

Historic Building Appraisal
Ma Hang Prison
No. 40 Stanley Village Road, Ma Hang, Stanley, Hong Kong

The six pre-World War II buildings in Ma Hang Prison were collectively known as Old Maryknoll Storage Huts. Built in **1939** and paid for by the Hong Kong Defence Funds War Expenditure, the Storage Huts were part of the Hong Kong Defence Scheme, in preparation for the war that came to South China. During the Battle of Hong Kong in December 1941, the storage huts served as storehouses for the provision of logistics to the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC). *Historical Interest*

When the defence of Hong Kong Island ended on Christmas Day, the storage huts were stocked up and the Japanese took them all when they captured Stanley peninsula. During the period of Japanese Occupation (1941-1945), the storage huts were utilized by the Japanese, at least in part as stables for the husbandry of horses.

In 1947, the site was taken over by the Prisons Department and used as Stanley Reformatory School for male offenders below the age of 16 – which is Hong Kong's first “open” institution for young offenders. In 1953 the boys were transferred to the new Boys’ Home at Castle Peak and the site became the Stanley Training Centre for male offenders aged between 16 and 18 where the inmates were treated under “open” conditions. This is Hong Kong's first youth training centre of that kind.

In 1974, the site was converted into Ma Hang Prison (馬坑監獄). The year 1974 also saw the opening of Hong Kong's first geriatric unit for prisoner inmates, who were accommodated in a single building in a piece of land within Ma Hang Prison.

Today, the six pre-war buildings consist of two large dormitories (Blocks A & B), a segregation unit (Block E), a dining hall (Block C), a reception block (Block D) and a clinic (Block F). Blocks A, B, C & D are all of the same design, one storey in height with rendered and painted walls and low pitched roofs. Windows and doors are regularly spaced with projecting canopies or hoods for weather protection. Most of the windows are modern aluminum units. The architectural style of these four buildings can be classified as **Utilitarian**. Internally, the roof structures are exposed, walls are plastered and painted and the floors are tiled. Blocks E & F are small rectangular one-storey blocks with rendered and painted walls and flat roofs with the roof slab projected beyond the face of the external walls for weather protection. Windows are small, regularly spaced and heavily barred. The architectural style of these two blocks may be classified as **International**. *Architectural Merit*

Modern.

Blocks A, B, C & D are said to be the last examples still surviving of this type of pre-war government storehouse. The other known example of pre-war warehouses of similar construction is found at Wong Chuk Hang Path. A main difference between the two sites is that Wong Chuk Hang Path has only 2 of the 11 original warehouses remaining, whilst Ma Hang Prison contains all of its pre-war storage godowns and thus has a much higher group value.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

However their appearance has been drastically altered by the addition of covered walkways, surface mounted plumbing and conduit, and replacement of doors and windows.

The social value of the building lies in the role they have played as a reformatory and a training centre in the prison system.

**Social Value &
Local Interest**

Nearby historic sites include Old Stanley Police Station (舊赤柱警署, Declared Monument), St. Stephen's College (聖士提反書院), St. Stephen's College Preparatory School (聖士提反書院附屬小學), Stanley Public Dispensary (赤柱公立醫局), Maryknoll House (瑪利諾會), Stanley Prison (赤柱監獄), Carmelite Monastery (嘉爾默羅聖衣會隱修院), etc. The preservation of the pre-war buildings at Ma Hang Prison would help to provide a walking trail to link up with the other sites of historic interest on the southern side of Hong Kong Island.

Group value

Ma Hang Prison has been identified as a Potential Development Area so that the buildings may be demolished eventually for residential development.

**Adaptive
Re-use**