



# HERITAGE TOURISM: STATION PIER



MELBOURNE  
MARITIME  
HERITAGE  
NETWORK



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## Summary

The aim of this report is to assess Station Pier as a heritage destination in order to reimagine the visitor experience in relation to an increase of cruise passengers over the past decades. The pier's historical value is unrecognised and is considered to compare poorly with other international cruise terminals worldwide, highlighting areas for improvement.

To address these issues, a comparative analysis was undertaken to assess Station Pier's function in contrast to other historic ports worldwide. An evaluation of the pier's heritage merits has also been evaluated in terms of its historical structure and how this relates to tourism. As a result, several proposals have been provided with the intention of reimaging the visitor experience whilst also promoting Station Pier's maritime history and significance.

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## Introduction

Cruise tourism has experienced rapid expansion worldwide, with an overall increase in annual passenger compound rate of approximately six per cent since 1990 (Cruise Market Watch 2019; see appendix one). The cruise industry in Australia has continued to generate significant economic activity, providing benefits to business and communities across the country (CLIA 2019).

Melbourne's Station Pier represents Victoria's premier sea passenger terminal, which has seen an influx of cruise passengers over recent years (Australian Cruise Association 2019). However, due to the effects of COVID-19, revenue in the industry is expected to decrease between 2020 and 2021 as a result of the Federal Government's ban on inbound tourism and the restrictions on non-essential travel (Ibis World 2020). As a result, Station Pier has remained closed to public access.

Opened in 1854, the pier has been central in almost every phase of Australia's history, and is significant in being Victoria's most important arrival point for migrants (Museums Victoria 2020). Since then, Station Pier has transformed into a modern cruise ship terminal, welcoming approximately 230,000 cruise ship passengers between 2017 and 2018 alone (Australian Cruise Association 2019). The pier also functions as a vital link with Tasmania through the TT-Line and hosts several visits by the Royal Australian Navy each year (Victorian Ports Melbourne 2019). Yet, despite being listed on the Victorian Heritage register, Station Pier's historical significance is undervalued. Further, the pier's function as a maritime gateway to Melbourne has been viewed as less than impressive, which compares poorly with other terminals worldwide (Watts 2019).

The purpose of this report is to address these issues and assess Station Pier as a historic port, taking into account its merits as a heritage destination in order to reimagine the visitor experience. A comparative analysis of cruise ports similar to Station Pier has been conducted, which provides an examination on how these ports cater to visitors and conserve their historical structures.

An evaluation of the pier and its heritage qualities has also been discussed, as well as its function as a tourism destination. Finally, the cruise arrival experience itself has been evaluated to provide recommendations on how this could be improved, including the consideration of several potential additional elements.

## Comparative Analysis

Prior to the 1970s, cruise ship travel was limited to elite and upper-class citizens (World Monuments Fund 2015). The establishment of several cruise lines such as Carnival, which were aimed at middle-income mass markets, revolutionised the industry and significantly impacted growth (World Monuments Fund 2015). As a result, there are now hundreds of cruise ports worldwide.

However, most of these are relatively new, having been constructed after the increase in cruise tourism following the 1970s. The oldest historical ports are present in Europe, yet the majority have been transformed into modern terminals and do not possess their original structures. Examples include the port of Barcelona in Spain, Dubrovnik in Croatia and Venice in Italy. These also represent some of the world's busiest ports, which have been forced to adapt to the negative impacts of over-tourism (World Monuments Fund 2015). However, there are several terminals that could be considered as being similar to Station Pier from a historical port perspective.

The port of Tilbury in London was opened in 1930 as a gateway for emigrants with P&O and the Orient Line to Australia (Capital Cruising 2020). The passenger terminal operated until the 1960s, until it was reopened under the new title of 'London's International Cruise Terminal' in 1995 (Capital Cruising 2020). The port was then recognised as a historic grade listed building, and 1.5 million GBP was invested in 2017 in order to refurbish and conserve the structure (Capital Cruising 2020).

The location of London's cruise terminal is of a considerable distance of forty kilometres from the city centre. To cater to arriving tourists, passengers are able to travel by MBNA Thames Clippers-operated ships (London river bus service) to the city centre, or alternatively by train which is approximately one kilometre from the port (Capital Cruising 2020). The terminal includes its original baggage hall and passenger lounge which also serves as a venue for function hire (Capital Cruising 2020). In terms of facilities, these are quite minimal, with only a small kiosk and no restaurants or shop in the surrounding area.

To promote the terminal's heritage, there is a memorial plaque placed in the baggage hall, and several murals and textile panels in the windows that depict significant anecdotes that are part of the local history (Yates 2020; see appendix two). The building has also retained some of its original structure due to ongoing conservation and restoration (Yates 2020).

Another historic port that could be compared to Station Pier is Auckland's Shed 10 terminal. Constructed in 1910, Shed 10 is the city's primary cruise terminal that is also heritage listed as the only original remaining structure on Queens Wharf (Auckland Live 2020). As a vital part of Auckland's maritime history, the building was formerly used as a warehouse to process cargo (Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd 2009). Currently, the terminal has the capacity to accommodate four vessels at a time (Auckland Live 2020).

Redeveloped in 2013, the building now functions as both a terminal and multi-purpose events space (Jasmax 2020). An overlay of portable infrastructure such as ticket counters, queuing systems and security scanners are installed when the shed is operating as a cruise terminal and are removed and stored when cruise ships are not docked, allowing the building to function as a flexible event space (Jasmax 2020).

Shed 10 is located in the heart of Auckland's city centre, providing convenience to visitors arriving to the port. While there are limited facilities at the terminal itself, there are a number of tourism operators, shopping and dining precincts and various public transport options in the immediate area (Ports of Auckland 2020). There is no short or long-term parking at the terminal, however, there is a designated area for picking-up and dropping-off passengers (Ports of Auckland 2020).

During the redevelopment of Shed 10 and prior to its opening as a cruise terminal, a key concern was the retainment and preservation of as many original heritage features as possible, including the existing form and fabric of the building (Harvey 2013). There is also a commemorative plaque inside the building which provides a brief history of the port (see appendix three), and Auckland's maritime museum is also located a short walking distance away.

After comparing Station Pier to several ports worldwide, it was discovered that London and Auckland represent two significant terminals that are similar in terms of function, historic value and use of an original structure. Further, as major terminals to both cities, they also involve logistics where ships are re-provisioned which is similar to Station Pier (Auckland Live 2020). The comparative analysis also suggests ways in which the pier can be improved and further utilised, which is discussed in the following sections.

## Station Pier as a Heritage Destination

Originally referred to as Railway Pier, Station Pier is the largest timber piled wharf structure in Australia and is of historical significance due its ability to provide a continuum by reflecting phases of Victoria's development (Heritage Council Victoria 2018). Since 1854, the pier has operated as a maritime freight and passenger terminal, representing an important role in the early development of Victoria by conducting services for passengers (Heritage Council Victoria 2018). Thousands of Victorians first arrived in Australia through Station Pier and during World War II it became a major embarkation and disembarkation point (Heritage Council Victoria 2018). The pier holds several other significant milestones, all of which are relative to the development of the region (Victorian Ports Melbourne 2019).

Station Pier's most distinguishing structure is its green-coloured gatehouse which represents the main entrance. Overall, the majority of what remains today is of cultural significance, with the addition of a few features constructed during the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Heritage Council Victoria 2018; see appendix four).

The pier underwent several refurbishments between 1949 and 1962 (Victorian Ports Melbourne 2019). The timber decking was replaced by reinforced concrete slabs, with an extension to the southern end of the structure (Heritage Council Victoria 2018). The terminal buildings were then refurbished in 1956 prior to the Olympic Games and underwent further restoration during the 1960s, due to the influx of passengers arriving under the government's assisted migration program (Heritage Council Victoria 2018).

Station Pier has retained the majority of its original timber structure and decking; however, this is mostly concealed by asphalt and concrete slab paving (Heritage Council Victoria 2018). Other areas of cultural significance are the west kiosk, parts of the east kiosk, the inner and outer passenger terminal buildings and the Stothert and Pitt portal crane which is positioned on the west wing pier (Heritage Council Victoria 2018).

Yet, despite being a historically rich destination, both Station Pier and Melbourne in general are unrecognised in terms of maritime heritage. While there are several small maritime museums along Victoria's coast, none exists in the city of Melbourne. Additionally, there is currently no information signage at Station Pier's entry to inform both locals and tourists alike of its historical value.

Such displays can be seen at the adjacent Princes Pier (see appendix five), which provides some insight into Station Pier's history. However, as the area in-between the piers is comprised of residential apartments with no shops along the boardwalk, the possibility of tourists travelling in this direction are low. These factors depict that while the merits of Station Pier as a heritage destination are strong, the promotion of its history and the information available to the public is lacking.

## **The Cruise Arrival Experience**

The substantial increase in cruise tourism over recent decades has resulted in a range of associated benefits for host cities (McCarthy 2018). While modern ships have been referred to as 'floating cities' (Sanz-Blas, Buzova & Carvajal-Trujillo 2019), port-of-call destinations remain a foremost part of the overall cruise experience (Sanz-Blas, Buzova & Carvajal-Trujillo 2019).

In comparison to 'regular' tourists, cruise passengers differ vastly in terms of characteristics and their experience (Sanz-Blas, Buzova & Carvajal-Trujillo 2019). Generally, they visit the destination for a shorter period of time and may stopover at multiple ports in a single trip (Sanz-Blas, Buzova & Carvajal-Trujillo 2019). Excursions are often booked in advance, and some passengers may opt to not visit the destination at all by remaining onboard the ship when docked (Whyte 2018). These factors, coupled with the increasing competitiveness in the industry, indicate the need for ports of call to improve their understanding of how cruise passengers perceive the destination, and what attributes can be implemented or adjusted to improve the overall experience (Whyte 2018).

Melbourne has a strong reputation as a vibrant and exciting destination, yet the perception of Station Pier is varied in regard to opinions held by tourists and the local community. A statement detailing the arrivals experience at Station Pier was written by an Australian guest speaker and described observations formed on visitors as well as passengers embarking and disembarking. From this report, the passengers' pre-conceived notions and expectations described Station Pier as an attractive and welcoming international terminal in a safe and interesting destination.

Despite the disembarkation process being described as satisfactory, the author highlights several facilities that are lacking including currency exchange, shops and cafes with the ability to easily purchase a Myki card, increased tourism information, trolleys for luggage and access for drop-off and pick-up.

The author also emphasises that Station Pier does not ‘tell a story’ of its history like the majority of cruise terminals worldwide. These perceptions are mirrored when examining experiences on various online travel websites such as TripAdvisor (2020), consisting of both international and domestic tourists. While the majority of these reviews are relatively positive, there are some that describe their visit as less than satisfactory (TripAdvisor 2020).

Similar insights are also shared by the local community, as discovered by the Victorian Ports Corporation (2019), in their findings from a community consult program regarding a proposed redevelopment project at Station Pier. Feedback from this report also detailed major areas of improvement and concerns.

Traffic congestion is of a high priority, with most respondents stating that this was a result of cars queuing whilst ships are docking (Victorian Ports Melbourne 2019). There is also a lack of free and paid parking in the surrounding area, and many stated that they avoid the area in the summer cruise season as a result of these factors (Victorian Ports Melbourne 2019).

Station Pier’s entry has been described as ‘unwelcoming’ by both the local community and tourists alike, with the lack of signage providing information on opening times to be confusing (Victorian Ports Melbourne 2019). There is also a strong desire for improved food and beverage options (Victorian Ports Melbourne 2019). Currently, there are three upmarket restaurants, one café and a fish and chips shop located outside of the pier. A small supermarket once existed next to the tram stop, however, this appears to have closed down, further limiting the available options.

## **Recommendations**

The insights provided from both a tourist and local perspective, coupled with a comparison to similar ports worldwide, highlights the need for improvements at Station Pier in order to improve the overall visitor experience. The objective of the provided recommendations is to represent Station Pier as a heritage destination that is informative and appealing to both tourists and locals alike, by focusing on specific attributes and their improvement.

## Terminal Facilities

Enhancing the arrival experience of cruise passengers involves taking into account several factors. When disembarking, visitors desire to feel welcomed, and have preconceived expectations about what the terminal should offer in terms of basic amenities and facilities.

Whilst the current information that is provided to arriving tourists at Station Pier is described as useful, the overall encounter could be improved. A welcoming committee is a simple and effective method to make visitors feel appreciated when arriving at the destination, as they are provided with a direct point of contact that can provide relevant information and answer queries.

As described, currency exchange is one of the main features that tourists seek when arriving, and this service is not always available at Station Pier. Ensuring this is available when cruises are docking is vital to improve the visitor experience as it is considered a necessity. In relation, passengers look for shops when disembarking, and currently there is a kiosk located on the pier, as well as a souvenir store. However, these facilities are viewed as substandard, with little variety available. As Melbourne has a strong reputation for food and beverage, culture and history, this represents a missed opportunity to showcase what the city has to offer.

As Melbourne is recognised as the 'coffee capital' of Australia, partnering with a renowned local café such as St Ali or Industry Beans to offer their products on the pier is an efficient method to emphasise this. By using either the existing kiosk or a unique coffee cart that is often used by businesses around Melbourne, visitors will be able to sample an authentic product. Similarly, the gift store's merchandise can be updated to provide products that promote Melbourne's heritage with high quality souvenirs and local gifts. The ability to purchase a myki card is also viewed as an essential amenity, which could be improved. Providing pre-paid myki visitor packs would remove any confusion or delay surrounding the current process, whilst also making it easy for passengers to use local transport.

Travellers over fifty-five years of age from the United Kingdom and the USA represent the largest demographics of cruise travellers visiting Australia, due to a higher discretionary income and available time for leisure activities (Ibis World 2020). To cater to both markets, trolleys should be offered to assist with luggage as this has been found to be a key element missing from the terminal. As the nearest rideshare and taxi rank area is a considerable distance away (approximately one kilometre), this is particularly significant.

Currently, there is little accessible information on Station Pier's heritage at its location. With so many historical milestones, the significance of the location of is under communicated to arriving visitors. Implementing heritage signage with anecdotes and a timeline of key events would assist with this bridging this gap, as seen at other similar historical ports such as at the Port of Tilbury and Shed 10.

A small museum on the pier may also be beneficial, considering that Melbourne currently does not have a maritime dedicated museum. Improved information at the entrance to the pier would also be beneficial, such as the placement of heritage signage similar to that of Princes Pier (see appendix five), as well as clear communication regarding access hours. Implementing this in a digital method could provide convenience to operating staff, as it could be easily altered to reflect the pier's accurate access hours. This signage could be placed not only at the entrance to the pier, but at the entrance to the pier's road access, which could assist with reducing unnecessary traffic.

Station Pier may also consider using portable infrastructure such as ticket counters, as done at Auckland's Shed 10, which would enable flexibility and allow the pier to function as both a terminal and space for visitors to enjoy when ships aren't docked. There are also several activation areas on the pier which could be added to enhance both cruise passengers' experience as well as other visitors, including the local community. A restaurant would further address the desire for improved food and beverage, whilst also providing an observation area and provide a dual purpose for the pier.

## **Transport**

Transportation represents a major issue for both tourists and locals alike when travelling to and from Station Pier. There is a tram stop located a short distance from the pier's entrance but can be busy during peak periods. As described, the designated area for pick-up and drop-off (including taxis and rideshare) is also a considerable distance away, and there is limited parking available. To address these issues and to also focus on improving the tourist arrival experience, it is suggested that water transport be implemented to ferry passengers to the city centre.

As road congestion has increased in Australia, cities such as Sydney, Brisbane and Perth have encouraged commuters to use ferry services, which has also been favoured by international and domestic tourists (Ibis World 2020). Water-based transport has also been used in other major cruise destinations to move passengers to the city centre, as used at London's International terminal.

While there is no ferry service in Melbourne that operates in conjunction with Myki, as Sydney and Brisbane do with similar one-card networks, the opportunity exists to use current businesses such as Melbourne Water Taxis (2020), which would provide an exciting means of transporting cruise passengers to the city centre. Alternatively, the pier could offer its own transport as this would enable the ability to provide a background of Melbourne's history by passing other important maritime areas before reaching the city centre, such as Princes Pier and Docklands (see appendix six).

Another possible maritime tour is from Station Pier to St Kilda, as there are areas along the bay which are significant to Melbourne's maritime history, such as Lagoon Pier. A heritage style bus would also be an efficient means of promoting Melbourne's maritime history, by following a similar route.

However, unless the current infrastructure is improved, more road transportation may further contribute to traffic congestion. An increase in tram frequency with the addition of an underground carpark including short-term and long-term parking options would be feasible methods to assist with this issue and the notion has been mostly well-received by the local community (Victorian Ports Melbourne 2019). Adding a larger underground carpark would also allow for the removal of the small carpark located directly outside Station Pier, which would enable the ability for the area to be redesigned to manage traffic congestion.

It is also important to recognise that there is currently no link from Station Pier with other significant destinations and there is abundant potential for this to be successful. Offering a direct link to popular tourist locations such as Geelong and Portarlington would be beneficial to further promote Victoria's rich maritime heritage.

## **Surrounding area**

Whilst it is not considered part of Station Pier, the surrounding area is vital to the tourist experience and may be considered as an extension of the pier itself. When arriving passengers disembark and exit the terminal there are little options to enjoy in the immediate area regarding food and beverage. Apart from a few benches located on the boardwalk that leads to Princes Pier, there are limited areas for visitors to enjoy. As a result, visitors are often spotted sitting on nature strips surrounding the small carpark, highlighting the need for increased recreational facilities, including undercover areas.

Further, as mentioned previously, the supermarket that once existed directly next to the tram stop is closed and has further limited options for arriving tourists. Implementing a small Woolworths or Coles in this space would provide tourists to purchase snacks and beverages as well as other essentials. Alternatively, the space could also be used as a café or restaurant, which would improve the current limited options and further emphasise Melbourne's strong reputation for dining.

## **Conclusion**

Station Pier is a structure of historical importance as a vital part of Melbourne's maritime history. As the city's premiere cruise terminal that welcomes thousands of international and domestic guests each year, many pass through its gates without recognising its importance. Additionally, in comparison to other cruise terminals globally, the pier has been viewed as less than impressive. These opinions extend to the local community, who are favourable towards redevelopment in order to not only improve the pier but also conserve its heritage (Victorian Ports Melbourne 2019).

The comparative analysis discovered that London's Port of Tilbury and Auckland's Shed 10 represent the two most similar ports worldwide in terms of function and historical value with use of original structure. From these findings and taking into account Station Pier's merits as a heritage destination, several recommendations were formed to improve the overall visitor experience by focusing on attributes regarding terminal facilities, transport and the immediate area.

To meet arriving cruise passengers' expectations, several elements can be developed and implemented. An improved welcoming committee, accessible currency exchange, trolleys for luggage and improved food and beverage options are key additions. The process of purchasing a myki is also considered essential for arriving passengers and offering pre-paid visitor packs would be an effective technique to make the process easier.

As there is currently minimal information provided on the history of Station Pier, heritage signage with anecdotes and timeline of key historical events should be placed around the wharf. A small museum would also be beneficial, as well as improved signage at the entrance to the pier. This could also include clear communication as to access hours, which has been viewed as confusing by potential visitors. Additionally, similar to Auckland's Shed 10, portable infrastructure could be implemented to enable the pier to function as a terminal and space for visitors when ships aren't docked.

Transport is a major issue for visitors and locals alike, as a result of congestion. Offering a ferry service to transport cruise passengers to the city centre has the potential to reduce this issue whilst also being able to provide a tour of Melbourne's maritime history by passing other significant areas. There is also the potential to offer a boat tour in the direction of St Kilda, or the option of a heritage style bus which could feature the same areas. Offering a direct link to Geelong or Portarlington would also be beneficial as additional maritime destinations.

Finally, improvement in Station Pier's surrounding area would bring further benefits, with the addition of recreational facilities, including increased seating and undercover areas. An improvement in the existing dining options is also important, and the unoccupied building located next to the tram stop which was once a supermarket could be utilised to provide this.

Overall, Station Pier's function as a heritage destination has the potential to offer its visitors a unique and educational experience. The recommendations provided will assist the pier to achieve this by focusing on the visitor experience from a holistic perspective to enhance its history and significance.

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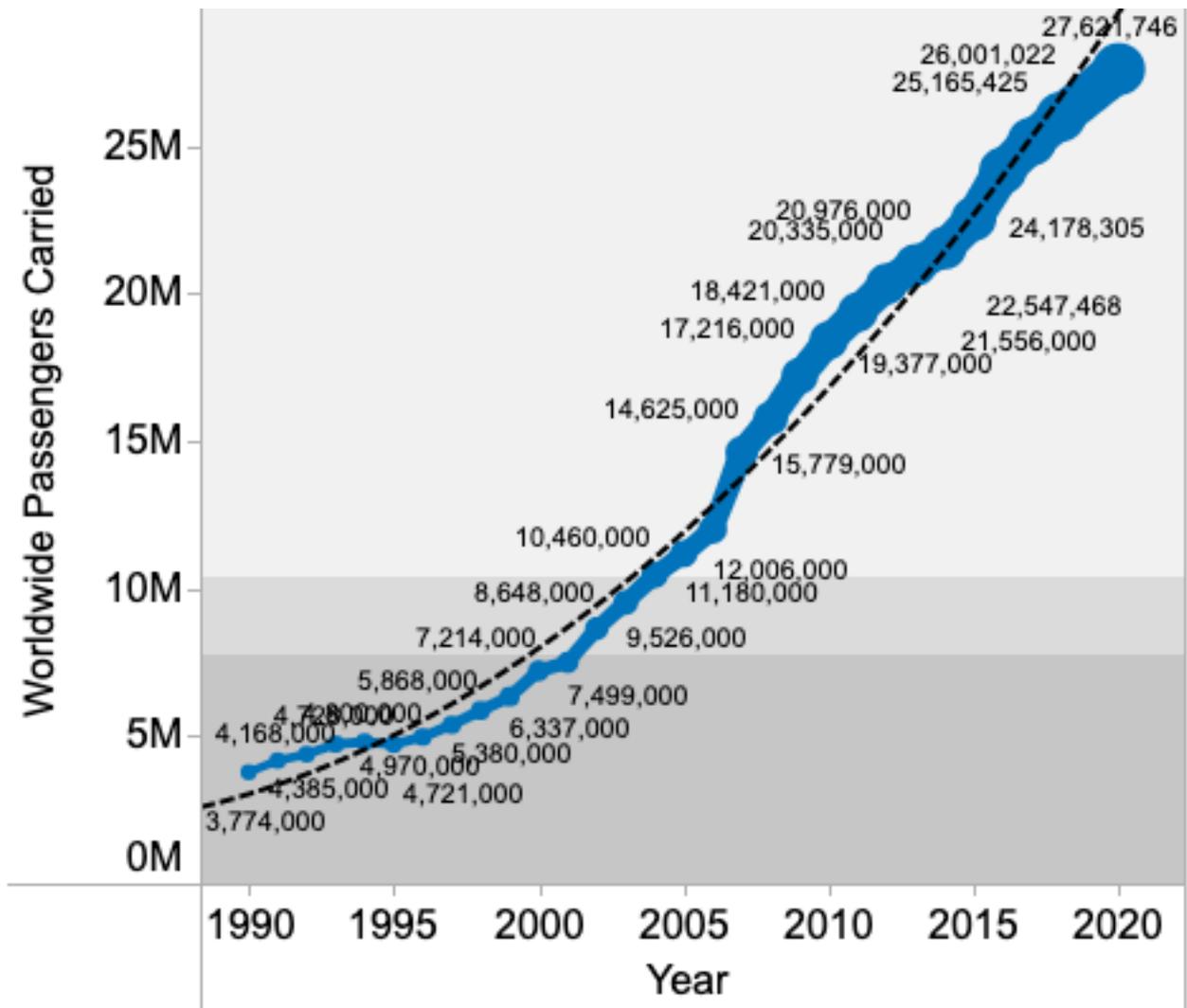
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## Appendices

### Appendix One: Growth of Worldwide Passengers Carried



(Cruise Market Watch 2019)

**Appendix Two: Heritage elements at Port of Tilbury, London**

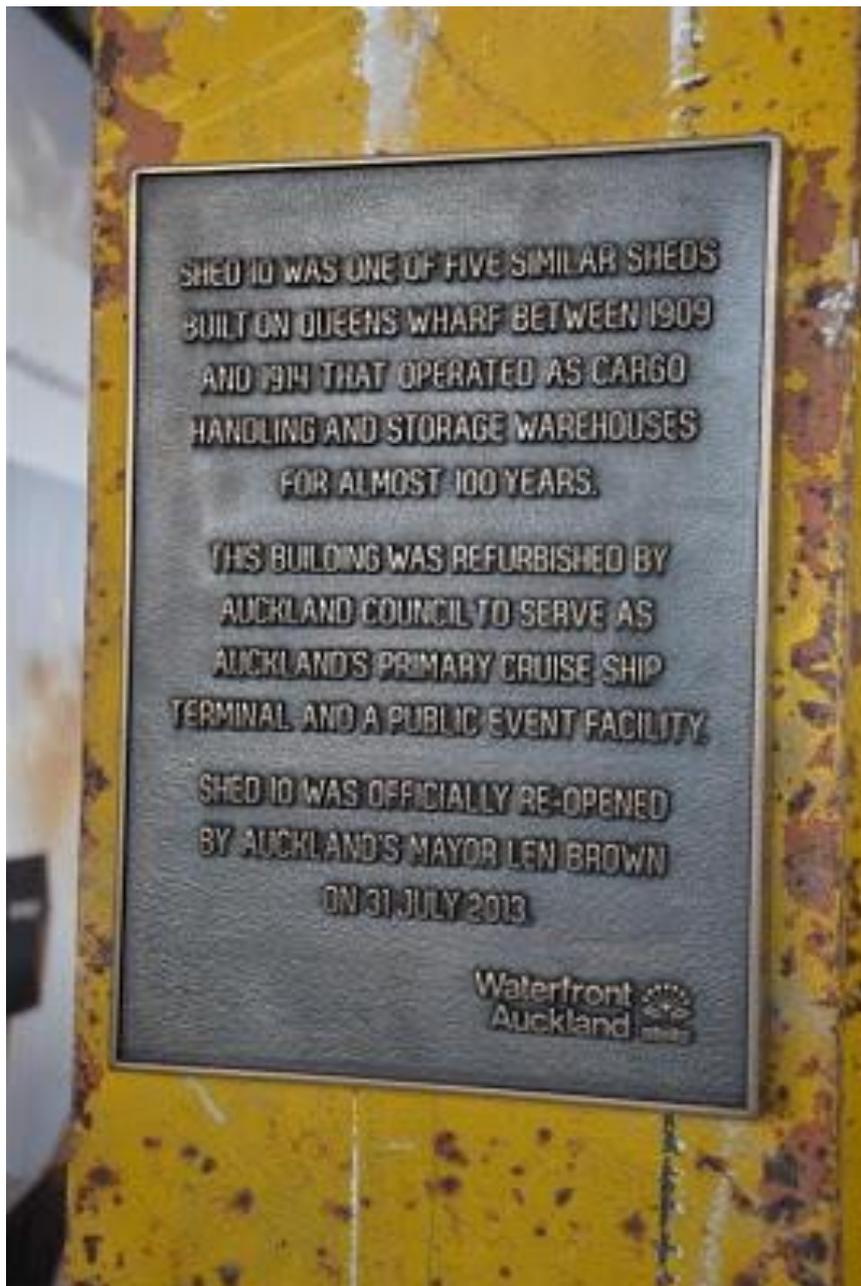


(Yates 2020)



(Yates 2020)

### Appendix Three: Heritage Elements at Shed 10, Auckland



(Cayford 2013)

## Appendix Four: Station Pier, Areas of Significance



### Primary Significance:

- Pier deck and Substructure;
- low-level landing to south of East Kiosk;
- west Wing Pier;
- West Kiosk;
- East Kiosk's 1927 portion;
- Gatehouse;
- palisade fence;
- Inner Terminal building;
- Outer Terminal building;
- Stoher & Pitt portal crane.



### Fabric of Contributory Significance

- (on the Pier deck of Primary Significance):
- East Railway Office (Boat-Train Shelter) and canopy roof;
  - upper-level steel-framed platform at north end of Outer Terminal;
  - Baggage Room and platform at south end of Outer Terminal.



### Fabric of No Significance

- (on the Pier deck of Primary Significance):
- additions to the East Kiosk Building;
  - canopy roof and bus shelter area;
  - membrane roof at north-east corner of Outer Terminal.

### VHR H0985 Station Pier

Permit Policy &  
Exemptions Diagram:  
Cultural Heritage Significance

(Heritage Council Victoria 2018)

Appendix Five: Signage at Princes Pier



## Appendix Six: Ferry Cruise Route

