

Showa-era Red Brick Warehouses

The Red Brick Warehouses near Alley Karasu Kojima were built as part of Kure Naval Base and date back to the beginning of the Showa era (1926–1989). Constructed next to the then-top-secret Naval Arsenal, the warehouses were used by the Navy for storing artillery and ammunition. Their presence in the arsenal is a testament to the strong British influence that shaped Kure.

Brick was not a common building material in Japan until the twentieth century, but the Imperial Navy implemented its use in the nineteenth century as a tribute to the British Royal Navy. In 1870, it was determined by imperial decree that the Royal Navy would be a model for development of the Japanese Imperial Navy. From 1873 to 1879, the Royal Navy deployed a 34-man contingent to instruct the Imperial Navy in British traditions and technology. The Red Brick Warehouses are a product of this relationship and a symbol of how Kure has been shaped by naval influences, both domestic and foreign.

Two warehouses originally stood at this location, but an air raid by Allied Forces during World War II destroyed the rear halves of both buildings. The warehouses were not repaired exactly as they once stood; instead, the rubble left from the bombing was used to construct a third warehouse in the empty lot between them, linking them together. As a result, three shorter, connected warehouses stand in place of the original two. The buildings' red brick façades are cracked in some places, but not all of these cracks were caused by the wartime air raids; some are the result of the Geiyo Earthquake of 1905.

The Allied Forces seized the Red Brick Warehouses following World War II and retained control of them until the British Commonwealth Forces withdrew in 1956. The warehouses were later acquired by a private company. Today, portions of the warehouses are used as storage facilities, and the remainder of the space houses shops and other businesses that cater to visitors to Alley Karasu Kojima.