

## Queen's Pier



*"I would not be a queen for all the world" (William Shakespeare)*

Once there was a wooden pier which bore the name "Queen's Statue Wharf", but was replaced in 1925.

Queen's Pier (left) was made of concrete and steel, with round pillars and arches. It was built on the waterfront at Pedder Street on the site of the present Mandarin Oriental Hotel at a cost of HKD\$20,000.



"Statue Pier", as it was then known, was officially renamed "Queen's Pier" in honour of Queen Victoria on 31 July 1924.

The 1925 pier was intended to be opened in time for the arrival of Edward Albert of Windsor, the Prince of Wales, but construction delays made this impossible. The pier was completed in October

1925 for Governor Cecil Clementi's inauguration.

The old pier was demolished in January 1955



Due to post war reclamation, a new pier was reconstructed on the new waterfront, with work commencing in February 1954. The pier was opened by the wife of Governor Alexander Grantham on 28 June 1954. Arrival at the pier by sea added a sense of occasion for visiting dignitaries as it was close to the City Hall.

The open-sided superstructure and utilitarian design of the pier was similar to earlier piers in the area but without the flowing arches of the earlier Queen's Pier. The flat roof was also made of concrete with five sets of stairs allowing boat passengers to board and disembark. In truth it looked much like a fish market.

In successive years the pier became the traditional landing place of British Royal Family and successive Governors arriving at Central on board the official Governor's motor yacht. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II officially landed there on 4 May 1975 on her first visit to Hong Kong. Prince Charles and Diana landed there in November 1989. The writer was a regular visitor at Queen's Pier but arriving in less style on a bobbing walla walla from Tsim Sha Tsui late at night.



Governor Sir Murray Maclehoose (left) inspects a guard of honour at the pier on November 20, 1971.



Once the ferries stopped there was no choice but to abandon the car at TST pier and hail a walla walla together with late elegant dressed black tie night revelers and grubby tradesmen alike to cross the harbour to Central.



The pier's ceremonial rôle has diminished but the pier still served as a landing for boat tours. Some old timers whiled away an hour to play chess or fish on the steps.

## The Battle for Queen's Pier



On 26 April 2007, the pier was officially closed in order to facilitate the Central reclamation.

The demolition of the Star Ferry Pier in Edinburgh Place in early 2007, activists declared Queen's Pier would be the next battle-ground against the conservation

policy of the Government.

After receiving criticism over its handling of the Star Ferry Pier the Government proposed a piece-by-piece relocation of the Pier to an unknown new location on the reclaimed waterfront.

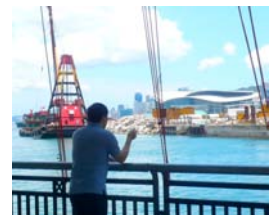
It was drawn to Government's attention the budgeted spending for infrastructure over the past three years was HK\$90 billion contrasted poorly with HK\$90 million spent on acquiring and renovating heritage sites.

The government's plan is for the pier's pitched roof to be disassembled into halves and the 34 concrete columns will be cut at the roof and deck level. The pieces will be labeled and then lifted by a crane barge and transported to the government's explosives depot in Lantau where it will be stored.



Soon after the unsuccessful attempt to save the Star Ferry pier in early 2007, a campaign to preserve the Queen's Pier in situ was launched. A petition of over 400 signatures from the Arts community was collected. On 22 April, about 100 protesters once again rallied at the Pier, launching farewell voyages in a last-ditch attempt to urge the Government to reconsider.

An application for HK\$50 million to fund the dismantling and relocating of the Pier was submitted to the Public Works sub-committee, and was scheduled to be debated on 9 May 2007. The Legislative Council's public works subcommittee approved the Government's re-submitted request for funds to dismantle and relocate Queen's Pier on 23 May in a 10-7 vote.



In July a number of protesters continued to sit it out at the site. They took turns to maintain a round-the-clock presence at the Pier, hoping to preserve the amenity.



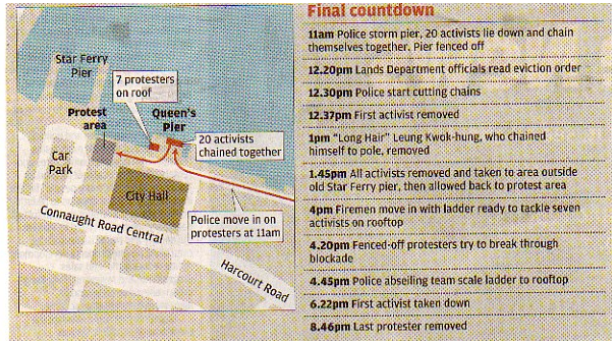
On 29 July, Secretary for Development appeared before a public forum at the pier repeating the government's insistence that keeping the pier was not an option. On 27 July, three students, as part of a group called 'Local Action' started a hunger strike on the pier.



## Legal Challenge

The Lands Department officials arrived on 30 July to put up notices ordering an end to the "unlawful occupation" of government land. The young activists filed for a judicial review. On 31 July 2007, the High Court accepted the application. Activists vowed to defy the order to quit the site by midnight.

On 1 August the police ejected the protesters while workmen removed their belongings and dismantled the banners erected by the protesters.



protest banner to make way for reclamation work at the site. Photos: Felix Wong and Martin Chan



**“The Queen is Dead: Long Live the Queen”**