rather than a serious engagement, as the battery had never practiced from its new positions. On 16 December 1941, a large Japanese naval vessel came just within its range. The battery fired about 10 salvos and the Japanese vessel left.

On 19 December 1941, Brigadier Willis decided to withdraw his troops from Shek O to Stanley as he worried the battery would be cut off by an enemy break-through. In consequence, the British destroyed all their military facilities before retreating. However, two gun emplacements, an observation post, magazines and office buildings still exist.

Before the Second World War, the Hong Kong Government was already operating a radio station on Cape D' Aguilar for commercial, marine and meteorological purposes. The radio station was badly damaged during the war period; however, the Japanese resumed its operation. In 1948, the battery site was handed over to Cable and Wireless for expansion of the station.

The **Office** building is an irregular shaped single storey building with rendered and painted walls and a flat roof. The edge of the roof slab is extended beyond the face of the walls to form a projecting eaves. Many window openings have been blocked up. Those that remain appear to be aluminum framed units. Doors are half glazed steel doors. There is not much architectural merit to the building which can be classified as **Utilitarian** of **Modernist** design. An old bunker beside the Office has been converted into a standby generator-set room. *Architectural Merit*

The other **Bunkers** on the site are reinforced concrete structures built against slopes and partially covered with earth and vegetation. Some appear to have been converted into offices or stores, but many remain derelict and

unused. Most of the bunkers feature wing walls or buttresses at the sides and internally have narrow cavities all around the perimeter walls for ventilation purposes. Some original steel doors and window shutters remain, and some wooden battened doors also remain. Some of the bunkers have concrete roof vents. The architectural style can be classified as **Utilitarian**.

The two former **Gun Emplacements** are situated on top of the cliff at the east end of the site. They are now ruinous, overgrown with vegetation and have had equipment of various kinds installed in them. There are also the remains of the old battery observation post, two searchlight positions and some associated battery buildings. All the structures are built of reinforced concrete but are completely ruinous probably partly from war-damage and partly from the ravages of time. The architectural style can be classified as **Utilitarian**.

There are a number of old gun batteries in Hong Kong so that these former military structures are not rare, but they should be regarded as having historical value as well as built heritage value. Their authenticity has been affected by conversion to other uses to some extent. The office building has no particular architectural merit.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

As a gun battery the buildings has a role to play in the defence of Hong Kong, and they are now playing a role in the field of communications. The old military structures are of great interest to military historians, but they are not well known to the general public as access to the site is restricted.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

As far as is known there are no plans to close down the radio transmitting station so that the question of adaptive re-use does not arise.

*Adaptive
Re-use*