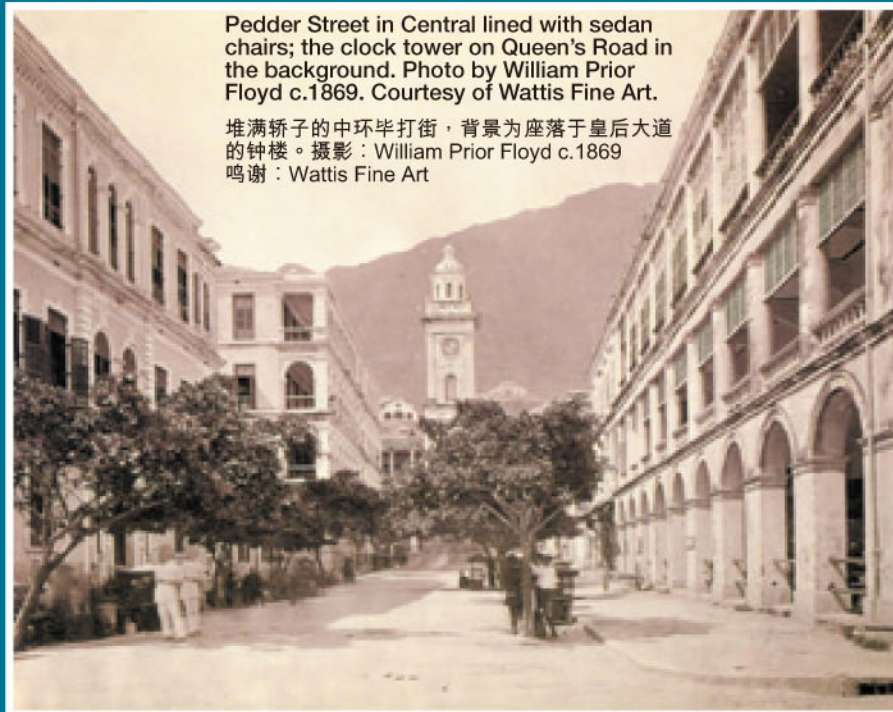


Seated in the Past

Valery Garrett examines the history of Hong Kong's iconic sedan chair.



Sedan chairs and rickshaws waiting outside the Peak rest house next to the Peak Tram terminus, c1930s. Public Records Office, Government Records Service
在靠近山顶缆车总站的休息所外等候的轿子和人力车。(c1930s. 历史档案馆, 香港政府档案处)



Pedder Street in Central lined with sedan chairs; the clock tower on Queen's Road in the background. Photo by William Prior Floyd c.1869. Courtesy of Wattis Fine Art.

堆满轿子的中环半打街, 背景为座落于皇后大道的钟楼。摄影: William Prior Floyd c.1869 鸣谢: Wattis Fine Art

Corner of Queen's Road and Wyndham Street with sedan chairs lined up outside the first Hong Kong Club which opened in 1845. Photo by William Prior Floyd c.1869. Courtesy of Wattis Fine Art.

于1845年启用的首间香港会所门外, 即皇后大道和云咸街交界, 排满多架轿子。摄影: William Prior Floyd c.1869 鸣谢: Wattis Fine Art



The Peak Lookout today, now a popular restaurant, 2010. Valery Garrett

是现今深受欢迎的太平山餐厅, 摄于2010年。相片: Valery Garrett



That well-known symbol of the East, the rickshaw, was still transporting passengers around Hong Kong when I arrived in the early nineteen seventies. Lined up at Star Ferry on both sides of the harbour, runners waited with their two-wheeled carts to carry commuters to the office. But with only one man to pull the rickshaw, it was impossible to scale the steep inclines on Hong Kong Island. The sedan chair is an even older form of human transport that was introduced after the colony was founded in 1841; and elderly residents recall ranks of chairs at the bottom of Wyndham Street in Central waiting to carry passengers up to Mid Levels and the Peak. But once the motor car grew in popularity after the war, the era of the sedan chair was over, and the last one was found abandoned in the mid nineteen sixties.

The sedan chair was borne on the shoulders of bearers in front and behind, often strong Hoklo men from Fujian province, who moved at a loping half trot, the skin on their necks hardened and calloused by the countless loads they carried. The long supporting poles were attached to the chair about two-thirds from the top so the passenger sat up high. The general public travelled in chairs made of bamboo, some open to the elements, others were covered with a dusty black oil-cloth, and carried by two groaning bearers. In swanky four-bearer chairs covered with a blue cloth and decorated with braid and tassels, wealthy merchants usually sat with the door closed, stifled by the heat, bumping and swaying and peering through small curtained windows.

Some private companies had liveried bearers, the number increasing with status, and 10 per chair was not uncommon. The Governor's bearers were a colourful sight with their scarlet coats, white knickerbockers and bright red straw hats as they carried their esteemed passenger up Old Peak Road to his summer retreat high above on Mount Austin at The Peak.

With its cooling breezes and lower temperatures, the Peak became the place of choice for many rich families once the Peak Tram was completed in 1888. George Benjamin Dodwell was a wealthy businessman who built a large Spanish style house in the 1890s which he named La Hacienda on Mount Kellett Road. He

founded a prosperous trading company in the late 20th century, and many can remember Dodwell Motors and especially Dodwell Stores on Queen's Road Central, which carried a selection of Marks and Spencer clothing displayed on open wooden counters. Dodwell lived with his wife and four children, with two European governesses and a staff of some 24 Chinese servants, including 12 sedan chair bearers to carry the family to and from the Peak tram half a mile away.

Chair coolies were not against deceiving inexperienced customers, as a visitor of Mrs Dodwell's found out. When returned to the Tram terminus, this visitor had offered 50 cents as payment, to which the coolie, on receiving it, stared at his palm as if to say it wasn't enough. The lady was about to add more when Mrs Dodwell caught up to them and promptly took back the 50 cents and paid the correct fare of 20 cents, all to the great amusement of the other coolies around.

For those who didn't employ their own bearers, chairs could be hired. In 1932, the Hong Kong government set the rate at 15 cents for 10 minutes with two bearers, rising to 80 cents for one hour with four bearers. Rest stations were placed around the colony, and one small pavilion remains at the start of Mount Kellett Road, built in a Chinese style with green glazed roof tiles and red balustrades, shaded by overhanging trees. This provided shelter for these itinerant coolies from the hot sun and heavy summer rains while they rested and waited for residents to hail them for the run down to the tram.

At the Peak Tram terminus, there was a much larger rest house built in 1900, which fell into disuse during the war and in 1952 was converted into a cafeteria. For many years it operated as the Peak Café, famous for its Hainan Chicken rice dish, but the former terminus has been now transformed into the popular Peak Lookout restaurant. Even though the sedan chair has long gone, it's still possible to revisit its habitat and reminisce about Hong Kong's past over a memorable meal.

Valery Garrett has lived in Hong Kong since 1973 and is the author of eleven books and numerous articles on people and places in Hong Kong and China. See www.valerygarrett.com

人力轿子

Valery Garrett介绍香港历史标记的人力轿子, 带你见证它昔日的贡献。

众所周知, 人力车是东方社会的象征之一。我在1970年代初来到香港, 当时仍然随处可见人力车在街上接送乘客。维港两岸的天星码头更驻扎了不少车夫, 拖着他们两轮的人力车接载乘客到公司上班。不过, 单靠一个车夫拉的人力车, 不可能爬上香港岛陡峭的山坡。于是, 在香港成为殖民地以后, 出现了一种更古老的人力运输工具—轿子。只要是老一辈的人, 都会记得中环云咸街街尾常常排着一列轿子, 等候客人雇上半山及山顶。可是, 自从汽车的数量在战后越来越多, 轿子的时代亦逐渐式微, 最后一架轿子在1960年代中期被发现弃用。

轿子是由两个轿夫一前一后扛在肩上, 很多轿夫都是来自福建省的「鹤佬」(泛指福建男人), 他们抬着轿子大步慢跑, 因为肩上重重的负担, 脖子上青筋暴现, 而且面无表情。长长的轿杆连接著坐椅从量度三分之二的位置, 让乘客坐上轿子后「高人一等」。一般市民大众所雇的轿子都是用竹椅, 当中部份轿子更无任何遮挡, 有些则挂著一块积满灰尘的黑色油布挡太阳, 由两个喘著气的轿夫抬扛。富有商人则坐四人抬扛的轿子, 以蓝布覆盖, 并用一些编织物和纓穗作装饰, 当轿门关上后, 内里闷热翳焯, 随著轿夫的步伐颠簸摇摆, 只能从挂上帘子的小窗窥探外面的街道。有些私人公司甚至聘请自己的轿夫, 规定他们穿上制服; 地位越高的人用越多轿夫抬轿子, 一架轿子十个人抬也不是甚么新奇事。至于, 港督的轿夫则带来色彩鲜艳的画面, 因为他们身穿深红的外套和白色灯笼裤, 还戴著鲜红色的草帽, 接送港督沿旧山顶道前往柯士甸山上避暑。

在1888年山顶缆车完工后, 因为山顶有著清涼的微风, 而且气温也比较低, 所以成为很多富豪家族的首选居住地。富商George Benjamin Dodwell便在1890年代于加列山道兴建了一幢西班牙风格的大宅, 命名为La Hacienda。他所创办的贸易公司在20世纪后半的生意十分兴旺, 很多人都记得Dodwell汽车这个品牌, 尤其是位于皇后大道中的Dodwell Stores, 开放式的木柜台陈列著一系列马莎百货的衣裳。Dodwell家里除了太太和四名子女, 还有两位欧洲女家庭教师及大约24

个中国佣人, 包括12个轿夫接送家人转乘半里外的山顶缆车。

另一方面, Dodwell太太的访客发现, 山下抬轿的苦力尝试从经验不足的乘客身上多赚些钱。当她的朋友打算回去缆车总站的时候, 拿出了五毛钱给一个苦力, 但那人接过后, 盯著手掌, 像在示意她付的钱不够。这位女士本想再多给一点, 这时Dodwell太太追上来, 迅速拿回那五毛钱, 只付了两毛钱的正价, 让旁边的苦力大笑一场。

至于, 那些自己没有轿夫的人, 则可以在街上雇用轿子。在1932年, 香港政府规定乘坐两人抬扛的轿子10分钟, 需付费一毛五分钱, 而四人抬的轿子, 坐一小时需付八毛钱。城内各处都有给轿夫歇息的站所, 其中一个亭阁到现在还屹立于加列山道入口, 中式的建筑风格有著绿色釉面瓦顶和红色栏杆, 在树荫下见证了几许风雨。它为到处卖力的轿夫提供一个遮挡酷热阳光和躲避滂沱夏雨的地方, 让他们在这里休息和等候需要坐轿的客人召唤。除此以外, 在山顶缆车总站还有一个更大的休息处, 建于1900年, 于战时遭废弃, 及后在1952年变成小卖亭。往后多年, 这地方以山顶餐厅之名经营, 并以海南鸡饭闻名, 但现在已变身成为另一间深受受欢迎的餐厅—太平山餐厅。尽管人力轿子这种交通工具已经绝迹, 但我们仍可以重游它昔日出没的地方, 还可以享受一顿美味佳肴。■

Valery Garrett自1973年起居于香港, 有11本著作, 并撰有大量文章, 描写香港及中国的人物地貌。请浏览www.valerygarrett.com。