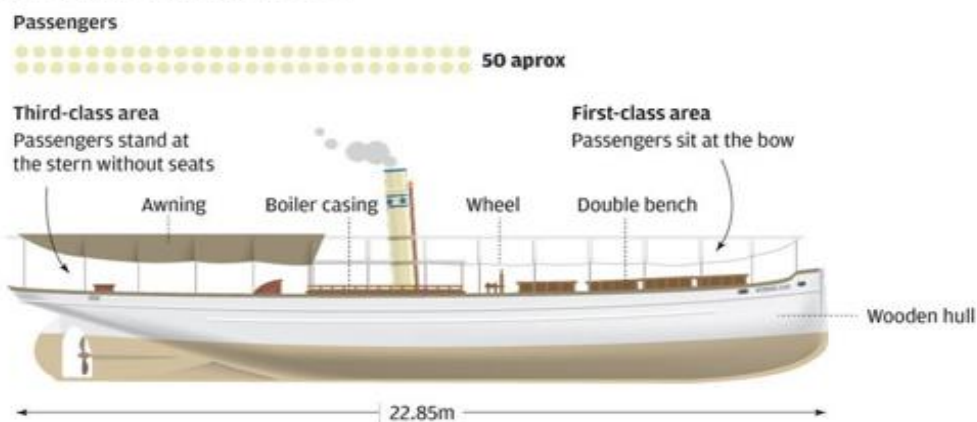


The “Star” Ferry Story

The “Star” Ferry’s colourful history dates to 1888 when Parsee merchant, Dorabjee Naorojee Mithaiwala, founded the “Kowloon Ferry Company”, using one locally built wooden steam vessel, *Morning Star*, carrying 50 passengers between Pedder’s Wharf and Tsim Sha Tsui. Naorojee arrived in Hong Kong in 1857 as a penniless cook and set up a bakery. He prospered after a bread poisoning incident at Ah-Lum’s bakery at the beginning of the 2nd Opium War and his growing wealth enabled him to become a prosperous Hotelier. He acquired his first vessel to transport bread from his bakery in Kowloon to Hong Kong, including himself and friends back to Kowloon after hard day’s work. In 1888, the “Kowloon Ferry Company” operated the *Morning Star* and *Evening Star* and operated 21 crossings a day between 6am and 12pm which proved popular compared to the adhoc ferries that were the competition. To improve the service in 1889 Naorojee ordered two new vessels, a new *Morning Star* and *Rising Star* from the Hong Kong and Whampoa Dock Co. Both were single deck wooden steam vessels, powered by coal, that could carry 100 passengers, 50 in first class and seated which was very popular.

Copyright - The South China Morning Post

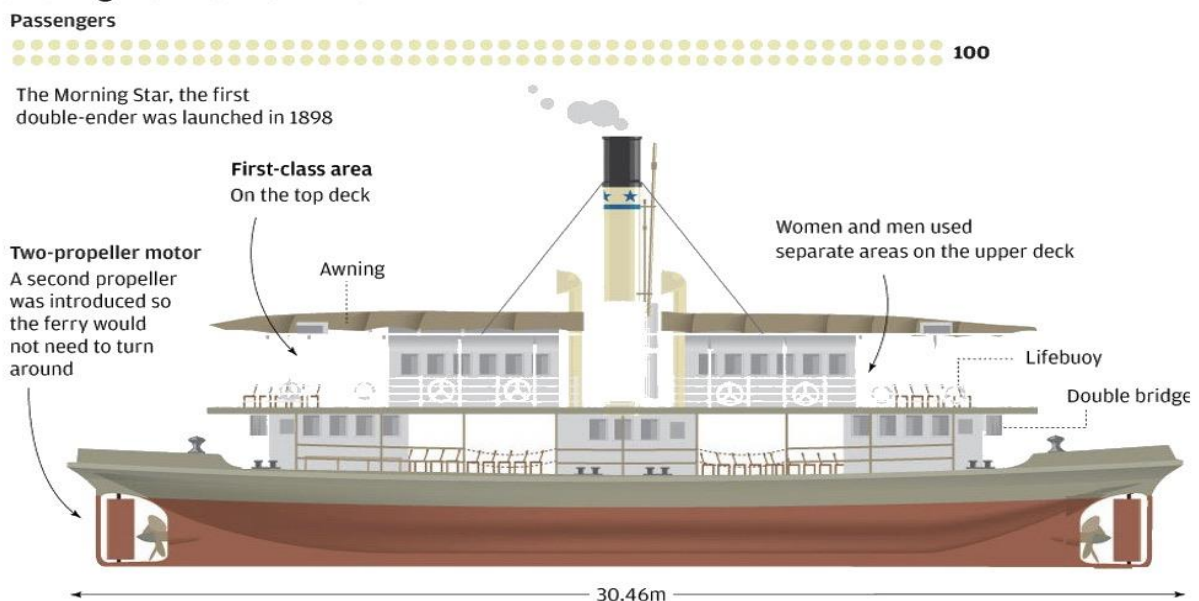
First generation 1871-1904



In 1897 Naorojee ordered the first 2nd generation ferry, *Guiding Star*, which was a double decked and double ended ferry. This speeded up the turnarounds and proved so popular that a second one was ordered, a new *Morning Star*. The new ferries were still wooden and powered by steam.

Copyright - The South China Morning Post

Second generation 1898-1934



In 1898, British Armenian businessman, Sir Catchick Paul Chater, bought what had grown to become a fleet of four ferries, each carrying 100 passengers. The service became known as the “*Star*” Ferry Company Ltd and was soon publicly listed but was always closely allied to Kowloon Wharf and Jardine Matheson.

The names of the original four vessels, *Morning Star*, *Evening Star*, *Rising Star* and *Guiding Star*, were inspired by British poet Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *Crossing the Bar*, which has the line: “Sunset and evening star, and one clear call for me!”. After the success of the 2nd generation double ended ferries, *Morning Star* and *Guiding Star*, in 1898, The “*Star*” Ferry Co Ltd soon ordered three more, *Northern Star*, *Southern Star* and *Polar Star*. All remained in service until 1927. The new ferries were still wooden and powered by coal and steam. The top deck was 1st class and mostly enclosed with separate seats and areas for men and women. Men were expected wear a collar and tie. The lower deck was 3rd Class and open with bench seats and no backs but with space to carry baggage. Third class was popular. 2nd Class was abolished.

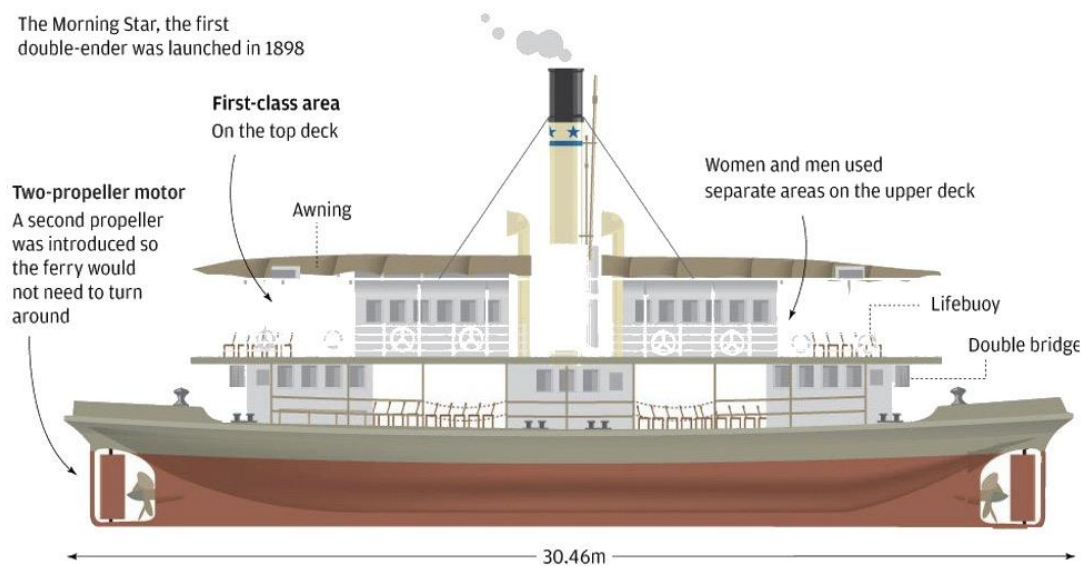
Copyright - The South China Morning Post

Second generation 1898-1934

Passengers

100

The *Morning Star*, the first double-ender was launched in 1898

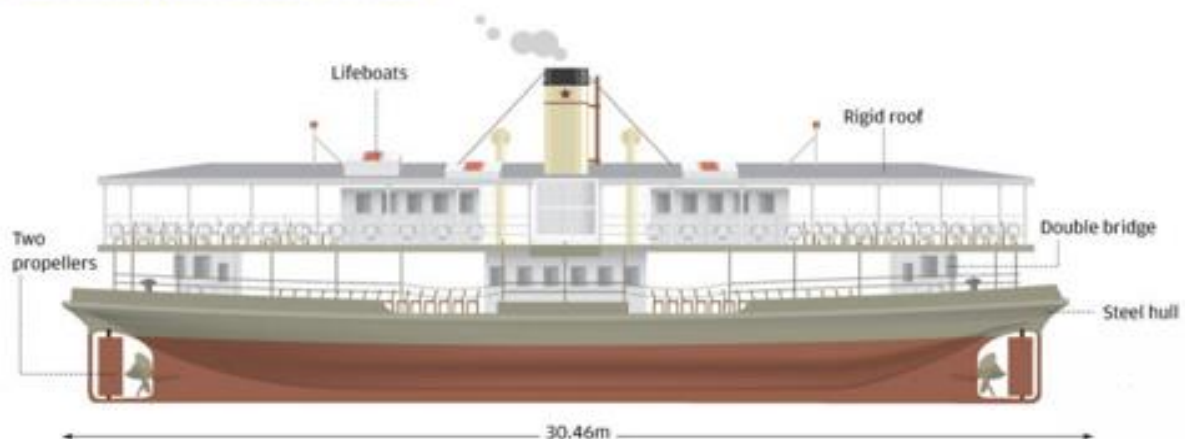


Copyright - The South China Morning Post

Third generation 1904-1928

Passengers

250



The success of the “Star” Ferry Company saw the replacement of *Morning Star* and *Evening Star* in 1904 with two new 3rd generation steel hulled ferries which could carry 250 passengers, a considerable step up from the wooden hulled 2nd generation ferries. The same double end design was used, the top deck was 1st Class and had an enclosed middle section which sheltered the passengers from the weather. The Lower deck was 3rd class. The steel hulled ferries were the same length, 30.46m but were 3m wider and were still steam driven, powered by coal.

By 1906 the “Star” ferry was operating 5 double ended ferries operating between Ice House pier in Victoria to Tsim Sha Tsui. The service ran every 10min from 0520hrs to 1000hrs and then every 20min up to 0030hrs.

Typhoons were always a danger and early on 18th September 1906, at 0840hr, the HK Observatory issued an imminent Typhoon warning. The 5 “Star” ferries were busy with the morning commute and only stopped at 0900hrs. They didn’t have time to seek shelter in a typhoon shelter and all were seriously damaged. The ferry wharfs were covered with bamboo matting roofs which were also very badly damaged. Over 10,000 died during the typhoon, mostly fishermen and boat families. Many sampans and junks were lost. A government commission set up to investigate recommended that a Typhoon early warning system be set up. The first numbered system was produced in 1917 and eventually resulted in the system in operation today.

The Kowloon Wharf Dockyard quickly repaired the “Star” ferries and makeshift wharfs were established enabling the service to quickly resume. At the end of the 1906, although passenger numbers had dipped by a million, the lower cost of coal and a higher 3rd class fare ensured a profitable year.

A few years later, after the first major central reclamation, a new stone and steel wharf was built on the seafront of the newly built Connaught Road and on the end of the Tsim Sha Tsui peninsular. They were both built by Kowloon Wharf and Government granted a lease until 1949.

Sir Paul Chater stepped down as Chairman in 1911 and from then on, the Chairman was always the Wharf Company Chairman who was appointed by Jardine Matheson. Edward Osborn, who as secretary to the Hong Kong and Harbour Wharf and Godown Co Ltd, helped found the “Star” Ferry company in 1898 had run it from inception, retired in 1913. To mark his contribution and retirement his junior colleagues presented him with a unique silkscreen painting of a double decker, double ended ferry which he had been instrumental in being introduced. The painting was obtained by the Hong Kong Maritime Museum 2015 and is hanging in the “Star” Ferry gallery section of the museum on B deck. Mr Osborn was succeeded by W S Brown who had joined the Wharf Company in 1898 at the time the Star Ferry was formed.

In 1910, the Kowloon Canton railway opened with its terminus in Tsim Sha Tsui, a short walk from the “Star” Ferry Pier. The passenger traffic increased, especially as the Government granted the “Star” Ferry a 15-year contract to carry passengers for the railway across the harbour. A covered walkway was built from the “Star” ferry pier to the train station.

Four more 3rd generation ferries were built between 1924 to 1925, *Meridian Star*, *Solar Star* and *Golden Star*. They were built of steel and were 3m longer at 33m and 2m wider. They were fitted with more powerful engines providing higher speeds for faster trips and to dodge the increasing volume of harbour traffic. However, they were still steamers powered by reciprocating steam engines driven by steam generated from coal fired boilers. They were simple to operate and maintain, using low pressure steam and remarkably they lasted until 1956, ’58 and ’68 respectively. By 1933, all but one of the older 2nd generation ferries had been sold and the service was running with the 3 newer 2nd generation vessels built between 1924 and 1926 plus the *Evening Star*, built in 1904. In 1933, the company made history by launching the first diesel electric passenger ferry, the *Electric Star*. She had

a much smaller engine room, as she didn't require a boiler, enabling her to accommodate 533 passengers. She was the only diesel electric ferry ever built pre-war. All other Star Ferries, since, until recently, have been built with a single diesel engine with shafts, clutches, gearboxes, and with propellers at both ends.

In the early 1920's the government was keen that vehicles should be able to cross the harbour. The "Star" Ferry Company initially obliged, buying an old flat top barge that vehicles could drive on and off and strapping it alongside one of the "Star" ferries. It was largely used by private vehicle owners rather than as an integral part of the transport system. In the week, the service operated 4 times a day but on Sundays and holidays the service ran every 30min from 8am to 7pm. With the growing use of vehicles, especially commercial ones, the government considered a regular vehicle service from Jordan Road to Central. Consideration of this delayed the decision on fleet replacement. But the government put off the decision until 1929 and then asked the "Star" Ferry to consider a combined vehicle and passenger ferry service. The company thought about it for a year but couldn't make up its mind. Meanwhile, the government looking ahead at reclamations and other developments decided that the combined vehicle and passenger service should be tendered to run from North Point to Jordan, a route already operated by the Hong Kong and Yaumati Ferry Company. To show willingness the "Star" Ferry put in a tender but with all the issues of terminals and typhoons to consider they offered a high price. They were relieved that it was not accepted. The Government accepted the offer from the "Yaumati Ferry Company" who still run the service to this day.

The Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1932 and as they slowly took over eastern and southern China refugees poured into Hong Kong. Between 1935 and 1939 the population swelled by 250,000 to 1.6million. In 1939 over 15 million passengers were carried by "Star" Ferry vessels and the company made a profit of more than HK\$500,000 for the first time. But the good times were cut short by the invasion of Hong Kong in December 1942 and the occupation from 25th December 1942 until 30th August 1945. During this time, both *Golden Star* and *Meridian Star* were used for the transportation of prisoners of war. The *Golden Star* was bombed by the Americans in 1943 and sunk in the Pearl River near Guangzhou. *Electric Star* suffered a similar fate and sank in the harbour. The ferries were used by the Japanese but not as public ferries and by 1945 those not sunk were all badly damaged from lack of maintenance and maloperation.

As soon as the war was over "Star" Ferry made a great effort to resume its ferry service as soon as possible. Although this took longer than envisaged, due to the extensive damage to the ferries, piers and dockyards, a great effort was made and 3 ferries resumed service on 1st Feb 1946, only 6 months after the war ended. The population quickly re-established itself after the war as thousands returned from China, where they had fled. Remarkably, by the end of 1946 the daily passenger numbers had climbed to 56,000, equivalent to 20 million trips per year. Fares remained at pre-war levels of 20c for 1st Class and 10c for 3rd class. More than three quarters travelled in 1st Class on the upper deck. The 1st class passengers had individual seats with backs and enclosed sections to avoid inclement weather. The lower deck remained as 3rd class, passengers sat on benches without backs or stood up and were open to the weather and even sea spray in windy conditions but had sufficient space to hand carry goods. In 1947, 2 more ferries were salvaged, and finally in 1949 the *Electric Star* was brought back into service.

Passenger numbers increased to 80,000 per day in 1948 and to 100,000 per day in 1949 with 5 ferries in operation running at 5 min frequency between 0600 and 0030hrs, over 36 million passengers were carried. Profits increased, in 1947 they were HK\$1.4million and by 1948 over HK\$1.5million.

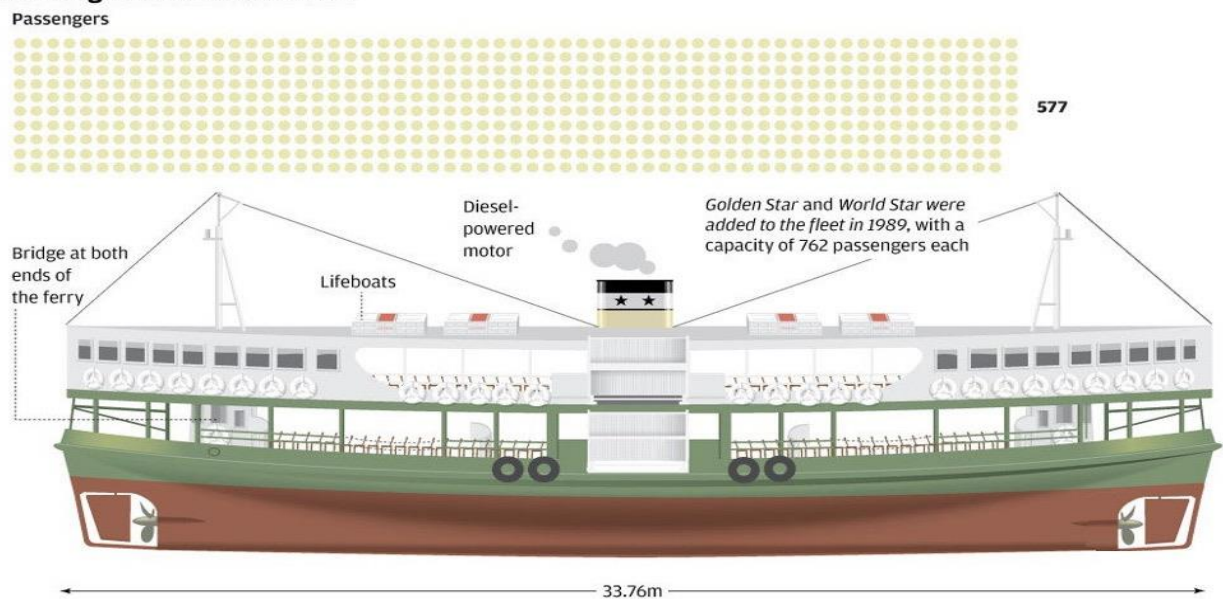
However, all was not well. The leases on the ferry piers were about to expire and costs had greatly increased. The fares had not increased since 1906 and the only reason the company was profitable was due to the increasing patronage while holding the fleet to only 6 vessels. The government took its time but eventually proposed a cap on issued capital of 12% with any excess returned to the government. Also, it was agreed that the company could rent the ferry piers, but they had to pay for all repairs and upgrading.

In 1951, the Government received HK\$401,000, 25% of the profits. The sharp increase in passengers stalled in the 1950s, between 34 and 38 million, but some daily records were established. In June 1953, during the Coronation celebrations, a new daily record of 150,596 passengers was established. As the years passed the ferries had to

work harder to maintain patronage in competition with “Yaumati” ferry. The number of crossings increased steadily from 130,000 in 1953 to 153,000 in 1958. Rush hour frequency was down to 2.6min in 1957. Despite continual maintenance the ferries were old and wearing out. New ferries were being considered but the Government was now discussing plans for a cross harbour tunnel. The directors eventually decided that instead of ordering 5 new 4th generation ferries they would only order 2 but would re-engine *Golden Star* with a spare engine. The *Celestial Star* and *Radiant Star* were brought into service in early 1956 and the *Meridian Star* with 32yrs of service was sold. There were now 8 “Star” ferries in service. Although passenger numbers were the same, 4 of the vessels were diesel and these were considerably cheaper to run than the old coal powered steam vessels. When the Government announced, it was not going ahead with then cross harbour tunnel, another 2 new vessels were ordered. A new *Meridian Star* and *Solar Star* entered service in early 1958 and the old *Night Star* and *Solar Star*, both steamers, were sold. A new *Northern Star* was built in 1959 and the old one sold. At the same time the company very generously built a block of 50 apartments to house 80 of the company’s staff and 360 members of their families.

Copyright - The South China Morning Post

Fourth generation since 1956



The 4th generation ferries were a major improvement on the 3rd generation. They were able to accommodate 577 passengers in first and 2nd class. The 1st class deck had much larger enclosures at both ends instead of in the middle. Also, the individual seats were replaced with wooden bench seats but with individual seats inserted in them with movable backs. Another major feature were the dual level embarkation and disembarkation ramps that speeded up the turnarounds. The lower deck reverted to 2nd class with bench seats with no backs but to accommodate more passengers there was also less room for large hand carried luggage. Building continued at a steady rate from 1955 up to 1969 with 13 Ferries built, the later ones being increased in size carry to 588 passengers. *Golden Star* and *World Star* were the last 2 ferries to be built in 1989 with 762 passengers. Increased passenger numbers were achieved by increasing the length by 11m to 44.4m. The same successful 4th generation design was retained.

In the mid 1950's, the area where the City Hall and Post Office are currently located was reclaimed requiring the “Star” Ferry piers to be moved to a new location. The new “Star” Ferry pier was designed to complement the modernistic design of the newly built Post Office and City Hall between which it was located. A clock tower was added to make the pier more balanced and practical. The chimes of the turret clock installed at the pier marked every quarter-hour since the pier's inauguration in 1957. The clock was a gift from John Keswick who had in turn received it from the Prince of Belgium. Covered walkways connected to an underpass under Connaught Road built for easy access into central, which still exists. The piers were made dual-level, allowing the new ferries with ramps on the upper and lower deck to board and depart at the same time, which greatly speeded turnarounds. The Tsui Sha Tsui terminal was upgraded to accommodate dual-level ramps. Large taxi ranks and bus terminals were

positioned at the entrance of both terminals. Even rickshaws were still available in 1957, providing a traditional mode of transport.

The newly opened Dual Level Central “Star” Ferry Terminal in 1958 with Clock Tower and covered walkways.

Photo by Mike Cussan's - Gwulo



With no other means to cross the harbour the “Star” Ferry remained the primary means of fast cross harbour transport. However, even with an exclusive monopoly between Tsim Sha Tsui and Central, early in 1958 there was a worrying drift of passengers from 1st class, who paid 20c, to 2nd class who paid only 10c. But suddenly it reversed in 1959 and passenger numbers climbed to a record of 41million in 1961 and 46million in 1962. The population had grown from 600,000 in 1945 to 2.1million in 1951 and had grown again to 3.13million by 1961 and 4.4million by 1976. Passenger numbers tracked the population growth and increased to a peak of 54 million in 1969, an average of 147,945 per day which has never been surpassed.

The new “Star Ferry” Dual Level Piers in Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon in 1960 with the Kowloon railway station and clock tower in the background. Photo by Mike Cussan's - Gwulo



New central “Star” Ferry terminal in 1958 looking south to HSBC Bank, taxis and rickshaws line up for customers. Photo by Mike Cussan's - Gwulo



The “Star” Ferry was not isolated from the social strains of the day. There were several crew strikes for higher pay and better working conditions. The Navy was called in to operate the ferries in 1946, like they had done in 1922 and 1925 when the crew had gone on strike. But unlike before the war in 1946 the population had greatly increased and the demand for regular ferries was of vital importance to the smooth running of the economy. Unfortunately, in 1946, the Navy were not up to the job and were only able to operate a 30min service, far removed from the normal 3min one. Large crowds built up both sides of the harbour. Private sampans made a small fortune offering alternative services but at a much higher price. Due to unfamiliarity, the Navy managed to damage both ferries they were operating, after which the service ceased which caused considerable hardship. Although the Yaumati Ferry service initially continued to operate their crews also went strike. With no regular cross harbour ferry services in operation one young man wrote to the paper complaining that it was costing him \$1/day to cross the harbour for work by private sampan, yet he only earned \$10/week and had to support his mother! What could be done about the ferry strike? The government pushed both sides to arbitration and eventually an agreement was reached and after a month on strike the crews returned to work and the normal ferry service resumed.

The next major upheaval took place in the early 1960's. By 1963 more than 49million passenger trips per year were being made. The service was bursting at the seams. To cope more 4th generation ferries were ordered and brought into service, *Night Star* entered service in April 1963 and a year later *Shining Star* followed by *Day Star* and *Twinkling Star*. The population was increasing rapidly, and new apartment blocks were springing up. The congestion at the Tsim Sha Tsui ferry piers in rush hour was becoming intolerable. Most passengers arrived by bus and the bus terminal had reached maximum capacity at rush hour. Government experts estimated that 11million passengers could be diverted to travel between Hunghom and Central. China Motorbus, anticipating that an alternative route was needed, decided to build a new bus terminal and ferry terminal at Hung Hom. When the Government tendered for a new ferry service from Hung Hom to central, “Star” Ferry applied and were awarded the contract which started in 1965.

“Star” Ferry had increased the number of ferries from 6 in 1953 to 11 in 1963 and 14 in early 1965. The fleet size was now sufficient to meet the requirements of the rush hour but with passenger numbers stagnant and costs rising an increase in fares was needed to ensure profits were being made. An application to Government was

made in November 1965 to increase the ferry fares by 5c. Fares had not increased since before the war and were a symbol of stability. A 5c increase may not sound much today but it was a 50% increase for 2nd class and 25% increase for 1st Class. The average retail price index increases between 1947 and 1967 was 40%, about 2% per year but the wage growth of the poor had not kept pace.

Elsie Elliot, an Urban Council member, and a champion of the poor organised a petition against the fare rise to the Governor. By January 150,000 signatures had been obtained but the fare issue was side-lined and given to the Transport Advisory Committee to consider. After taking a considerable time they eventually approved the fare rise. But they underestimated the depth of feeling among the poor who considered the rise was very unfair. A 27yr old, So Sam Chung, then staged a hunger strike at the Hong Kong Ferry pier. When he was arrested a series of demonstration marches were organised. The leaders were also arrested. This led to more nightly riots with damage to vehicles and stone throwing against the police who were trying to contain them. Over 450 were arrested and a curfew was imposed from 9pm to 7am with soldiers patrolling the streets. Business was hit hard, shops, restaurants and cinemas closed early. Taxi revenues were halved. By the end of April, a compromise was reached. The 1st Class fare would rise 5c to 25c with children and students up to 25 exempt. There was no rise for 2nd Class which remained at 10c. Also, a new profit scheme was introduced. The company was permitted a profit of between 10-13% after tax. If profits fell below 10% a fare increase could be proposed. If profits exceeded 13% a reduction in the fare was to be made. The whole episode is part of the collective history of Hong Kong and known as the “Star” Ferry riots.

Prior to the fare rise 50% of passengers travelled 1st Class but after the increase this fell to 30%. Also, the Hung Hom service to central was not successful. Passenger numbers were only 4million per year, far below the Government estimate. Also, as the trip was much longer it tied up 4 ferries. In 1966, the return on assets was only 4.4%. To restore the fortunes of the company the Hung Hom to central service was suspended in 1967 and the 4 ferries were laid up.

On 2nd August 1972, the first cross harbour tunnel opened and suddenly an alternative route to cross the harbour became available. Some bus services started cross harbour routes, but “Star” ferry fares remained unchanged enabling them to retain a major portion of their regular passengers who were very price conscious and couldn’t afford switching to new high-cost cross harbour bus routes or to taxis. Costs were increasing and the small reduction in 1st class passengers reduced profits. Other means were looked at increase profits, from shops in the concourse to advertising. Enhanced pier advertising offered the best return and in 1972 the income was \$2.2m which exceeded the profits from operating the ferry service.

There was an ownership change in 1972, only 5 months after the tunnel opening “The Wharf Company” purchased the company outright for \$75million, which was a high price to pay for a low profit business. The change in ownership made no difference to the service but in 1974 the company made a loss and applied for another fare increase of 5c in 1st Class to 30c and 10c in 2nd class to 20c. The government eventually agreed in 1975 to 30c 1st class and 15c 2nd class and at the same time the Hung Hom to Central service resumed to service the trains that had moved from Tsim Sha Tsui to a new station in Hung Hom.

The next major event that challenged the management of the “Star” Ferry was the opening of the MTR on 12th February 1980, linking Hong Kong Island to Kowloon. The initial MTR fare was \$1 which was 75% more than the 1st class fare on the “Star” Ferry of 25c. Based on the much higher MTR fare to cross the harbour, “Star” Ferry applied to increase its fares to 50c for 1st and 2nd class. Although, this was not accepted a new fare of 60c for 1st class and 40c for 2nd class was agreed, which was introduced in 1980. Surprisingly the passenger numbers didn’t drop as dramatically as predicted. In the early 1980’s with 10 “Star” ferries in operation there were still 50 million passengers per year, 95% between Central and Kowloon and 5% between Hung Hom and Central. It was apparent that the lower cost of the ferry and bus combined overrode the extra expense of the MTR. The increasing population also played a role, from 1971 to 1981 the population increased from 3.9million to 5.1million.

From the mid 1970’s Sir Y K Pao, owner of “Worldwide Tankers” with over 200 tankers, started to buy shares in “Wharf”. In 1980, he owned 25% of the shares and was able to appoint 4 directors. A titanic battle then ensued as Sir YK Pao attempted to take over “Wharf” owned by Jardine’s. Finally, with backing from HSBC, he made a

general offer of \$105 /share, outbidding Jardine's \$90/share, and on 22nd June 1980 took over "Wharf". Whether he knew he was also buying a small ferry company when he purchased "Wharf" is not known but management continued unchanged at "Star" Ferry until Dec 1986 when Sir YK Pao's son-in-law, Peter Woo, became Chairman of Wharf and of Star Ferry.

The effect of the cross-harbour MTR and ever-expanding cross harbour tunnel bus routes slowly squeezed profits and requests for fare increases were readily agreed by Government under the scheme of control. Fares increased from 50c in 1st class and 30c in 2nd class in 1980 to 70c and 50c respectively in 1987. They continued to be raised almost yearly up to 1997 to \$2.2 in 1st class and \$1.7 2nd class. Also, the late-night crossings were cut back in 1982 from 6am to 2am, to 6.30am to 11.30pm, and have remained so up the current day. Late night passengers had to find alternative routes using the MTR or by using taxis or buses through the cross-harbour tunnel. As commuter traffic slowly declined in the 1990's tourist passengers started to increase. Many tourists who visit Hong Kong enjoy taking a ride on the "Star" Ferry as it is such an icon.

Another round of reclamation in central was started in 2003 to create more land for development. The "Star" Ferry piers were moved from there central location between the Post Office and City Hall, between the 11th -12th November 2006, to Pier 7, location 300m away. On the 11th November some 150,000 nostalgic visitors visited the central Pier for the last time with many enjoying ride across the harbour. To mark the special occasion, "Star" Ferry hosted a "last ride" before the pier was closed, with the last four ferries leaving the central pier on the stroke of midnight. Eighteen hundred Hongkongers willingly paid \$88 (40 times the normal fare) for the last ride, whose proceeds were designated for charity. Architects and conservationists argued that the pier was architecturally significant to Hong Kong as one of the last remaining examples of a Steamline Modern, (Art Deco) public building in Hong Kong. Culturally the pier was widely recognised as a part of local collective memory including the clock tower. Public opinion was keen to retain the clock tower, including its iconic chimes, at the front of the new pier as a memorial. Unfortunately, the original clock tower was demolished but a new chiming clock was incorporated into the new pier complex. The whereabouts of the original mechanical chiming clock donated by John Keswick is unknown.

Since the relocation to Pier 7 the "Star" Ferry company has lost many millions of dollars due to the inconvenience to commuter passengers of the extra 300m walk into central. Because of this it decided not to re-tender for the loss-making Hung Hom to Central and Hung Hom to Wan Chai routes and stopped operating them on 31st March 2011.

The Old Central Pier still in use and new Piers under construction in 2005. Photo by Carlsmith



New Pier 7 “Star” Ferry Terminal - 2017 Photo by Martin Cresswell



“Day Star” - taking on passengers at Pier 7 - 2017 Photo by Martin Cresswell



According to Government statistics tourist numbers visiting Hong Kong have surged from 18m per year in 2007 to around 65m in 2018 of which 80% were from mainland China. In 1999, the number of passengers travelling on “Star” ferries 2 routes, Tsim Sha Tsui to Central and Tsim Sha Tsui to Wanchai was 28.68million and stayed around this amount until the central pier relocation in 2006, after which the numbers reduced to 23.5m in 2007.

In 2010, the total reduced to 21.1million passengers, 13.9million passengers, 38,000 a day, on its Central to Tsim Sha Tsui route (down by about 25% since pier relocation in Nov 2006) and 7.3million, 20,000 a day, on the Wan Chai to Tsim Sha Tsui route. Since then, passenger numbers have slowly declined by another 2million and are now down to around 19million for both routes. Some of this reduction is no doubt due to the Central-Wan Chai Bypass infrastructure work that is still going on and when this is finished passenger numbers may increase. “Star” Ferry continues with its rooftop advertising at its Wan Chai and Tsim Sha Tsui Piers and earned HK\$3.3 million annually from these in 2011.

Fares remained unaltered from 1997 until 2009 but after having to absorb substantially increased costs and loss of revenue resulting from a 19% drop in passengers, following relocation of the new Pier 7, fare increases were approved of 30c to \$2.5 for 1st class and \$2 for 2nd class. They took effect on 1st Jan 2010. Fares were increased by \$1 for weekends in 2012. Also, from 2012, the over 65’s have travelled free with subvention from government.

In March 2018, the Hong Kong government renewed the company’s franchise rights, allowing it to continue operating for another 15 years. The move allowed the “Star” Ferry Company to continue operations between Central and Tsim Sha Tsui, as well as Wan Chai and Tsim Sha Tsui, until March 31st, 2033.

The Transport and Housing Bureau said the key factor that the government had considered in awarding the extension to Star Ferry was its service performance. But the company faces the problem of an ageing workforce, with fewer young people interested in joining its ranks. This has raised concerns about the future of the cultural symbol.

In response, the company has taken precautionary measures. This includes an agreed fare rise by an average of 8.9 per cent in 2017. Fares were increased in July 2017 by 20c to \$2.7 for 1st class and \$2.2 for 2nd class. The monthly pass was also increased to \$135. The upper-deck fare for adults on the Central to Tsim Sha Tsui route rose from HK\$2.50 to HK\$2.70 on weekdays and from HK\$3.40 to HK\$3.70 on weekends and public holidays, which is still a much lower cost than travelling across the harbour by MTR.

As the government seeks to improve the environment in the area, the company pledged to fork out HK\$56 million to retrofit eight ferries with a low-emission propulsion system and a new exhaust system that would reduce emissions by 75 per cent and cut fuel use by 8 per cent. It also said it was willing to consider introducing electric ferries. The operator also recently announced it would begin to offer free Wi-Fi in the waiting areas of its three piers and train service staff to be proficient in Mandarin and English. The company also vowed to continue exploring how its services could be diversified to attract more tourists.

The “Star” ferry’s trips across Victoria Harbour are still regarded as an important part of the commuter system, and an essential excursion for tourists. *National Geographic Traveller* put the crossing in its list of 50 places of a lifetime. It’s also well known as one of the world’s best value-for-money sightseeing trips. Between 2008 and 2015 the 2 ferry routes averaged 53,000 passengers each day, 19.3million per year, delivering an average annual profit of about HK\$4 million, a profit margin of 4.1 per cent. But in 2016 it was revealed “Star” Ferry suffered a loss with fare revenue showing a significant downward trend. A fare increase of 8.9% was accepted, including relaxing restrictions on developing the Central and Wan Chai piers, by handing over the management of the piers to “Star” Ferry to help them generate more income.

“Star” Ferry is facing an ageing workforce and is having difficulty retaining young recruits. In 2016, the average age of a sailor was 54, and 58 for a coxswain. The total number of seafaring staff is about 170, comprising 40 coxswains and 130 sailors and engineering staff. The company increased staff pay by about 11 per cent in 2015 and then 3.5 per cent per year over the following two years.

But it remains to be seen if the company can attract new blood. “Star” Ferry may also face competition from water taxi services, as the government is mulling a proposal for private boat services from popular piers, including Pier 9 and 10 next to Pier 7 the “Star” Ferry one. But lawmaker Yiu Si-wing, representing the tourism sector, did not think that such a service would pose a threat to the “Star” Ferry.

“They are two different modes of service. “Star Ferry” is a public transport with very cheap fares while water taxis will surely charge much more for a personalised service. I have no worries about “Star” Ferry,” he said.

To follow through on its pledge to the government and to be more environmentally friendly, “Star” Ferry agreed to retrofit the diesel engines of two vessels with a green diesel-electric propulsion system in, 2019, and make changes to the rest of the fleet progressively and to consider introducing electric powered ferries.

In the 120 years since its founding, the company has grown from a handful of single-deck coal-powered steam driven ferries boats to a fleet of diesel-powered vessels. All ferries now operate with air-conditioned upper decks during Hong Kong’s humid summer.

It is to be hoped that “Star” Ferry can continue stay profitable as it is such a cultural icon of Hong Kong and endures in the hearts of all Hongkongers.

“Shining Star” a recently modified ferry used for harbour tours. Photo by Martin Cresswell



THE STAR FERRIES

Dowrabjee Nowrojee & Co. c1871-1898
The "Star" Ferry Company Ltd 1898-

Name	In fleet	Tons ¹	Length (m)	Passengers ²
<i>Morning Star</i>	1871?-1889			
<i>Evening Star</i>	1878 -1901?			
<i>Morning Star</i> (2)	1889 -1898		22.85	104
<i>Rising Star</i>	1890?-1902?			
<i>Guiding Star</i> ³	1897-1903		27.42	250
<i>Morning Star</i> (3)	1898-1903		30.46	
<i>Northern Star</i> ⁴	1900-1927	107	30.46	
<i>Southern Star</i>	1900-1927	107	30.46	
<i>Polar Star</i>	1901-1927	107	30.46	
<i>Morning Star</i> (4)	1904-1928	107	30.46	
<i>Evening Star</i> (2)	1904-1934	107	30.46	
<i>Golden Star</i> ⁵	1924-1968	147	33.36	
<i>Meridian Star</i> ⁶	1924-1956	147	33.36	
<i>Solar Star</i> ⁷	1926-1958	173	33.51	
<i>Night Star</i> ⁸	1926-1958	173	33.51	
<i>Northern Star</i> (2) ⁹	1928-1959	168	34.27	
<i>Electric Star</i> ¹⁰	1933-1968	164	33.97	553
<i>Oriental Star</i> ¹¹	1955-1973	164	32.00	573
<i>Celestial Star</i>	1956-	164	33.76	579
<i>Radiant Star</i> ¹²	1956-1971	164	33.76	579
<i>Meridian Star</i> (2)	1958-	164	33.76	587
<i>Solar Star</i> (2)	1958-	164	33.76	587
<i>Northern Star</i> (3)	1959-	164	33.76	588
<i>Night Star</i> (2)	1963-	164	33.76	588
<i>Shining Star</i>	1964-	164	33.76	588
<i>Day Star</i>	1964-	164	33.76	588
<i>Twinkling Star</i>	1964-	164	33.76	588
<i>Morning Star</i> (5)	1965-	164	33.76	588
<i>Silver Star</i>	1965-	164	33.76	588
<i>Lady Star/</i>				
<i>Pacific Princess</i> ¹³	1988-	379	41.07	392
<i>Dragon Star</i> ¹⁴	1988-89	120	20.09	192
<i>Golden Star</i> (2)	1989-	352	44.39	762
<i>World Star</i>	1989-	352	44.39	762

物超所值之服務

Ticket Fare

往來尖沙咀/中環及尖沙咀/灣仔航線之成人票價

Ticket fare of Tsim Sha Tsui/Central and Tsim Sha Tsui/Wan Chai Routes

尖沙咀/中環 Tsim Sha Tsui / Central					尖沙咀/灣仔 Tsim Sha Tsui / Wan Chai	
日期 Date (YY/MM/DD)	上層(成人) Upper Deck (Adult)		下層(成人) Lower Deck (Adult)		上層(成人) Upper Deck (Adult)	
1906	\$0.15		\$0.10		-	
1966	\$0.25		\$0.10		-	
1972/8	\$0.25		\$0.10		-	
1975/12/1	\$0.30		\$0.15		-	
1977/1/1	\$0.30		\$0.20		-	
1980/4/1	\$0.50		\$0.30		-	
1981/7/1	\$0.60		\$0.40		-	
1983/3/1	\$0.70		\$0.50		-	
1988/4/1	\$0.80		\$0.60		-	
1989/7/2	\$1.00		\$0.60		\$1.00	
1990/9/23	\$1.20		\$1.00		\$1.20	
1993/2/15	\$1.50		\$1.20		\$1.50	
1994/12/18	\$1.70		\$1.40		\$1.70	
1996/3/8	\$2.00		\$1.70		\$2.00	
1997/6/1	\$2.20		\$1.70		\$2.20	
	星期一至五 (Mon-Fri)	星期六、日及 公眾假期 (Sat, Sun and Public Holidays)	星期一至五: (Mon-Fri)	星期六、日及 公眾假期: (Sat, Sun and Public Holidays)	星期一至五: (Mon-Fri)	星期六、日及 公眾假期: (Sat, Sun and Public Holidays)
2009/3/29	\$2.30	\$2.50	\$1.80	\$2.00	\$2.30	\$2.50
2010/1/1	\$2.50	\$3.00	\$2.00	\$2.40	\$2.50	\$3.00
2012/6/24	\$2.50	\$3.40	\$2.00	\$2.80	\$2.50	\$3.40
現時票價 Current Fares	成人(Adult): \$2.7 小童(Child): \$1.6	成人(Adult): \$3.7 小童(Child): \$2.2	成人(Adult): \$2.2 小童(Child): \$1.5	成人(Adult): \$3.1 小童(Child): \$2.1	成人(Adult): \$2.7 小童(Child): \$1.6	成人(Adult): \$3.7 小童(Child): \$2.2
	65 歲或以上之長者 / 65 years old or above : 免費 Free 月票 Monthly Ticket: \$135					

「星」之特色

Specialties of "Star" Ferry

三腳桅杆 比併 單柱桅杆 Tripodal mast Vs Monopod mast

桅杆的主要用途，是用來掛起旗幟。要區別一艘天星小輪於另一個年代建造，桅杆是其中一種辨認方法。

十二艘渡輪中，五十年代投入服務的「天星」、「午星」、「日星」和「北星」是採用單柱式桅杆設計。六十年代及期後投入服務的「夜星」、「輝星」、「晨星」、「熒星」、「晚星」、「銀星」、「金星」和「世星」則採用了三腳（即主杆再加雙腳輔助支撐）的桅杆設計。

Top masts are used for hanging the flags. It is one of the ways to distinguish the era of ferries built.

Among the twelve Star ferries, Celestial Star, Meridian Star, Solar Star and Northern Star which were built in 1950s, have monopod masts, whereas Night Star, Shining Star, Day Star, Twinkling Star, Morning Star, Silver Star, Golden Star and World Star which were built in 1960s and after adopted the tripodal masts.



單柱桅杆
Monopod Masts

救生水排 Life Rafts



日星及北星之救生水排
Life rafts of Solar Star and Northern Star



天星、午星、晨星、晚星、輝星、夜星、熒星及銀星之救生水排
Life rafts of Celestial Star, Meridian Star, Day Star, Morning Star, Shining Star, Night Star, Twinkling Star and Silver Star



三腳式桅杆
Tripodal Masts

可自由轉向的椅背 Turnabout seat backs



傳令鐘 Ferry engine telegraph



傳令鐘（別稱「車鐘」）是一種讓船主和大副在駕駛室和機房之間傳遞指令的工具。

Ferry engine telegraph is one of the command transmission tools for coxswains and engineers at the driving cabins and engine rooms.

中環天星碼頭與海岸線發展

Central Star Ferry Pier and the Coastline Development

1888-1912

1888年，第一代中環天星碼頭始於雪廠街與干諾道中交界落成，建築風格較為簡樸，起初碼頭上蓋只用禾稈草搭建而成，後來才以木材搭建及出現三角形前後末端頂蓋。

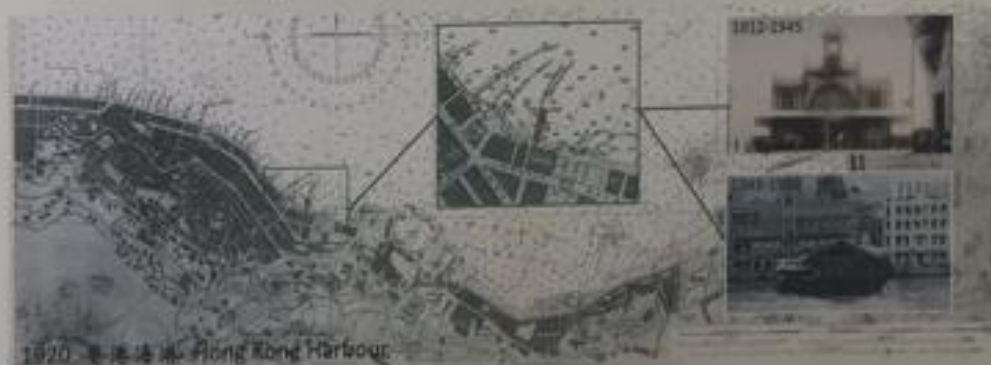
The 1st Generation of the Central Star Ferry Pier was built in 1888, located at the junction of Ice House Street and Connaught Road Central on Hong Kong Island. It was initially a primitive, mat-shed shelter. This in turn was upgraded to a more substantial timber shed with a decorative arched detail at the gable ends.



1912-1958

受1910年填海工程影響，碼頭於1912年重建，並在大樓內安裝了一套機械鐘。鐘樓結構由實木及灰泥建造而成，鐘樓樓頂加裝了金屬圓欄圍繞樓身；位於碼頭入口之上的半圓型大窗戶亦成為了當時中環碼頭入口設計的重要元素。第二次世界大戰後，該碼頭於1945年原址重建，鐘樓依然保存，但碼頭外觀則較簡潔及現代化。

Following the reclamation in 1910, the Central Star Ferry Pier was rebuilt in 1912. The central building was surmounted by a handsome clock set within a square domed tower, but both incorporated a timber frame and stucco construction in a block form, with iron balustrading above the roof gutter line and corner posts with prominent square caps. A semi-circular multi-paned 'diocletian' window was the major fenestration element above the entrance of the pier. After the 2nd World War, the Pier was re-constructed in 1945 at the same location with a clock tower, simple but modern look.



中環天星碼頭與海岸線發展

Central Star Ferry Pier and the Coastline Development

1958-2006

1950年代初，中環再進行填海。位於愛丁堡廣場的天星碼頭亦於1958年隨著填海工程完成而啟用。碼頭採用了當年盛行的筒樓建築設計。碼頭圓形的書頭與天星小輪的弧形線條非常配合而這種亦成為中環繁盛商業區中的地標。

The post-War reclamation program was kicked off in the early 50s. The Edinburgh Place Pier in Central was then launched in 1958 following the post-War reclamation program. The design of these reflected the necessarily austere architectural style of the time. The rounded ends of the wharfs themselves project into the harbour, reminiscent of the bow of a ferry. The clock tower has been as important landmark at the water's edge for many years.



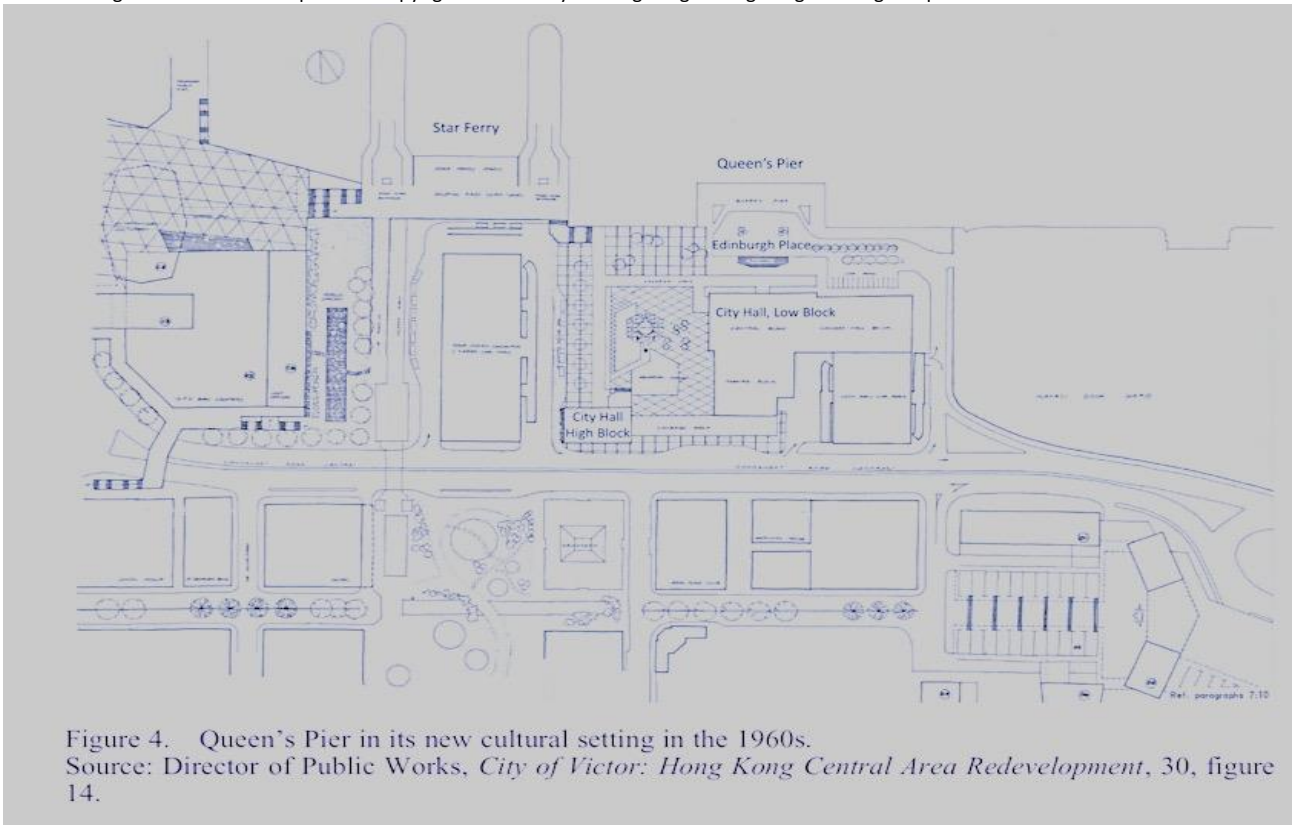
2006+

因應中環填海第三期工程 (CKIII)，中環的渡輪服務於2006年11月12日由愛丁堡廣場渡輪碼頭遷往以北約300米，新填海地區所在的新中環天星碼頭（中環7號碼頭）。新中環天星碼頭除融合了新舊元素外亦凸顯天星小輪之歷史及地標意義。

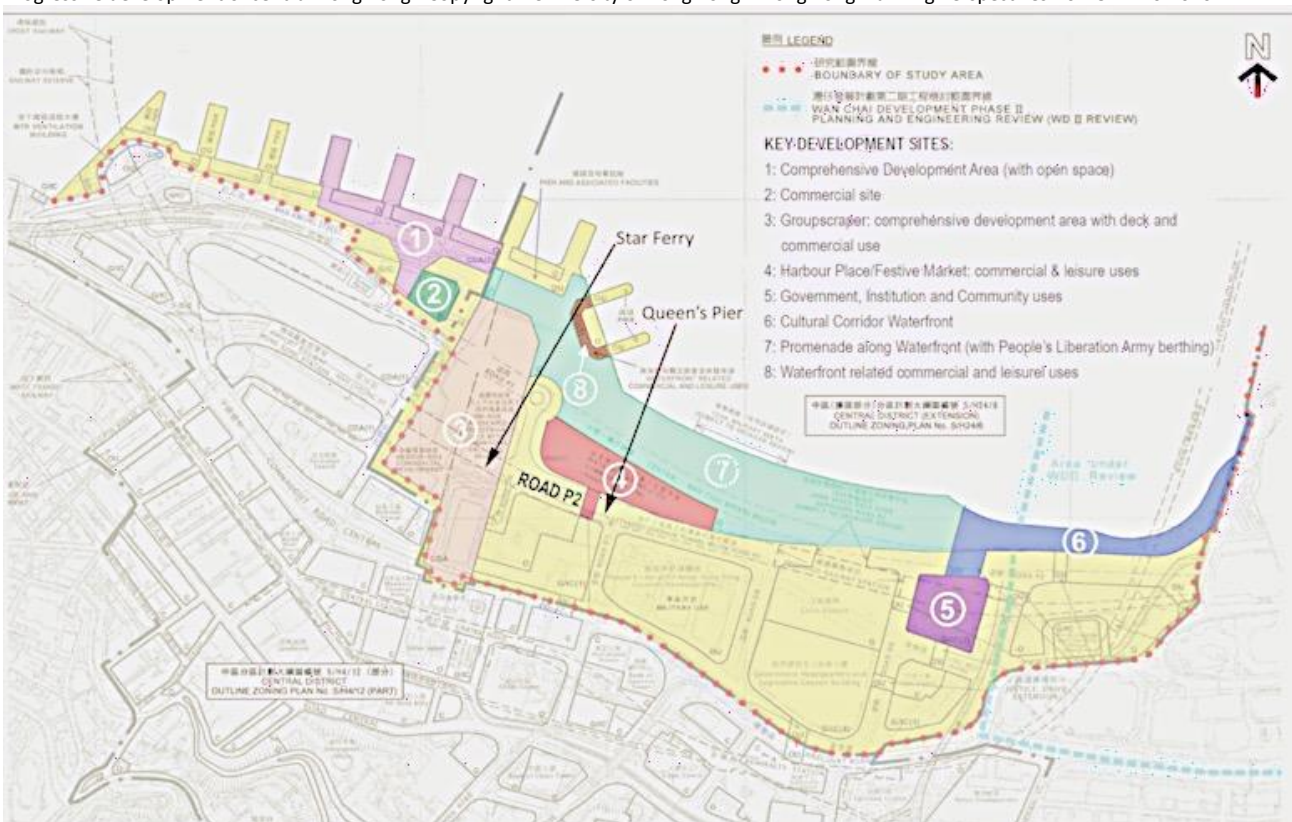
Starting from 12 November 2006, due to the Central Reclamation Phase III, Star Ferry continues its ferry services at the Central Star Ferry Pier (Central Pier No. 7) after the relocation of the Edinburgh Place Pier to northward approximately 300 meters ahead. The Central Star Ferry Piers with its elegant clock tower is the re-creation of a distinctive building reinforcing the history and character of the Star Ferry with its identity as an important landmark at the waterfront in Central.

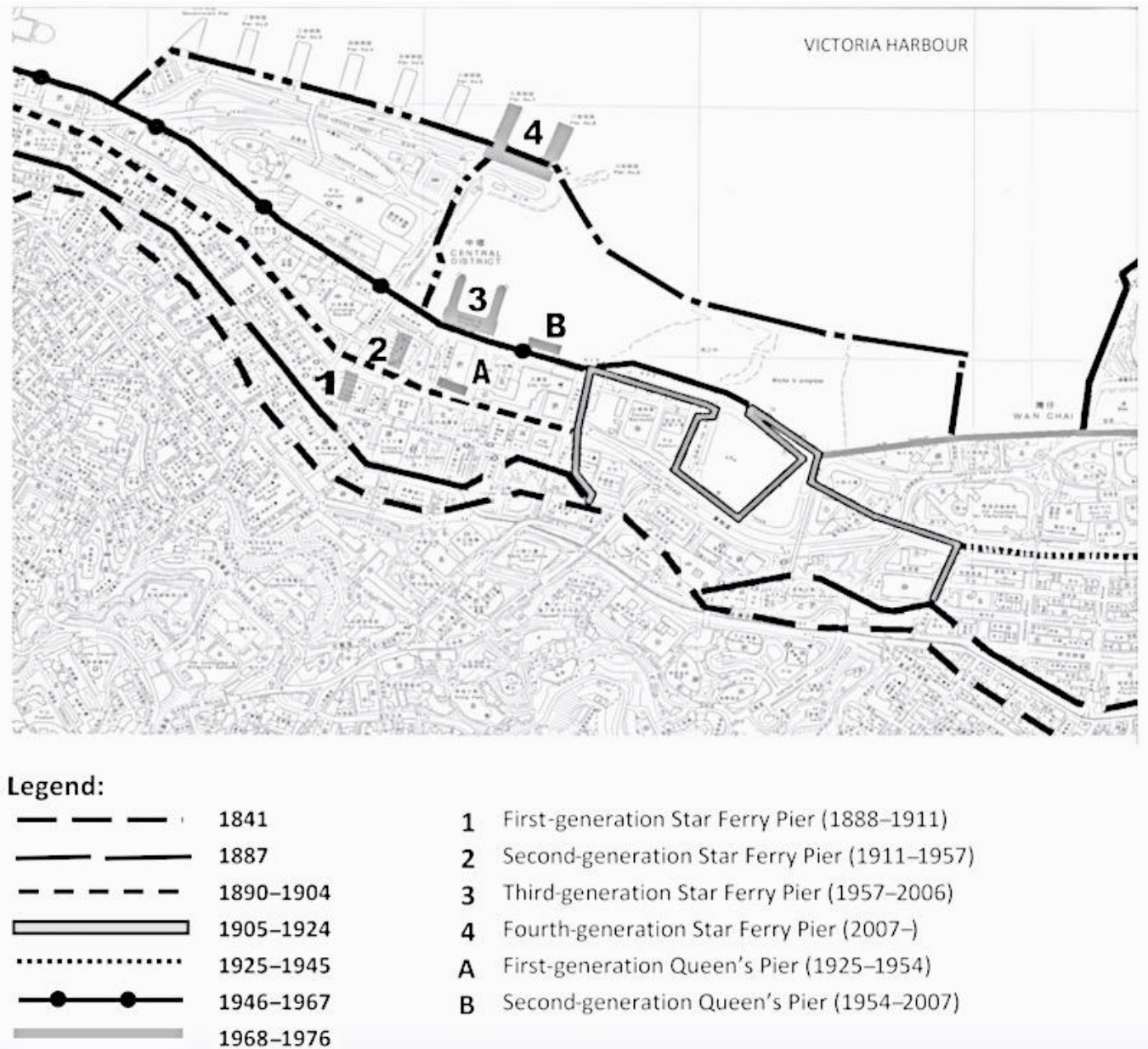


Plan showing 1957 central development. Copyright – University of Hong Kong – Hong Kong Planning Perspectives Vol 25 - 4-10-2010



Progressive development of central Hong Kong - Copyright – University of Hong Kong – Hong Kong Planning Perspectives Vol 25 - 4-10-2010





SCMP Article 3rd April 2016 - Copyright South China Morning Post

50 years on, Hong Kong protest pioneer has no regrets (but he's got no time for today's radicals)

When So Sau-chung started a hunger strike on April 4, 1966, to oppose a Star Ferry fare rise he unleashed forces that reverberate to this today.



So Sau-Chung, a translator, was protesting at the fare increase for the boat ride between Central and Tsim Sha Tsui, back then a vital link between the two areas.

His defiance drew sympathy from some members of the public. But it was his arrest the following day that prompted thousands to take to the streets of Kowloon in violent protest.

It sparked one of the biggest disturbances in Hong Kong's recent history and led to an official inquiry, which admitted a chasm existed between the colonial government and the people. Fifty years on, the pioneer of social protest in Hong Kong has no regrets.



"My actions have awakened many young people since then and to some extent what I did had inspired the social movements in the 1970s," So told the *South China Morning Post* in an interview last week.

But So, who became a Buddhist monk in 1996, slammed the activists involved in the Occupy Central protests and advocates of Hong Kong independence.

"They oppose everything the government does. They only care about grandstanding, rather than the betterment of the society."

On the morning of April 4, 1966, So ambled into the Star Ferry Concourse ready to take matters into his own hands.

On the back of his black jacket, he had painted in white the words in English and Chinese words that read: "Hail Elsie! Join hunger strike to block fare increase".



He had been inspired by then urban councillor Elsie Tu who was the sole dissenter in the Transport Advisory Committee that had approved the fare rise for the cross-harbour ferry service. The route was then a vital link between Hong Kong and Tsim Sha Tsui. Tu had launched a petition against it and collected more than 150,000 protest signatures. But the overwhelming opposition failed to impress the committee and the government-appointed body recommended in March 1966 that the fare be increased by five cents.

"The committee insisted on approving the application for the fare rise despite strong public opposition. Public opinion was not even worth a five-cent coin," he said.

"I feared other public utilities might follow suit after the Star Ferry raised its fares. I was determined to do something to stop the chain reaction."

"My protest was inspired by the non-violent activism of Mahatma Gandhi in India," So said. "Police power was unchecked at the time. I was then prepared for the worst-case scenario that I could die for my cause."

At that time, protests were unheard of in Hong Kong. When he was arrested on April 5, thousands took to the streets of Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok, sparking several days of violent protests.

The mayhem lasted for four days until April 9, as mobs threw stones at riot police, looted shops and set fire to buses and various public facilities, including fire stations. One person was killed in the disturbances and 26 injured. So was charged with "causing an obstruction". He was later found guilty but was let off with a notice to be on good behaviour for two years with a bond of HK\$200.

So, who was born in Guangzhou, migrated with his family to Hong Kong in 1949. He studied at Salesian English School in Shau Kei Wan. He married but later divorced and has no children. In the 1960s, he contributed articles to various

newspapers and magazines and later in the 1970s taught English grammar at evening schools. So, now 75, became part of the history of the Star Ferry pier, which was demolished in the face of protests in December 2006.

The colonial government appointed a commission of inquiry in May 1966 to investigate the causes of the disturbances. The commission's report said evidence relating to the outbreak of the disturbances suggested a gap between the government and the people.

"Within the economic and social fields there are factors that need to be watched, lest they provide inflammable material which could erupt into disturbances should opportunities arise in the future," it said.

History repeated – Mong Kok riot similar to deadly Hong Kong unrest of 1966, says former top policeman

So said that, "most of the people arrested over the 1966 riots were teenagers. "

"There was serious shortage of recreational facilities for young people at the time. We only had two public parks back then - Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens and Victoria Park."

He said the government attached more importance to youth work and provision of recreational facilities after the riots.

"I regret that what I did half a century ago had little impact on young people nowadays. They barely know Hong Kong's history," So lamented.

Acknowledgements

This Article, the "Star" Ferry story has been compiled from various sources thankfully acknowledged below: -

"Star" Ferry Archives at Pier7

The "Star" Ferry, The Story of a Hong Kong Icon. by David Johnson, ISBN 962 852 234 -2-2

"Star" Struck, Hong Kong Maritime Museum, By Dr Stephen Davis, ISBN 978-988-98611-6-2

South China Morning Post Archives

University of Hong Kong Archives

Gwulo – <http://gwulo.com> Photos by Mike Cussan's of Star Ferry Piers

Wikipedia articles on harbour reclamation and "Star" Ferry

Hong Kong Government Records and Statistics, populations, tourist and ferry numbers.

Hong Kong Maritime Museum collections and publications

Author: Martin Cresswell - January 2019