

A Historical and Architectural Appraisal of Queen's Pier, Central

HISTORY

The existing Queen's Pier, built in 1953-1954, was the second Queen's Pier in Hong Kong. The first one, located near the present-day carpark at Edinburgh Place, was completed in 1925. The old Queen's Pier was demolished to make way for the reclamation of Victoria Harbour in the 1950s-60s. The existing pier was constructed at the new harbourfront, replacing the old one as a royal and public pier.

Reclamation in the Early Colonial Years

2. After the British occupation of Hong Kong Island on 26 January 1841, the first land sale was held on 14 June. Purchasers were mostly the British, Indian and Parsee traders such as Dent, Jardines, Lindsay, etc. The traders were mainly import and export merchants and land lots chosen all had water frontage along the seashore of Victoria Harbour. The first road opened up was to the south, Queen's Road. The land lots were then much expanded and reclaimed from the sea without paying rent to the government. The shoreline was made very irregular. The first land reclamations after 1841 were private ones without any planning at all.

Praya Reclamation Scheme in the 1880s

3. The rapid increase of Hong Kong's population after the British occupation drove the government to consider reclamation as a means to alleviate the high population density, housing and hygiene problems. In 1875, there were plans to carry out large-scale reclamation from Western District to Central. However, due to funding shortages and disputes with the existing Marine lot holders and the military over land rights along the Praya in Central, the plans did not materialize. The plans were revived in July 1887 when the *taipan* of the Hong Kong and Kowloon Wharf and Godown Co., Paul Chater, suggested the Praya Reclamation Scheme. With some revisions, reclamation was carried out in stages from 1889 and was completed in 1903.

Praya East Reclamation Scheme in 1921-1931

4. In 1897 when the Praya Reclamation Scheme from Western District to Central was in full swing, the government commenced planning for the Praya East Reclamation which was to start from the junction of present-day Hennessy Road and Johnston Road, and terminate at present-day Percival Street, in order to relieve further the population density in the City of Victoria. But the scheme was held up for 20 years. It was not welcomed by the Royal Navy as it required the relocation of the Naval Hospital on Hospital Hill. The plan, through the persevering efforts of Paul Chater, by then an Executive Councillor, was endorsed by the Executive Council on 4 May 1920 after the Royal Navy agreed to relocate the Naval Hospital to Stonecutters Island. The reclamation was begun in November 1921 and completed in 1931. The focus of reclamation was shifted from Central to Wan Chai in the two decades before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Central Reclamation After the Second World War

5. Reclamation at Victoria Harbour took place again after the Second World War. A large-scale reclamation, started in 1953, was completed in 1968. The impact of the reclamation on Queen's Pier will be elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Queen's Pier Amidst Central Reclamation

6. The Queen's Pier, originally named "Queen's Statue Wharf", was first built in the form of a wooden wharf. Reconstruction was proposed by the Public Works Committee in July 1921. Thereafter, contract drawings and documents were prepared for the construction of a reinforced concrete pier, which would provide accommodation for four launches lying alongside. The contract, awarded to Messrs. Sang Lee & Co., was signed on 20 October 1921. The construction of the pier and approach was completed by February 1923. The construction and erection of the structural steelwork; the roof and façade; and the entrance porch of the pier formed separate contracts.

7. This reinforced concrete pier was located near the present-day carpark at Edinburgh Place (**Fig. 1 & Fig. 2**). At first, it was known as "Statue Pier". It was formally renamed "Queen's Pier" by the Legislative Council on 31 July 1924 (The "Queen" refers to Queen Victoria who reigned from 1837 to 1901). The pier was completed in 1925 (**Fig. 3**).

8. The post-war reclamation resulted in the demolition of the pre-war Queen's Pier. A new Queen's Pier (**Fig. 4**), i.e. the existing one, was constructed at the reclamation area in 1953. Pile driving for the pier took place in April of that year. An aerial photo in the *Hong Kong Annual Report* for the year 1953 shows the reclamation and construction of the new pier underway (**Fig. 5**). The tendering for constructing the superstructure of the pier began in December 1953, and construction started in February 1954.

9. The Queen's Pier was opened to the public by the wife of Governor Sir Alexander Grantham (1947-1957) on 28 June 1954 (**Fig. 6**). The old Queen's Pier was demolished around January 1955 (**Fig. 7**).

10. The 1950s-60s reclamation brought profound changes to the Central harbourfront. The new Queen's Pier (opened in June 1954) and Star Ferry Pier (opened in October 1957) had been erected at the new harbourfront. Edinburgh Place and a new City Hall (completed in 1962; the old one, built in 1867, was demolished in 1947 to make way for the construction of the old Bank of China building) were also established on the reclaimed land, forming the backdrop of Queen's Pier (**Fig. 8**).

Queen's Pier as a Ceremonial Pier

11. The old Queen's Pier was purposely built as a ceremonial pier. It was mooted that it would be opened at the time of the Prince of Wales' arrival. However, due to serious delays in the construction, the pier was not completed until some time before October 1925.

12. As a royal, ceremonial pier, the old Queen's Pier was the landing place for the Governors of Hong Kong as well as prominent officials and figures within and outside Hong Kong, upon their arrival in and departure from the colony. Sir Reginald Stubbs (1919-1925) was the first governor who used the pier, from which he left the colony upon the end of his term of office as the Governor of Hong Kong. A final farewell gathering attended by important government officials, members of the Legislative and Executive Councils, representatives of the Navy and Army, and the foreign and Chinese communities, together with inspection of the Guard of Honour by the Governor, was held at the pier on 31 October 1925, followed by his boarding the steam launch "Victoria" there (**Fig. 9**). With the departure of Stubbs, Sir Cecil Clementi (1925-1930) was the first Governor to land at Hong Kong from the old Queen's Pier.

13. Landing ceremonies were also held at the old Queen's Pier and

Connaught Road facing it to welcome prominent figures for their visit to the colony. They also departed for home or their next destination from the Queen's Pier, accompanied by farewell ceremonies (**Fig. 10**).

14. Moreover, celebrative events were organized by the government and foreign communities at Queen's Pier. For instance, the Japanese community celebrated the birthday of their emperor, Emperor Yoshihito, on 31 October 1925; and a parade in celebration of the birthday of King George V (1910-1936) was held in 1928 (**Fig. 11**).

15. The role played by the old Queen's Pier as a ceremonial pier was succeeded by the existing Queen's Pier. Starting with Governor Sir Robert Black's taking office in 1958, Queen's Pier has served six Governors of Hong Kong. The remaining five governors were Sir David Trench (1964-1971), Sir Murray (later Lord) MacLehose (1971-1982), Sir Edward Youde (1982-1987), Sir David (later Lord) Wilson (1987-1992) and Mr. Chris Patten (1992-1997).

16. In the old days, the Governor would perform his inspection of the Guard of Honour on Connaught Road abutting the old Queen's Pier upon his landing ashore. Then he would receive an address of welcome delivered by a senior government official at the old City Hall. After the ceremony at the City Hall, he would leave for the High Court (now the Legislative Council Building), where he would take his oath of office. After the completion of the existing Edinburgh Place and City Hall in the 1960s, the inspection of the Guard of Honour and oath taking were performed at Edinburgh Place and City Hall respectively.

17. Members of the Royal family also embarked on and from the Queen's Pier. They included the Duke of Edinburgh (also known as Prince Philip) who visited Hong Kong in 1959, Princess Alexandra of Kent (1961) (**Fig. 12**), Princess Margaret (1966), Princess Alexandra (1972) (**Fig. 13**), Queen Elizabeth II (1986), and Prince Charles together with the then Princess Diana (1989). Welcoming ceremonies were marked by the British National Anthem, and an inspection of the Guard of Honour would be organized at Queen's Pier and Edinburgh Place.

Queen's Pier as a Public Pier

18. The Queen's Pier was also used by the general public as a public pier for over 50 years from 1954 to 2007. The pier was a popular spot for social gathering for Hongkongers for pier fishing, boarding launches for cruising trips, and dating. With the pleasant harbour view it provides,

it is a popular venue for movie shooting and photo taking as well. Since it is adjacent to Edinburgh Place, it is often the gathering place for civic, political functions and wedding groups. There were various activities taking place at Queen's Pier in the past, such as the cross-harbour swimming race until 1978 when the harbour became polluted; thousands of swimmers swam from the old Kowloon Railway Pier to Queen's Pier in each race.

ARCHITECTURE

19. The architectural style of Queen's Pier is modern utilitarian. The Pier is built to a U-shaped plan, with an open sided superstructure (**Fig. 14**). It is built with a reinforced concrete base with round pilotis, those of them along the west and east sides having inverted bell shaped capitals. There are two triangular structures on the west and east sides which are concrete structures with granite ashlar facing, with vent holes with metal grilles formed at high level in the walls. Each wall has one green sign “皇后 Queen's Pier 碼頭” on the side facing Edinburgh Place. The west side structure is now used as food store while the east side one is used as a store room. The four sides surrounding the counter opening of the food store are finished with terrazzo.

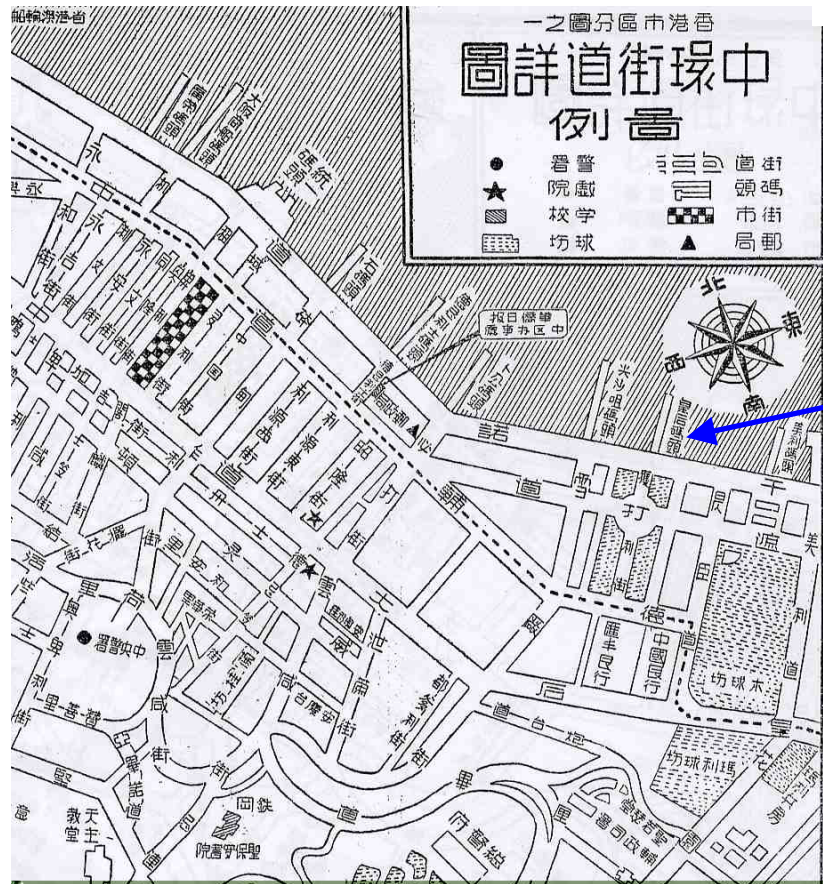
20. Decorative railings are fixed to the edge of Pier. There are five sets of public landing steps, with fifteen bollards and timber fenders fixed to the Pier to prevent ships or boats damaging the Pier.

21. Three black flower boxes between the columns are built to the front of the Pier with one sign of “Queen's Pier” in English and two signs of “皇后碼頭” in Chinese respectively on top of black flower boxes. Wordings to the signs are made of plastic in black colour, screwed on steel plate painted white with black marble stone border and fixed on the flower box by iron posts painted white. Two benches are built between columns with granolithic finishes. Two navigation lights are located at the corners and fluorescent strip lights are provided on the ceilings.

22. The ceiling is finished in rough spatter dash rendering and decorated with recessed panels on the west and east sides. The floor is paved with square stone setts of natural colours with panels bordered by grey and black setts. It has a concrete flat roof with the central part pitched, bitumen roofing felt was laid on top of roof as waterproofing membrane. There are two steel frames mounted on concrete blocks with unknown purpose. They may possibly mark the position of cables on the sea-bed of the Harbour.

List of Figures

- Fig. 1 Location of the Old Queen's Pier, 1952
- Fig. 2 Central Harbourfront, 2007
- Fig. 3 The Old Queen's Pier c.1930
- Fig. 4 Elevation and Section Plans of Queen's Pier, 1953
- Fig. 5 Construction of Queen's Pier and Central Reclamation in Progress, 1953
- Fig. 6 Opening Ceremony of Queen's Pier on 28 June 1954
- Fig. 7 The Old Queen's Pier Demolished, 1955
- Fig. 8 Aerial View of Central District, 1969
- Fig. 9 Governor Stubbs' Departure from Queen's Pier, 1925
- Fig. 10 News Clippings from *The China Mail*, 1920s
- Fig. 11 King George V's Birthday Parade at the Old Queen's Pier, 1928
- Fig. 12 Princess Alexandra of Kent at Queen's Pier, 1961
- Fig. 13 Welcoming Ceremony for Princess Alexandra at Queen's Pier, 1972
- Fig. 14a-c Elevation Plans of Queen's Pier, 2006
- Fig. 14d Roof Plan of Queen's Pier, 2006



The Old Queen's Pier

Fig. 1 Location of the Old Queen's Pier, 1952
(1953年《香港年鑑》)



The site of the
Old Queen's Pier

Existing Queen's Pier

Fig. 2 Central Harbourfront, 2007



Fig. 3 The Old Queen's Pier c.1930

(Information Services Department)

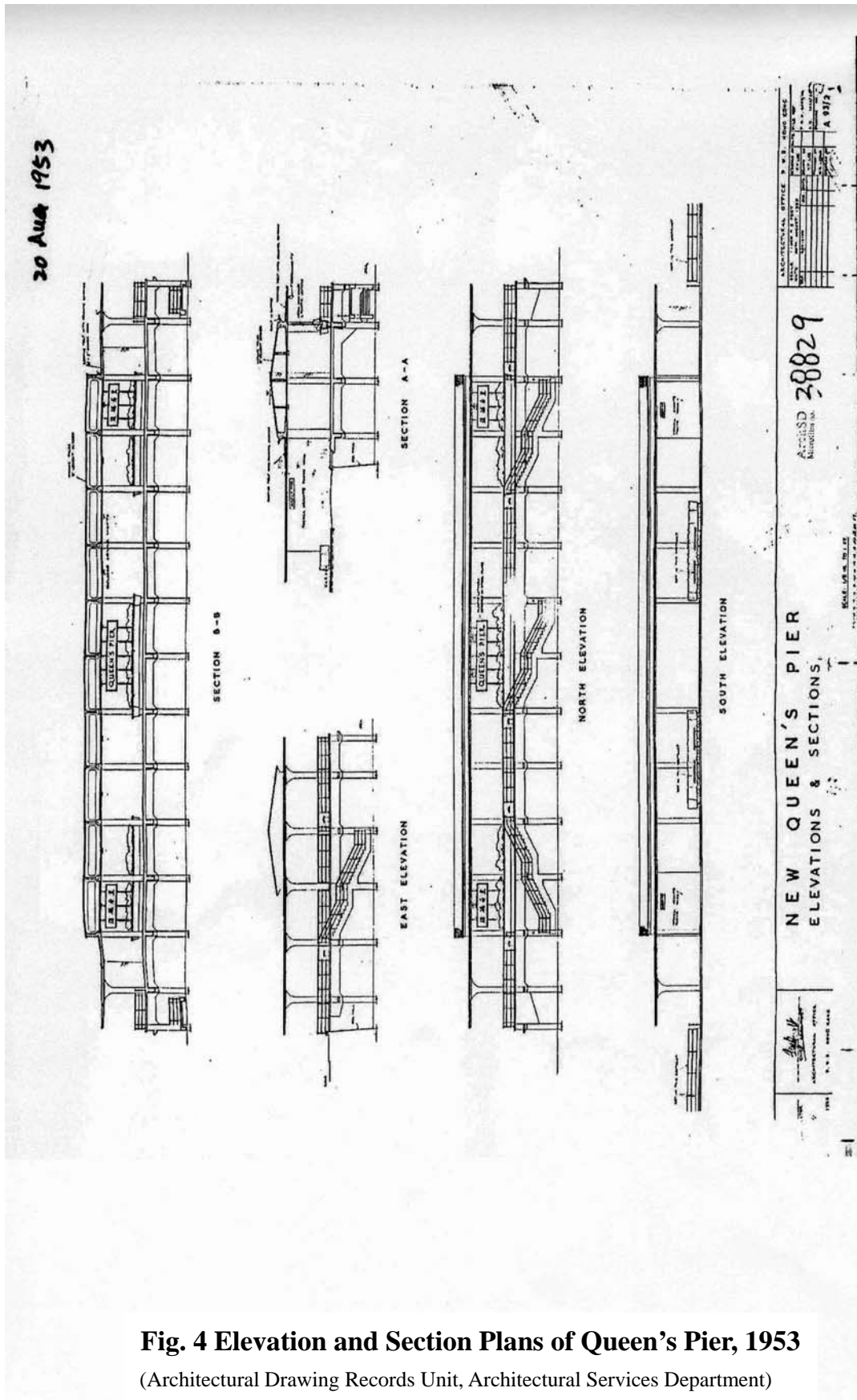
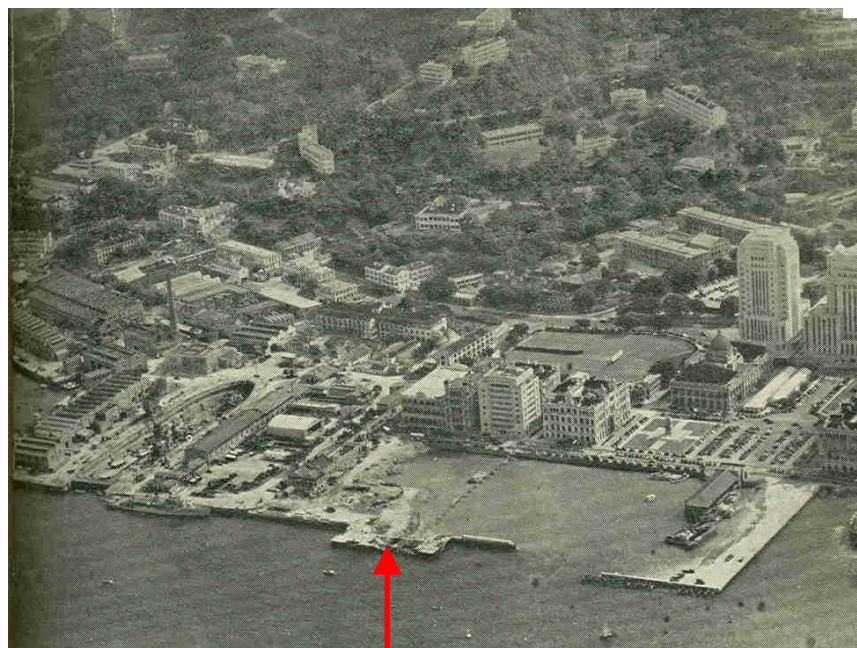


Fig. 4 Elevation and Section Plans of Queen's Pier, 1953
(Architectural Drawing Records Unit, Architectural Services Department)



Queen's Pier

Fig. 5 Construction of Queen's Pier and Central Reclamation in Progress, 1953

(Hong Kong Annual Report 1953)

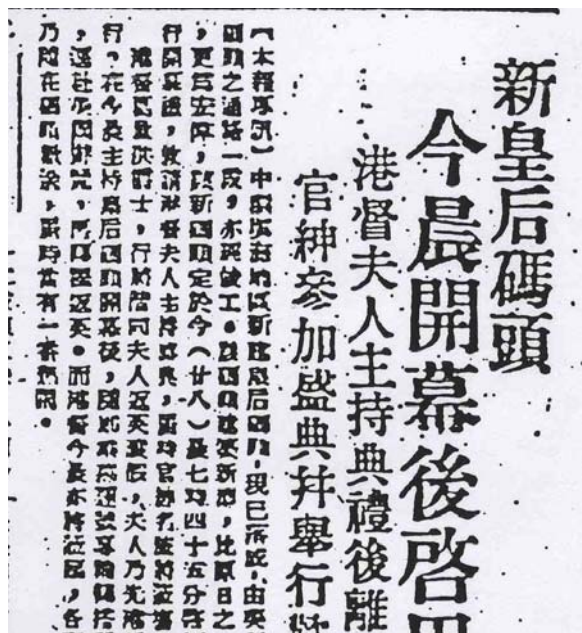


Fig. 6 Opening Ceremony of Queen's Pier on 28 June 1954

(《工商日報》，中華民國四十三年六月廿八日)

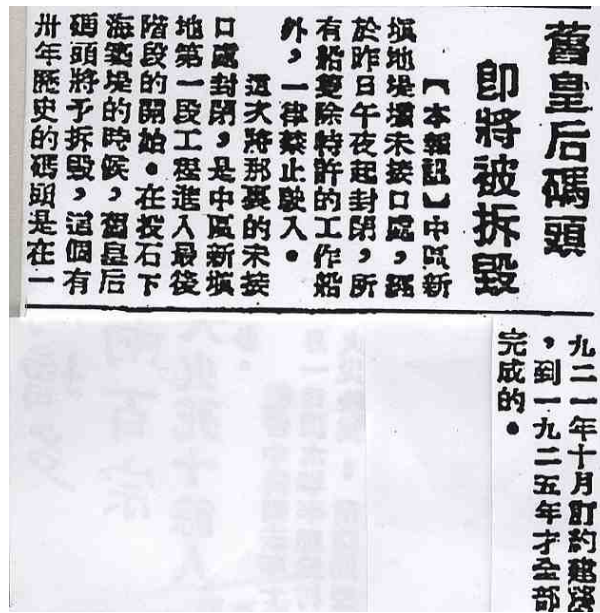


Fig. 7 The Old Queen's Pier Demolished, 1955

(《大公報》，一九五五年一月十七日)

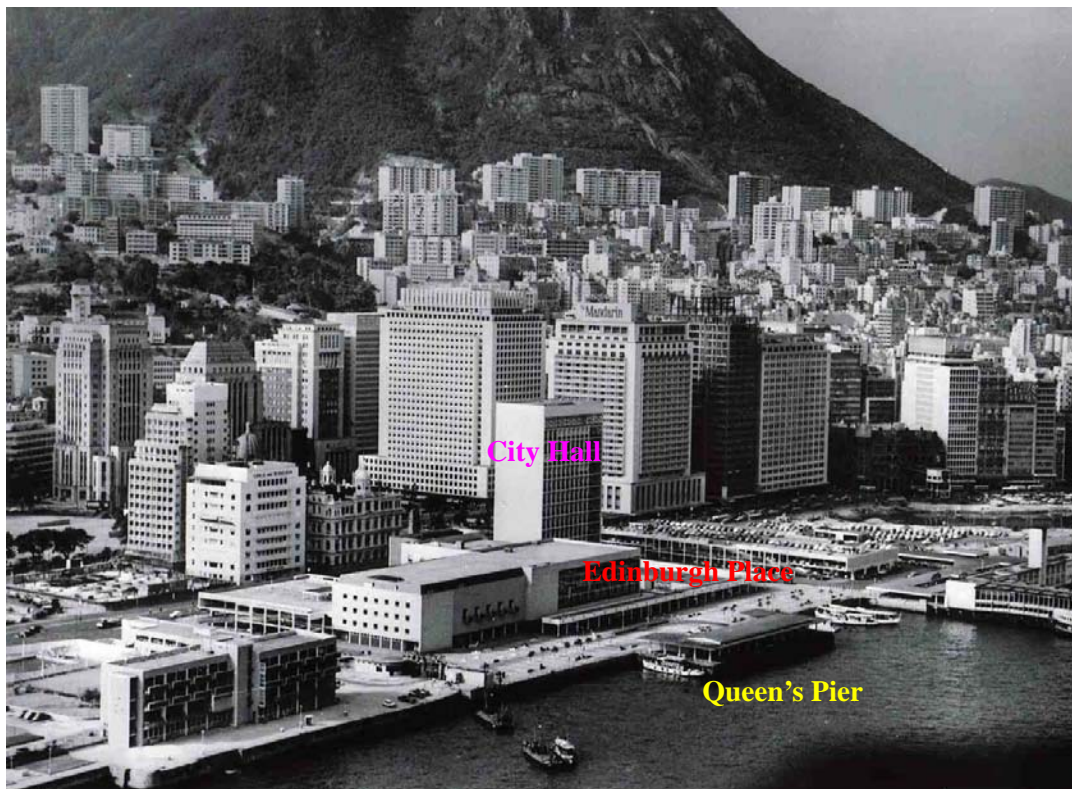


Fig. 8 Aerial View of Central District, 1969

(Information Services Department)

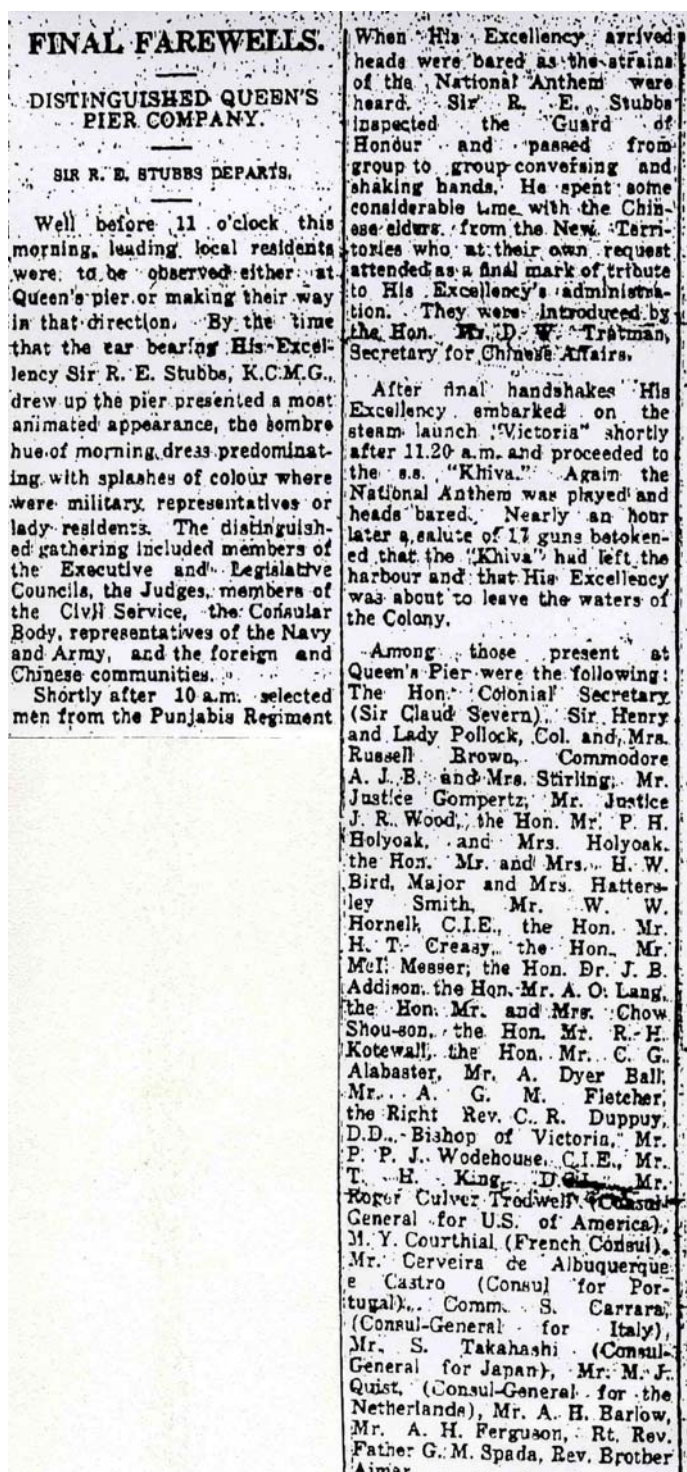


Fig. 9 Governor Stubbs' Departure from Queen's Pier, 1925

(The China Mail, 31 Oct 1925)

MARSHAL LI HERE.

CROWDS GREET TO-DAY'S ARRIVAL.

POLICE PRECAUTIONS.

Ceremony Marks Queen's Pier Landing.

DISTINGUISHED GATHERING HONOURS CANTON GUEST.

Great interest was evinced in the arrival in Hong Kong this morning of the Canton Commander-in-Chief, Marshal Li Chai-sum, Madame Li Chai-sum and party of Chinese officials from Canton.

There were dense crowds in the neighbourhood of Queen's Pier and the utmost precautions were taken by the Police both there and along the route from the pier to Government House to ensure that no untoward event should mar the landing.

Marshal Li, who had on morning attire, was introduced to the officials and leading residents lined up on the pier and inspected the Guard of Honour of the K.O.S.B.'s. Others of the Canton party who landed wore military and naval uniforms.

WELCOMING SALUTES.

The Nationalist gunboat, "Fei-yang," which brought the Canton party, arrived sooner than expected and went to buoy about 9.30 a.m. in the man-o-war anchorage, firing a salute of twenty-one guns in greeting on the occasion



Marshal Li Chai-sum, Hong Kong's guest of honour.

of her first visit. This led to 'attery hal'

party from Canton. General Chan Hing-wan, together with Mr. Chu Chao-sin, Commissioner of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Luk Yau-ko, of the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs, left in the next car and Admiral Chan Chak, Commander of the Canton Navy. Mr. Cheung Wai-cheong, head of the Canton Air Bureau, and General Chui King-tong, Commander of the 13th Division, also left by car together.

Major-General C. C. Luard, together with Colonel C. Russell Brown and Commodore J. L. Pearson took the salute as the Guard of Honour marched past.

Others present at the landing ceremony included: — Capt. Palmer, of H.M.S. "Argus" (representing Vice-Admiral Sir Resinald Tyrwhitt, who is in Shanghai), Hon. Mr. E. R. Hallifax, Hon. Sir Joseph Kemp, K.C., Hon. Mr. C. McL. Messer, Hon. Mr. R. A. C. North, Hon. Mr. H. T. Cressy, Hon. Mr. E. D. G. Wolfe, Hon. Sir Henry Pollock, K.C., Hon. Sir Shou-son Chow, Hon. Dr. R. H. Kotewall, Hon. Mr. D. G. M. Bernard, Hon. Mr. J. Owen Hughes, Hon. Mr. A. C. Hynes, Group Capt. G. D. M. Robertson, R.A.F., Pay Comdr. H. Rogers, Lt. R. Q. F. Johnston (A.D.C. to the General), Mr. W. E. L. Shenton, Mr. A. E. Wood, Mr. D. W. ... man, Mr. R. E. Lindell, Mr. ... on, Mr. W. ...

China Mail 2 March 1928

ADMIRAL HOEKSTRA'S LANDING

AT QUEEN'S PIER

OFFICIAL VISIT TO LOCAL ADMINISTRATOR

GUARD OF HONOUR & BAND

Rear-Admiral A. ten Broecke Hoekstra, commander-in-Chief of Her Netherland Majesty's Naval Forces in Netherland-India and head of the Naval Department, paid an official call to-day on H.E. the Officer Administering the Government (the Hon. Mr. W. T. Southorn, C.M.G.) at Government House.

Rear-Admiral Hoekstra's flagship, the cruiser "Java," arrived this morning and tied to a buoy in the Naval ar

China Mail
9 Jan 1929

FRENCH ADMIRAL

MAKES OFFICIAL LANDING AT QUEEN'S PIER

GUARD OF HONOUR

The Queen's Pier was thronged with spectators this morning when Rear-Admiral Mouget, of the French Squadron in Eastern waters, made an official landing at half past nine o'clock promptly.

Capt. F. G. Sillitoe, R.M. (representing His Excellency the Governor, Sir Cecil Clementi, K.C.M.G.), Col. W. D. S. Brownrigg, D.S.O., A.A. & G.M.C. for Administration (representing Major-General J. W. Sandilands, G.O.C.), Capt. A. G. Dolble, Mon. M. G. Dufaire du la Prade (French Consul-General) and a number of Naval Officers were waiting at the pier to receive the distinguished visitor.

In a Motor Boat
Rear 'mir'

China Mail 14 Aug 1929

GENERAL LUARD SAYS GOOD-BYE

ROUSING SEND-OFF

OFFICIAL DEPARTURE FROM QUEEN'S PIER

SHAKES HANDS WITH THE MEN

Major-General C. C. Luard, Mrs. Luard, and Miss Luard were given a rousing send-off to-day prior to embarkation on H.M.'s troopship "Dorsetshire."

Members of the Executive and Legislative Council, the Judiciary, heads of Government Departments, Officers commanding units and staff officers in the Royal Navy, the Army, and the Royal Air Force, the Consular Body, officers in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps, officers from foreign men-of-war in port, and many friends, including a number of Chinese with their ladies, assembled at Queen's Pier for the occasion.

Queen's Pier was decorated with flags and bunting, the top of the

China Mail
7 March 1929

Fig. 10 News Clippings from *The China Mail*, 1920s

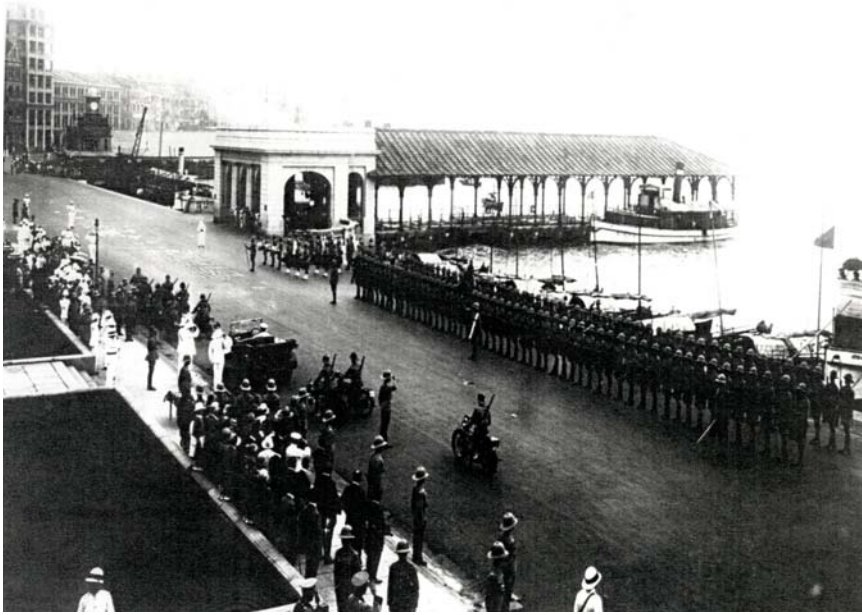


Fig. 11 King George V's Birthday Parade at the Old Queen's Pier, 1928

(Public Records Office)

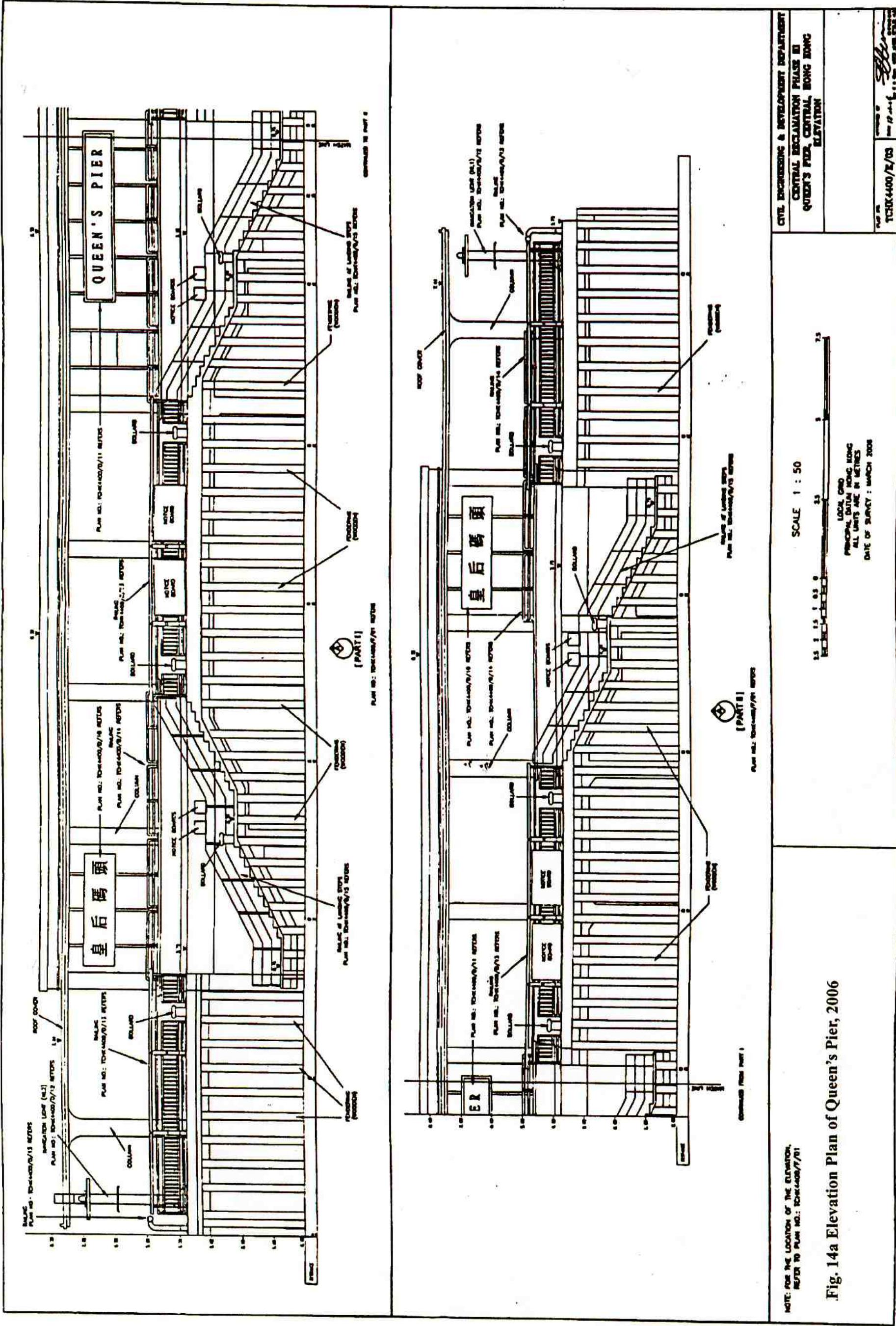


Fig. 12 Princess Alexandra of Kent at Queen's Pier, 1961

(Hong Kong Annual Report 1961)



Fig. 13 Welcoming Ceremony for Princess Alexandra at Queen's Pier, 1972
(Information Services Department)



NOTE: FOR THE LOCATION OF THE ELEVATION, REFER TO PLAN NO.: TQ-400/0/01

Fig. 14a Elevation Plan of Queen's Pier, 2006

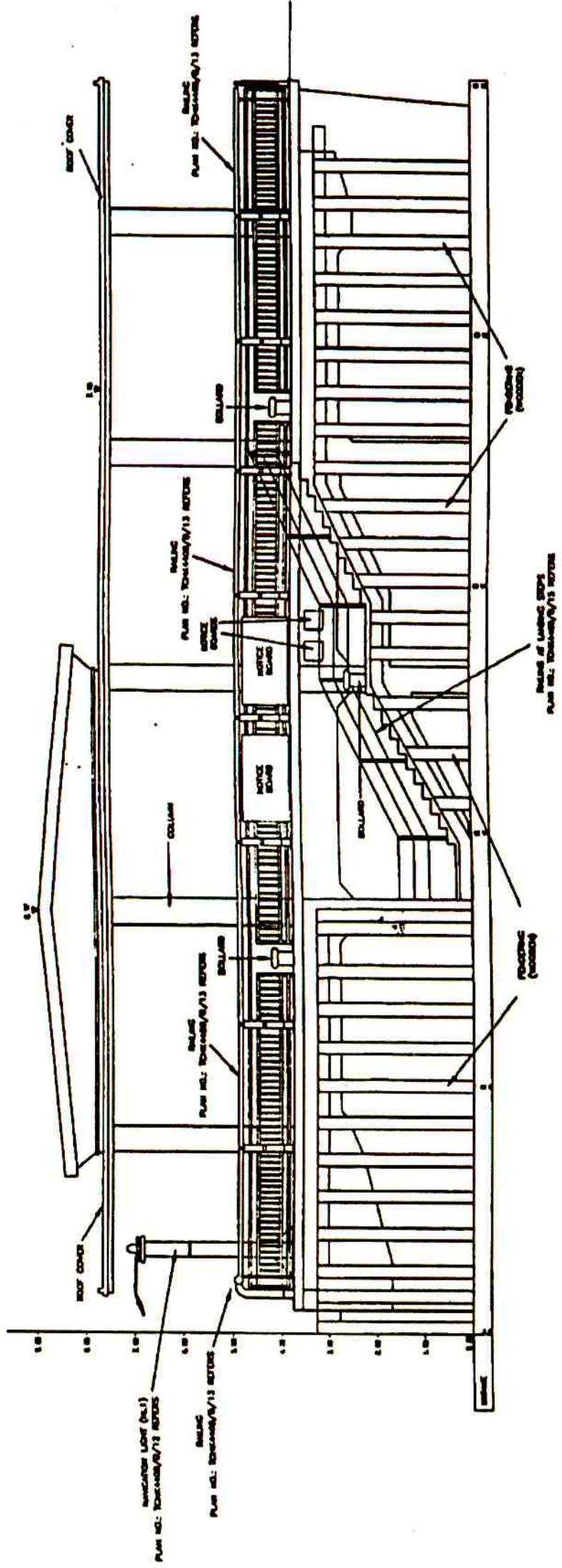
SCALE 1 : 50



LOCAL GRID
PRINCIPAL DATUM HONG KONG
ALL UNITS ARE IN METRES
DATE OF SURVEY: MARCH 2006

CIVIL ENGINEERING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
CENTRAL RECLAMATION PHASE III
QUEEN'S PIER, CENTRAL HONG KONG
ELEVATION

DRAWING NO. TQ-400/0/2/03



PLAN NO.: TCHK400/R/01 REVISED

NOTE: FOR THE LOCATION OF THE ELEVATION, REFER TO PLAN NO.: TCHK400/R/01

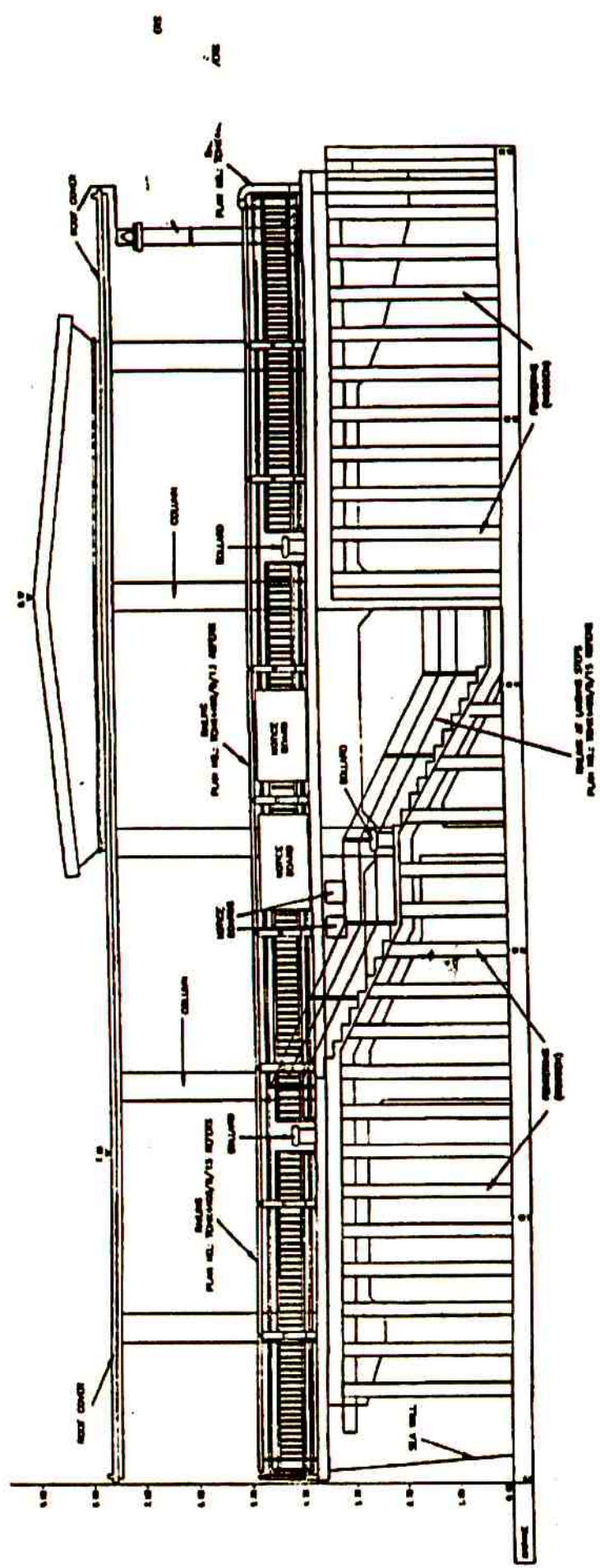
Fig. 14b Elevation Plan of Queen's Pier, 2006

SCALE 1 : 50



LOCAL GRID
 PRINCIPAL DATUM: HONG KONG
 ALL UNITS ARE IN METRES
 DATE OF SURVEY : MARCH 2006

CIVIL ENGINEERING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT	CIVIL ENGINEERING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT CENTRAL RECLAMATION PHASE II QUEEN'S PIER, CENTRAL, HONG KONG ELEVATION
PLAN NO.: TCHK400/R/05 DATE: 11/06	



NOTE: FOR THE LOCATION OF THE ELEVATION, REFER TO PLAN NO. TCRK-4400/7/01

Fig. 14c Elevation Plan of Queen's Pier, 2006

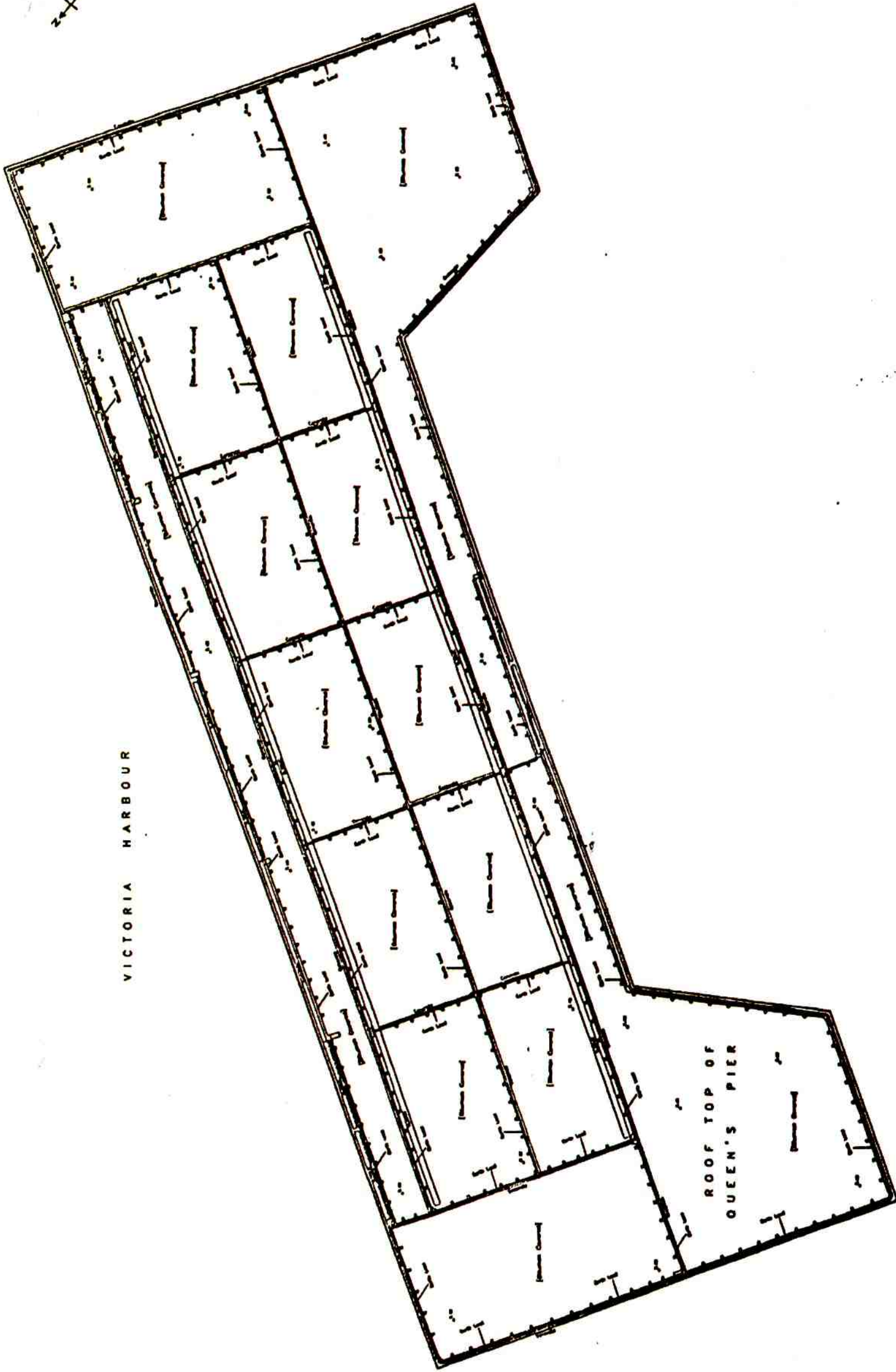
SCALE 1 : 50



LOCAL GRID
PRINCIPAL SURVEY POINTS
ALL UNITS ARE IN METERS
DATE OF SURVEY : MARCH 2006

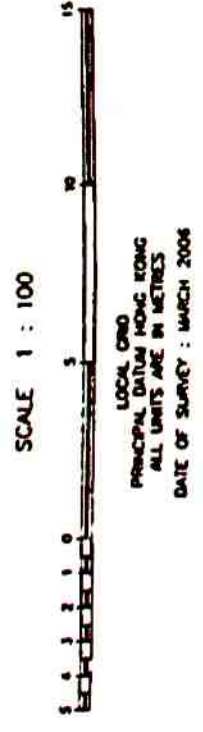
CITY ENGINEERING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
CENTRAL RECLAMATION PHASE III
QUEEN'S PIER, CENTRAL HONG KONG
ELEVATION

PLAN NO. TCRK-4400/7/01
DATE: 11/01/04
DRAWN BY: [Signature]



CIVIL ENGINEERING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
 CENTRAL RECLAMATION PHASE III
 QUEEN'S PIER, CENTRAL, HONG KONG
 ROOF PLAN

Plan No. TCEK4400/R/02
 Date of Issue: 15/03/2006



ABBREVIATIONS :-
 UC : Unfinished

SYMBOLS :-
 Wall
 Door

Fig. 14d Roof Plan of Queen's Pier, 2006