

Historic Building Appraisal
Great China Match Factory
Peng Lei Road, Peng Chau

The political instability in China and the Japanese invasion of China since the 1930s led to the great influx of Chinese refugees and capital to Hong Kong. The Great China Match Factory (大中國火柴廠) on Peng Chau (坪洲) was established in 1939 by a Shanghai industrialist named **Mr Liu Hongsheng** (劉鴻生, 1888-1956) who came to Hong Kong in **1938**. Mr Liu was one of the wealthiest and most influential Shanghai industrialists at that time. He processed numerous commercial companies and owned several match factories in China, including the subject match factory. *Historical Interest*

The match factory required extensive land. Also, as it was a hazardous industry, it had to be far away from populous areas. An extensive piece of flat land was available at a low price on Peng Chau when compared with Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. Moreover, the population of Peng Chau mostly lived in the central part of the island. The company therefore bought the land in the northern part of Peng Chau as the factory site.

The Great China Match Factory was once not only the biggest match factory in Hong Kong, but also in the whole South China region. These matches were not only for Hong Kong consumption, but also for export. Australia and Southeast Asian countries were the main overseas markets. Production ceased during the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945) but picked up again after the War. However due to trade restrictions imposed by other countries the match making industry in Hong Kong declined and the Peng Chau factory eventually closed down around 1981.

The factory comprises five groups of dilapidated structures which are empty and abandoned. The structures are all constructed in a functional **Utilitarian** style. They are surrounded by boundary fencing and walls. There is a simple pitched roof structure near the main entrance gate with red brick walls and corrugated metal roof sheeting. A larger structure with rendered walls, red brick columns and a pitched roof stands in the SE corner of the compound. The remaining structures are ruinous and covered with vegetation, but a curved roof building (probably an ex-army Nissen hut) can be seen also several pitched roof buildings with rendered walls built side by side with regularly spaced windows. As access was not available it is not known if the match making machinery still exists inside the factory buildings. *Architectural Merit*

This match factory was said to be not only the biggest match factory in Hong Kong, but also in the whole South China region. Part of the site has been *Rarity, Built Heritage*

redeveloped so that the remaining structures have historical value. As access could not be obtained it is not known how authentic the structures are.

Value & Authenticity

As the factory provided numerous local employment, it had social value to the community although match making was hazardous to health. It is of interest to historians.

Social Value & Local Interest

From the heritage point of view, the Ruins of Great Match Factory is situated nearby the historical item of Tin Hau Temple (天后宮) as well as a number of items recorded by the Antiquities and Monuments Office including the Stone House at Peng Chau Wing On Street (坪洲永安街), Peng Chau Chi Yan Public School (坪洲公立志仁學校) at Peng Chau Lane (坪洲里), Leather Factory Site (牛皮廠) at Chi Yan Lane (志仁里), Office and Mess of Sing Lei Hap Gei Lime Kiln Factory (勝利合記石灰窯廠辦公室遺址) at No. 2 Nam Wan Shan Teng Tsuen (南灣山頂村 2 號) and I-Tsz at Wing On Toi (永安台). All the buildings form the cultural cluster of Peng Chau area.

Group Value

Some of the old factory sheds seem to still be in reasonable condition and could probably be re-used again subject to their structural condition.

Adaptive Re-use