



Submission re Proposed Gradings of CGO - Email #1

to: amo@lcsd.gov.hk

2012/08/31 下午 09:28

From: John Batten

To: AMO <amo@lcsd.gov.hk>

6 attachments



1 - AAB Bernard 31 August 2012.doc



1 - ICOMOS CGO Hong Kong July 2012.pdf



Submission 31 Aug 2012.doc



1 - Central Map circa 1958.jpg



1 - Design1949-CGO-plan.jpg



1 - Map of Govt Hill 1869.jpg

The Secretary
Antiquities Advisory Board
c/- Antiquities & Monuments Office
Hong Kong

Re: Submission re Proposed Gradings of CGO

See attached submission and attachments from the Central & Western Concern Group.

Kind regards - John Batten.

JOHN BATTEN

Submission re Proposed Gradings of CGO - Email #2

to:

amo@icsd.gov.hk

2012/08/31 下午 09:30

Hide Details

From: John Batten

To: AMO <amo@icsd.gov.hk>

3 Attachments



1 - Plaque 1847.jpg 1 - Pottinger's Map 1842.jpg 1 - View of Govt Hill and Govt House.jpg

The Secretary
Antiquities Advisory Board
c/- Antiquities & Monuments Office
Hong Kong

Re: Submission re Proposed Gradings of CGO

See attached submission and attachments from the Central & Western Concern Group.

Kind regards - John Batten.

JOHN BATTEN



Submission re Proposed Gradings of CGO - Email #3 FINAL

to:

amo@lcsd.gov.hk

2012/08/31 下午 09:31

Hide Details

From: John Batten

To:

AMO <amo@lcsd.gov.hk>

2 Attachments



1 - Year Book 1950 Map.jpg 1 - Year Book 1952 View of HK Govt Hl.jpg

The Secretary
Antiquities Advisory Board
c/- Antiquities & Monuments Office
Hong Kong

Re: Submission re Proposed Gradings of CGO

See attached submission and attachments from the Central & Western Concern Group.

Kind regards - John Batten.

JOHN BATTEN

中西區關注組

Central & Western Concern Group

a heritage conservation & good urban planning advocacy group
www.centralandwestern.org

Postal Address:

31 August 2012

The Chairman, Bernard Chan
Antiquities Advisory Board
c/- Antiquities and Monuments Office
Nathan Road
Tsim Sha Tsui
Kowloon
Hong Kong

Dear Bernie

Re: Proposed Gradings of the Post-1950 Former Central Government Offices

Attached is a brief submission from the Central & Western Concern Group on the proposed gradings.

Thank you again for allowing us to make this submission.

If you need any further information, I can be contacted on

or email me on:

Kind regards

John Batten
Convenor of the Central & Western Concern Group

ICOMOS

International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage

isc20c@icomos-isc20c.org

78 George Street
Redfern NSW 2016
AUSTRALIA

international committee for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

do.co.mo.mo_



26 July 2012

Mr Tony Li

Development Secretary

Hong Kong SAR Government

Office of the Chief Executive

Central Government Offices

Tamar, Hong Kong

By Email:

Ref: Reply re redevelopment Central Government Offices West Wing

Dear Mr Li

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the West Wing of the Central Government Offices (CGO). We appreciate the opportunity to continue the professional dialogue about this important heritage site.

We fully respect that Hong Kong has its own set of heritage rules and guidelines in the way it determines how culturally significant properties should be preserved and protected. The members of ICOMOS ISC20C, the International Union of Architects and Docomomo are professionals who assess and advise on such projects in their daily work all over the world, and we appreciate the diversity of processes and cultural practice that are applied. We have carefully reviewed your letter and the assessment reports prepared for the property and we must respectfully disagree with the conclusions that are presented.

Our analysis of the relevant documentation and our research confirms that the West Wing of the CGO is a vital and integral part of the whole CGO complex. Designed as one entity, the CGO is a demonstration of the concept of providing centralised government services and administration in a single accessible location, and it has proved to be adaptable and functionally relevant to date. The adaptive re-use proposals demonstrate the sustainability for further functionality of this type of building form and fabric for future generations.

The AAB assessment that rated the whole site Grade 1, Main Wing Grade 1, East Wing Grade 1, and West Wing Grade 2, also indicated that the site as a whole is the entity to be considered as heritage. The reasoning for a lesser grade 2 evaluation for the West Wing is not clearly reasoned, but, the Grade 2 evaluation in conjunction with the rest of the complex being all Grade 1 makes it clear that the West Wing building is vital to understanding the whole.

Using the definitions given related to the gradings: "Grade 2 status refers to buildings of special merit, efforts should be made to selectively preserve", and especially when viewed in conjunction with the rest of the complex which is all Grade 1, we respectfully suggest that such "efforts" should be strongly pursued. The CGO was conceived as a whole, designed as a whole and indeed built as a whole, though it was done in phases and with numerous people involved. The CGO has also functioned as a

significant government complex for more than fifty years, serving the people of Hong Kong. Differentiating between the parts therefore is philosophically contradictory and ethically troubling.

The removal of the West Wing will not only be a great loss in its own right but it would significantly diminish the cultural value and meaning of the remaining buildings and site that make up the CGO complex. We acknowledge with enthusiastic support your government's plans to save and rehabilitate the Central Wing and East Wings. However, we strongly believe that just as the government has demonstrated that those two buildings can be successfully rehabilitated and given new life, a similar opportunity should be offered to ensure that the West Wing can continue to serve the people of Hong Kong. In that way the entire CGO complex can retain its cultural value and meaning, its heritage values appreciated and celebrated by future generations.

We ask you once more to re-consider further the opportunity before you to conserve and celebrate the heritage significance of the entirety of the Central Government Office complex.



Sheridan Burke

President, International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage



Albert Dubler

President, International Union of Architects, UIA



Ana Tostões

President, Docomomo International

Copies to:

Mr Gustavo Araoz, President ICOMOS

Mr Tong Mingkang, President ICOMOS China

Mr Leung Chun Ying, Email:

Mrs Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor Secretary for Development Email address: devbenq@devb.gov.hk,

Mr. Bernard Charnwut Chan, Antiquities Advisory Board Email: amo@lcsd.gov.hk,

Mr Ming Kay Chuen, Tom, Antiques and Monuments Office; Email:

Mr. Thomas Chow, Town Planning Board ;Email: tpbpd@pland.gov.hk

Mr Dominic Lam, President [Hong Kong Institute of Architects](#) Email:

Ms Katty Law Government Hill Concern Group; Email:

**Submission to the Antiquities Advisory Board
by the Central & Western Concern Group
on the
Proposed Gradings of the Post-1950 Former Central Government Offices**

Introduction

The Antiquities Advisory Board has previously accepted and considered a number of letters, comments and submissions (including the printed pamphlet *Our Government Hill*) and two oral presentations made by the Government Hill Concern Group (GHCG), comprising 21 affiliated organisations and individuals, including the Central & Western Concern Group (C&WCG).

This submission by the C&WCG gives support to the highest historical grading for the Post-1950 Former Central Government Offices and a very brief outline of the historical and other merits of the Government Hill site, its unique treed and green environment, its buildings and underground facilities.

The site and buildings

We believe that the "Post-1950 Former Central Government Offices" is the historic Government Hill site, also known as the "CGO site" and that the current historical grading exercise covers the following area of the site: the historical Government Hill site (the Post-1950 Former Central Government Offices) is bounded by Queen's Road Central (including Battery Path and its treed and grassed slopes), Lower Albert Road, Garden Road and Ice House Street. The buildings to be graded are the Main, East and West Wings of the former Central Government Offices and all underground facilities, including underground air-raid tunnels. The "site" referred to in this submission is this area.

As outlined in her exhaustive submission, Ms Gladys Li has outlined the importance, when the AAB is grading the site and buildings; to exactly define what it is being graded.

Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance

The AAB is an advisory body that advises the Antiquities Authority under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance. Its areas of advice under the Ordinance are wide-ranging and in particular may propose "items (that) should be declared as a monument or a proposed monument." Administratively, it makes many recommendations and gives advice on the grading of historical items in Hong Kong – of which the Post-1950 Former Central Government Offices is currently under discussion for grading.

AAB administrative grading procedure

The grading of historical buildings and sites in Hong Kong is an administrative procedure that plays an important role in the preservation and care of Hong Kong's heritage – and, ultimately, for future generations to enjoy.

The AAB considers six criteria when assessing items for historical grading. This criteria is:

- historical interest
- architectural merit
- group value
- social value
- local interest
- authenticity and rarity

We believe that the site is of exceptional importance in all these areas. Consequently, we largely agree with the AAB's recommended gradings for the site.

We support the following historical grading of the Post-1950 Former Central Government Offices:

Entire Site: Grade 1

Main Wing: Grade 1

East Wing: Grade 1

West Wing: Grade 1 (we strongly believe with the new historic documentation – see attachments - that the AAB's proposed grading of Grade 2 be upgraded to Grade 1)

Furthermore, due to the historical importance of the site, we urge the AAB to recommend to the Antiquities Authority that the site (including buildings and underground features) be proposed as a Monument.

Historical importance of the Government Hill site 1842 – 1951

The site has been reserved from the earliest days of Hong Kong's 'modern' settlement in the 1840s for "government use". Government decision-making and meetings of the Executive Council were continuously made on the site between 1842-1950. Its proximity with Government House was deliberate and the entire area was designated and used by government. The following documents verify this historical importance:

Attached are:

- Reproduction of Henry Pottinger's 1842 Map of Hong Kong – please note the area reserved for government use and original layout of roads surrounding Government House and topography; these are largely unchanged until today.
- The original Secretariat Offices and later Public Works offices and old shops (on corner of Ice House Street and Queen's Road Central) were all demolished prior to the construction of the current site's buildings. At the time of demolition of the old Secretariat building, a plaque dated 1847 was discovered (and reproduced in Hong Kong Year Book 1953) – images of 1950 map and image of 1847 plaque are attached.
- Map from 1869 showing expansion of government use on the site.
- Photograph on cover of Hong Kong Year Book 1952 showing Government Hill as it was prior to construction of present buildings. This view has been largely retained since the 1840s, and remarkably is still – in 2012 – intact. Compare photograph of Government Hill and Government House circa 2000, also attached.

Historical importance of site 1951 – present

It was announced by the government in 1949 that the site would be redeveloped and three new wings of government buildings would be constructed. These new buildings (Main, East and West Wing) would house government workers and consolidate a number of offices spread around Hong Kong. Their design and use of a functional, modernist style was a precursor of other public buildings designed in the 1950s and 1960s – many of these buildings will, however, not be preserved or will not be retained. The preservation of the site's three buildings will be an inspired decision that ensures that examples of this architectural style is kept intact and preserved – alongside the site's historical importance as the seat of Hong Kong government decision-making since the 1840s, it appears obvious that the site should be preserved and protected in its entirety.

The printed pamphlet *Our Government Hill* * explains the architectural, social and environmental importance of this site and its integral relationship with nearby historical features that have already been accorded Monument status (Government House and St John's Cathedral) and important historical graded buildings, including the Anglican Bishop's House (former St Paul's College) and the former Dairy Farm Building.

Attached are:

- Architectural drawings showing that the site was designed as a whole and that the Main, East and West Wings were designed to be an integral whole and built in stages.
- Map of 1959; clearly showing the site was planned to be built in stages.

In summary:

1. This heritage site has been Hong Kong's seat of governance since the 1840s and deserves the highest respect and grading from our heritage protection legislation and administrative criteria.
2. The present Main, East and West Wings of the Central Government Offices were designed and built as a "harmonious, integral cluster" and all three wings must be preserved intact and thus treated as of equal architectural importance.
3. The three wings of the Central Government Offices are unique and a significant example of modernist, functional architectural design that is the precursor of many similar buildings built in the 1950s and 1960s.
4. As a place of governance and public administration this site and these buildings witnessed an unprecedented range of historic legislative, administrative and public decision-making and interaction with the public.

* The booklet *Our Government Hill* can be read at: http://issuu.com/kelvinsit/docs/cgo_booklet

Professional support for site's preservation

A range of local and international heritage and architectural experts have called on the preservation of the site. Consequently, the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage's has called on the preservation of the site and has issued a Heritage Alert. Their latest letter to the HKSAR Government is attached.

GHCG's "Heritage Precinct" Town Planning Application

To demonstrate the importance of the site, the GHCG currently has a planning application with the Town Planning Board, requesting that the Board approve the site being zoned to "Other Specified Uses" annotated "Heritage Precinct" or "G/IC(1)".

A change in the site's zoning will reinforce the importance of the site and preserve the site for future generations.

We welcome the AAB to formally support this planning application – your support certainly falls under the role of the AAB to recommend measures for the preservation of Hong Kong's heritage. We welcome your support!

Conclusion

This is a brief submission – previous material submitted to the AAB should be read in conjunction with this submission.

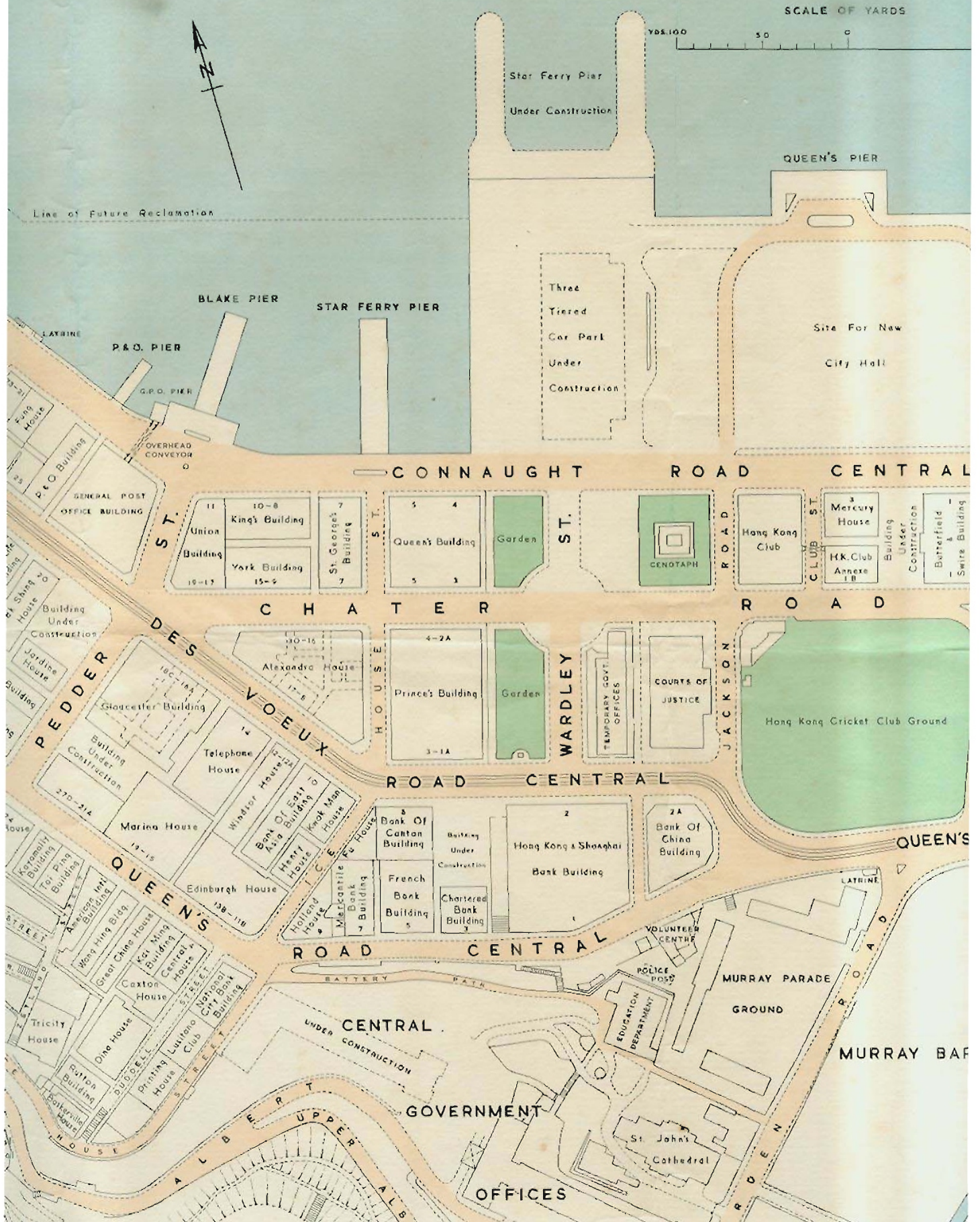
We strongly support the site and its buildings be accorded historical Grade 1 and that the AAB recommend to the Antiquities Authority that the site be a Monument.

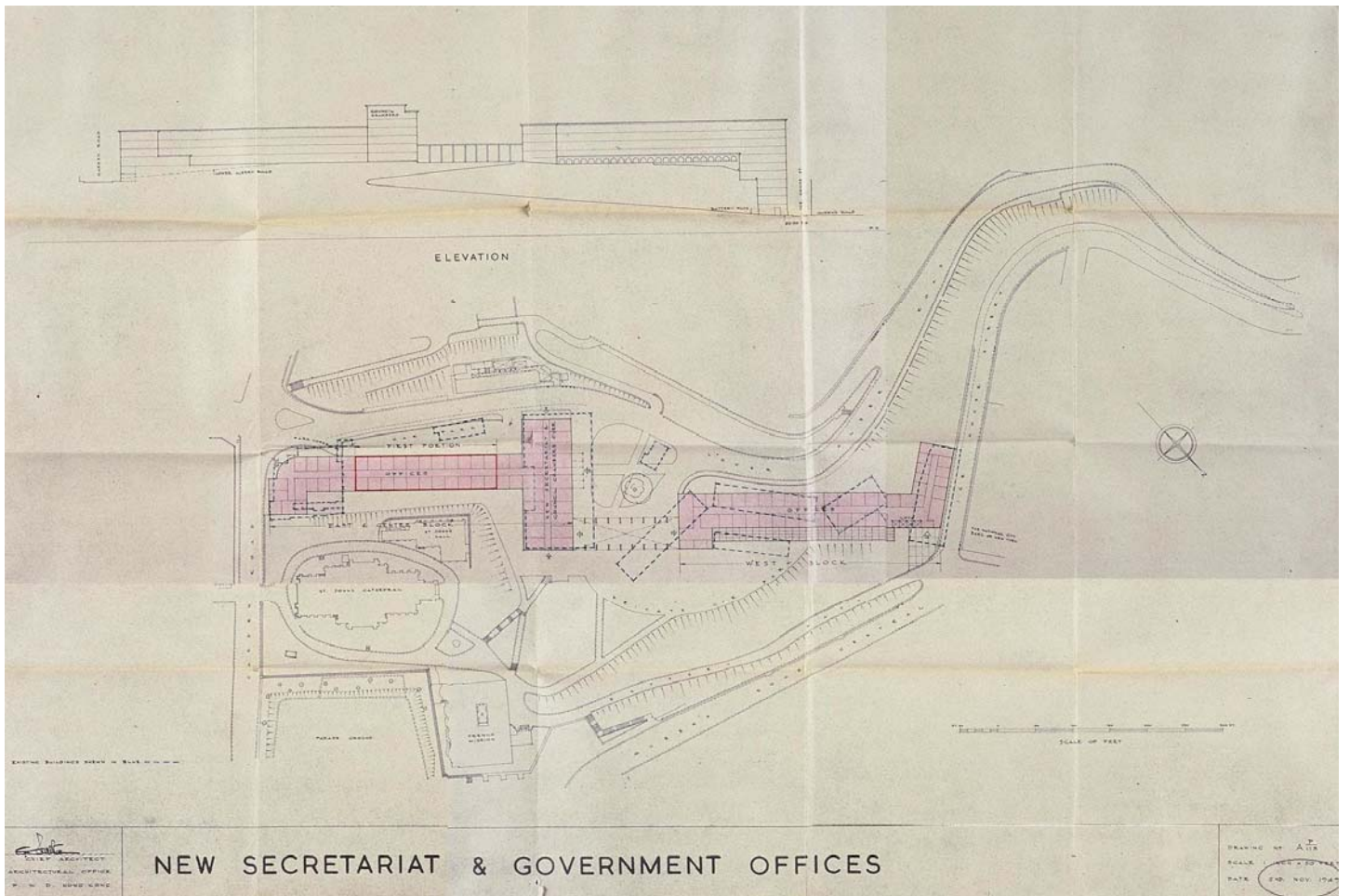
Prepared by John Batten
and sent on behalf of the Central & Western Concern Group

31 August 2012

(ends)

8 YAUMATI
FERRY PIER





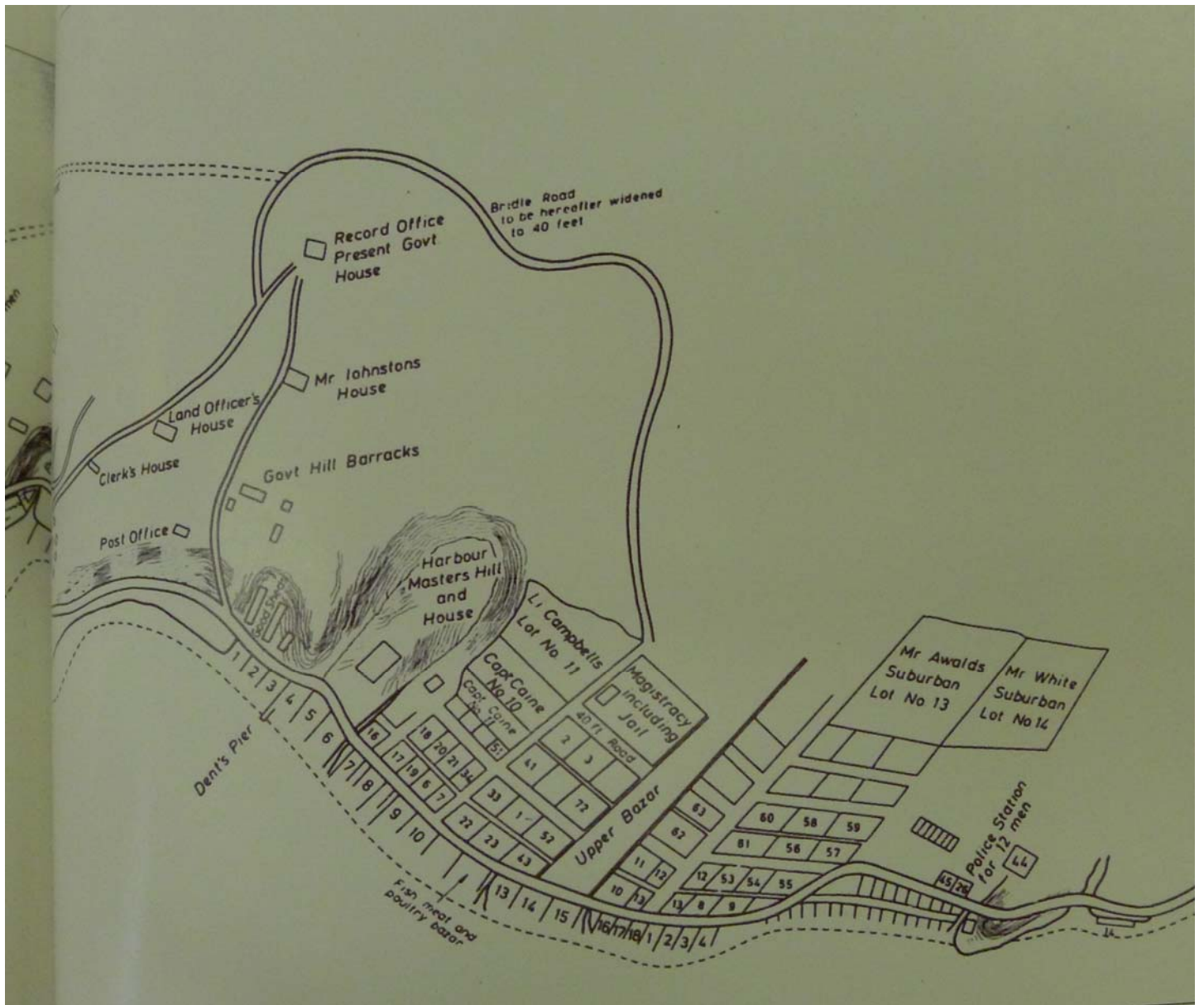


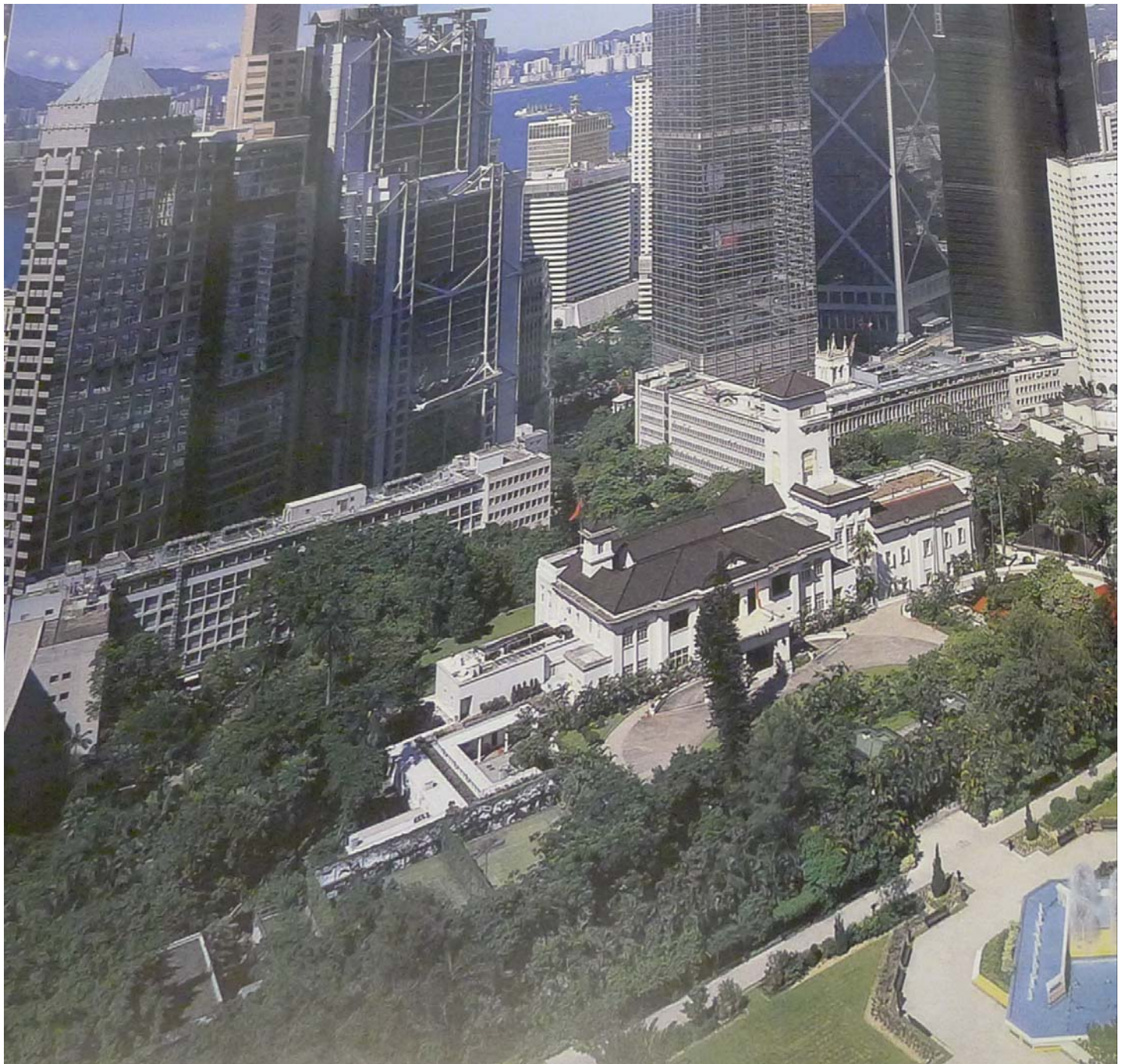


A building almost as old as the Colony itself disappeared in the summer when the old Colonial Secretariat was demolished to make room for the main block of the new Central Government Offices, the first wing of which (bottom picture) has been in use since the end of 1953.

Workmen excavating the site found the bronze circular plaque (at right) which commemorates the laying of the old building's foundation stone in 1847. The plaque covered a metal canister containing five contemporary coins. The inscription records that the foundation stone was laid on the 24th day of February 1847 by Sir John Francis Davis, Bart., the "Governor and Commander in Chief, Hong Kong, and Vice Admiral of the same, Her Majesty's plenipotentiary in China". The cost of the building "(being intended for Government offices)" was estimated at £14,300. 3s. 10d.

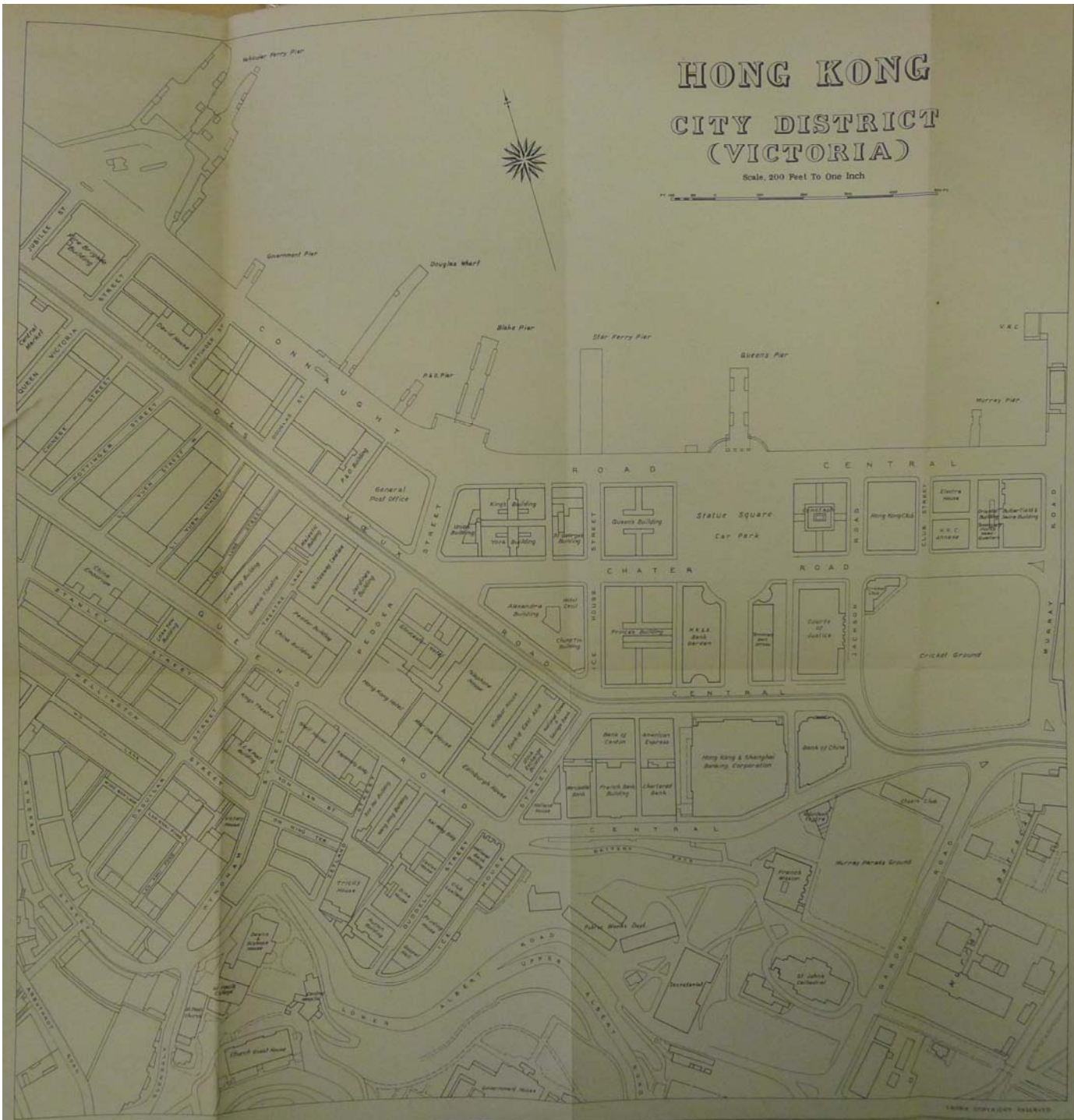






HONG KONG CITY DISTRICT (VICTORIA)

Scale, 200 Feet To One Inch



An aerial photograph of Hong Kong, showing the harbor, the city skyline, and the surrounding hills. The harbor is filled with ships, and the city is densely packed with buildings. The hills in the background are covered in vegetation.

Hong Kong Annual Report

1952