

Historic Building Appraisal
Shing Mun Redoubt,
South of Shing Mun Jubilee Reservoir and Kam Shan Country Park, N.T.

Shing Mun Redoubt (城門碉堡) was a 12-acre citadel situated underground on the northern part of Smuggler's Ridge (走私坳 / 孖指徑). The Redoubt's field of fire covered the southern slope of Tai Mo Shan to the north-west and Needle Hill to the north-east, with its front protected by Shing Mun Jubilee Reservoir. The Redoubt straddles Kwai Tsing and Sha Tin districts. As regards the portion that falls within Sha Tin, it is located within Kam Shan Country Park and Water Gathering Ground. Planned and built as a network of tunnels, observation posts and pillboxes, the Redoubt was meant to guard the most vulnerable land route into Kowloon.

*Historical
Interest*

Shing Mun Redoubt formed a critical part of the Gin Drinkers Line (or the "Inner Line" as it was also called by the military). The Gin Drinkers Line was the name given to an 18-kilometre defence line comprising a string of trenches, pillboxes and bunkers constructed in the **mid 1930s** against infantry attacks from the north. It extended across the hills to the north of the Kowloon Peninsula, from Gin Drinkers Bay in the west, via the Jubilee (Shing Mun) Reservoir, the Shing Mun River, Shatin, Tide Cove and Tate's Cairn, to Port Shelter on the eastern side of the New Territories. This 18km long line of static defence was constructed along the same patterns as prevailed in Europe after the First World War, the most well-known example of which is the Maginot Line.

The most decisive actions during the Japanese invasion of Kowloon were fought in the Shing Mun Redoubt and the Kam Shan (known as Golden Hill then) area. When the Japanese 228th Infantry Regiment, under Colonel Doi Teishichi, initiated a night attack on the Redoubt on 9 December, it was defended by one platoon of the Royal Scots. At 11:00hrs, the assault on the Redoubt started. After several hours' fierce close-quarter fighting, the Redoubt fell into the Japanese hands. After that, the way was open for the Japanese to take Kowloon. With the Japanese capture of Jubilee Reservoir, water supplies to urban areas began to be seriously affected. It was only a matter of days before the Japanese took over the whole of the peninsula.

The Redoubt is relatively intact, which is not found in other places, but certain sections of the tunnels are now impassable. Several pillboxes and their respective tunnels could still be found in Kam Shan, though with one exception, all are covered by heavy undergrowth.

*Architectural
Merit*

The Redoubt was a usual example of military engineering. It resembled a mini citadel consisting of five machine gun pill boxes, several re-inforced

firing steps, and artillery observation post and a headquarters bunker – all connected by hundreds of yards of underground tunnels. The soldiers who built the tunnels gave them London street names and these are etched in the concrete walls throughout the complex. Unfortunately the work on the Redoubt was never finished and the line was abandoned in 1937 when the defence policy was forced by circumstances to change, the decision was forced by financial constraints and the realization that Hong Kong could never get the large number of troops that it would take to defend its mainland, six infantry battalions for the Gin Drinker's Line alone.

In 1941 some serious shortcomings became evident in the design of the Redoubt in relation to an infantry assault:

- a. The ability of the pillboxes to give each other mutual covering fire was poor.
- b. The machine gun portals did not allow sufficient decline of weapons to fire upon, or even observe, the dead ground which surrounded most of the complex. This could allow an enemy to get within grenade throwing range in complete safety.
- c. The dozens of ventilation shafts that penetrated the tunnels could be infiltrated with ease by a Japanese assault infantryman.
- d. The 20 or so openings in the tunnel system required large numbers of men just for picket duty and were considered weak and vulnerable positions to defend.

Due to these shortcomings and through being thinly defended, the Redoubt was quickly captured by the Japanese but not without a fierce fight. The evidence can still be seen today in shrapnel damage to the walls and shell holes in the roofs to the tunnels. The pillboxes were not however destroyed during the battles. Rather, they were blown up by the British Army around 1949-50 because of concerns amongst the local military commanders that the pillboxes and bunkers might be exploited and used as bases for sabotage purposes. Almost all pre-war pillboxes on the mainland were destroyed in this way.

The Shing Mun Redoubt and Golden Hill Line should be regarded as having built heritage value as well as historical value. Since the end of the Second World War, many of these relics of war, once a matter of life and death for many of their occupiers, were quietly disappearing.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

The Shing Mun Redoubt and Golden Hill Line have had a role to play in the defence of Hong Kong. They remain a reminder of Hong Kong's tumultuous days and a corner of serenity amidst the commotion of present day Hong Kong. The old military structures are of great interest to military

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

historians, and they are well known to the hikers as access to the site is not restricted.

As far as is known there are no plans to redevelop the site so that the question of adaptive re-use does not arise. *Adaptive Re-use*