Historic Building Appraisal

Stanley Post Office,
No. 2 Wong Ma Kok Road, Stanley, Hong Kong

Historical Interest

Stanley Post Office, which has been in operation since 1937, is the oldest post office still in service. The history of Hong Kong Post goes back to the earliest days of British colonial rule when the first post office was established in 1841. In the early 1950s, after more than a century of service, there were eight post offices in Hong Kong. This network has grown extensively in recent decades to meet the needs of a thriving Hong Kong today.

Hong Kong has a unique place in history and Hong Kong Post has a rich tradition of providing a reliable and affordable postal service to the community. The picturesque district of Stanley has proved to be very popular over the years for residents and visitors alike, and Hong Kong Post has always been there to meet their postal needs. The Postmaster General, Mr. Tam Wing-pong, and the chairman of the Southern District Council, Ms. Mar Yuet-har, officiated at a re-opening ceremony of Stanley Post Office on 28 November 2007, following completion of works to restore the office to its original appearance.

Architectural Merit

Stanley Post Office is a small one-storey rectangular pitched roof structure that is functional, utilitarian and minimalist in style, with little decoration. The walls, presumably built of brickwork, are finished externally with rough cast rendering and painted, with a cement plinth or skirting all the way around. There are casement windows in each end wall fitted with ornamental security grilles featuring the GR royal insignia of King George VI. Double entrance doors and security gates face Wong Ma Kok Road. The roof in low pitched with hipped ends and wide overhanging eaves.

Internally the accommodation is quite basic and cramped consisting of a public counter, a staff toilet and several small storerooms. Building services consist of electrical installations, air-conditioning and fire services installations. Computers, telephones and other electronic equipment are provided.

Frankly, the building has little architectural merit, and it is difficult to give it an architectural classification. It could be called local vernacular but it is not built a certain charm and contributes to the character of Stanley Village.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

This little building can be said to be unique and therefore rare. Apart from an extension of the building made in the mid 1970s, Stanley Post Office had not seen major changes in seven decades of service to the surrounding community, and renovation works became necessary in order that this historic post office could continue its service. With this mind, Hong Kong Post embarked on a major restoration project for Stanley Post Office in August 2007.

Major restoration work in recent times include reinstalling for display purposes an original manual stamp vending machine and cast iron posting box bearing the royal cipher of King George VI, as well as refurbishing the original window grilles with the GR insignia, all of which were in use art Stanley Post Office at various times over the years. The counter layout has been rebuilt with grating to resemble its appearance in the early days and the original terrazzo floor, which was a very common finish in the old days, has been carefully restored. The roof has also been painstakingly renovated. The false ceiling was removed to reveal the original wooden beams and purlins of the roof structure. The exposed inner timbers seen today are the originals installed when the office was first built.

Restoration work was undertaken to preserve and reinstate the original characteristics of the office and keep this as a "time capsule of postal history". A small building with a proud heritage, it has contributed much to the special charm of Stanley over the years and lives on today as a charming tourist attraction as well. ***Social Value & Local Interest***

Together with the nearby Old Stanley Police Station and the Stanley Public Dispensary, it has group value. ***Group Value***

As far as is known there are no plans to close down the post office so that the question of adaptive re-use does not really arise. ***Adaptive Re-use***