

## CHAPTER X

## A NEW BRIDGE AND A NEW PIER

By 1907 the drawbridge was in need of replacement. Mr. J. B. Brodie, C.E., Glasgow was accordingly appointed consulting engineer, his remit being to advise the Trustees on:— the replacement of the existing bascule bridge by a new structure on similar lines (the structure of the bridge to cost not over £500); an extension of Albert Pier seawards with an alternative extension of the pier inwards into the Outer Harbour; the throwing of about 15 to 20 feet of the area of the Outer Harbour into the roadway of Albert Place; the widening of the entrance to the Inner Harbour and repairing of the piers there and the repair of the stair at the entrance to the Inner Harbour. Borings were taken adjacent to Albert Pier.

Mr. Brodie's suggestions and estimates were as follows:—

|                                                                                                                                               |              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| (1) Extension of Albert Pier seawards                                                                                                         | £3,150:--d.  |
| (2) Dredging in connection therewith (minimum depth 8 feet)                                                                                   | 650:--d.     |
| (3) Supersession of existing drawbridge by swingbridge (offices not removed) and reconstruction of stair alongside (width of opening 24 feet) | 2,010:--d.   |
| (4) Widening of Albert Place                                                                                                                  | 1,750:--d.   |
| (5) Cargo berth alongside cattle pens                                                                                                         | 2,750:--d.   |
|                                                                                                                                               | <hr/>        |
|                                                                                                                                               | £10,310:--d. |

On 9th September 1907 Mr. Brodie's report and recommendations received the unanimous support of the Trustees who instructed their Clerk to obtain the necessary Statutory Authority.

The replacement of the drawbridge and relative widening of the harbour mouth did not require Parliamentary approval, accordingly detailed plans and specifications were prepared immediately and the work put out to tender. One condition of the job was to be that the new bridge was to be completed not later than 20th March 1908.

The plans for the proposed new swingbridge were approved by the Board of Trade and on 9th December 1907 the contract was awarded to George Halliday Ltd., who offered

to carry out the job for £2180.

At 1.00 p.m. on 20th May 1908 Provost Robert Burness formally opened the new bridge. Although the bridge was exactly two months late in being completed, it was well worth waiting for. In place of the old wood and iron drawbridge which had opened upwards in two sections, was a single modern steel swingbridge. The bridge was pivoted at the north side of the harbour mouth and opened into the Inner Harbour over a specially constructed low wooden pier. The new bridge was opened and closed by a manually operated winding handle which was situated on the deck of the bridge.

The passage through Parliament of the Provisional Order promoted by the Trustees in 1907 was no smoother than the passage of the 1898 Order. Objections were lodged by Mr. John Williamson, Turbine Steamers Ltd., Buchanan Steamers Ltd., and the Glasgow and South Western Railway Company Ltd. The Fishery Board lodged observations as to possible disadvantages to the fishery industry.

A meeting between the Trustees and the objectors did not produce a solution and a Hearing was accordingly held by the Board of Trade on 13th March 1908. The Provisional Order issued by the Board contained permission for extending Albert Pier and Albert Place and for dredging, but not for the proposed cargo berth at the cattle pens. Even then, the objectors were not satisfied and resumed their attack by petitioning against the Bill introduced into Parliament to confirm the Provisional Order. A further meeting took place between the Trustees and the objectors whose ranks had been swelled by David MacBrayne Ltd. On this occasion sense prevailed and an agreement was reached.

The Trustees agreed—

(a) to a clause (number 23) being inserted in the Order requiring that henceforth through and transfer steamers should be berthed only at the front pier.

(b) to a provision being inserted in the Order requiring the Trustees before commencing work on the new Albert Quay wall to obtain an undertaking from the Town Council to pay for filling up the space behind the new harbour wall and to form

and maintain in all time coming a road and footpath thereon, and

(c) to abandon their proposals for a cargo berth at the catile pens.

In return the Albert Pier and Albert Quay extensions were allowed to proceed on condition the Trustees undertook *inter alia* to erect an efficient crane on and berth special excursion traffic at Albert Pier.

On 1st August 1908 the Pier and Harbour Order Confirmation (No. 3) Act 1908 became law. The hurdle had been cleared even if it had been touched in passing.

The works authorised by section 7 of the Order were as follows:—

Work A: A widening and extension seawards of the existing Albert Pier on the north east and north west sides thereof for a distance of 63 yards or thereabouts commencing at a point in the bed of the existing harbour 35 yards or thereabouts north east of the northern corner of the existing Albert Pier and terminating at or near the south west corner of the said pier.

Work B: An extension of Albert Quay westwards *ex adverso* of Albert Place for a distance of 85 yards or thereabouts commencing at a point on the north face of Albert Quay 11 yards or thereabouts distant from the intersection of the said Albert Quay with the existing north side of Albert Place and terminating at a point on the east side of the mid pier 6 yards or thereabouts distant from the intersection of the said mid pier with the existing north side of Albert Place.

Work D: The dredging an approach to the widening and extension of Albert Pier described as Work A and deepening the approach through the existing outer harbour to the existing inner harbour.

Work A was to be constructed of open piling and Work B was to be solid throughout.

Section 16 of the Order authorised the Trustees to borrow an additional £8000.

While the Provisional Order was proceeding through



Parliament Mr. Brodie made a detailed inspection of the old timber portion of the front pier. His report is worth recording *ad longum*.

"It appears from the records of the Harbour Trust that this work was carried out in the year 1867.

For the purpose of our report we divide the old portion of the Front Pier under review into two parts, viz:—

First: That part having sheet piling in front of the original stone quay wall extending in length to 260 feet from the east end of the Front Pier, and

Second: That part in continuation of above having no sheet piling in front of the old wall and extending in length to 308 feet.

In dealing with the first part, and speaking generally, we found the timber structure in a very fair state of preservation, but would direct your attention more specifically to the following points.

1st. On entering underneath at the East end where the old wooden portion of the Pier forms the major portion of width of the Front Pier we found the corner defective through want of sufficient strutting and we recommend that a system of strutting be put in here.

2nd. Proceeding further inside we were struck with the uniformity of defect in the lower halves of the Greenheart diagonal bracings, especially those next the old stone quay wall and in contact with the concrete behind the sheet piling. Several of these bracings have been scarfed or joined and are in a weak condition. We consider that twenty five of them require renewal — the remainder, although reduced from their original size, are still fit for their work and do not require renewal for some time to come.

3rd. The main Greenheart Piles throughout this part of the work vary in extent of deterioration. The majority of them are in a sound condition and show little signs of decay. There are, however, fifteen which we specially noted as being so badly eaten away that we recommend their renewal. All the timber work above water level is in a good state of preservation.

4th. Coming now to the concrete and sheet piling in front of the old stone wall which averages 2 ft. 9 ins. in width and which has been put there for the purpose of protecting the

foundation of the old stone quay wall, we found this most defective. There is an appearance of concrete on the top behind the sheeting, but on more careful inspection it reveals itself to be loose stones without any cementitious matter. This work would require to be repaired, and the most economical and expeditious method of doing so would be to grout the porous concrete with cement having previously erected a temporary screen in front of the old sheet piling in order to retain the grout. After the grouting was completed a layer of concrete would be deposited forming a cope between the old sheeting and the wall.

The specific points alluded to above are matters of ordinary maintenance charges pertaining to structures of this kind from time to time, and in no way do they suggest that this part of the old pier is unfit for the duty it has to perform. We believe that if these recommendations pertaining to this portion of the old pier were carried out it would serve its purpose for many years to come.

Regarding the second portion of the old pier before referred to we are pleased to be able to report that with the exception of a few minor defects it is in a sound and satisfactory condition."

Only seven weeks after the 1908 Act became law the Trustees awarded a contract for extending Albert Pier and Albert Place. The successful bidders were George Halliday Ltd. The contract price for the open Greenheart pier extension and associated dredging was £3741:15:4d. and for the solid Albert Place wall was £1744:18:3d. D. Watson and Co., of Glasgow were awarded the contract for supplying a 6 ton crane with a 22 feet radius for the extended pier at a cost of £174:10:-d.

As in 1899 the improvements to the harbour had to be financed by the Town Council borrowing funds and relending them to the Harbour Trust.

The extended Albert Pier was officially opened in May 1909 even although the Trustees had again omitted the formality of obtaining a title to the sea bed for the extension. The ever watchful Board of Trade drew the matter to the attention of the Trustees who duly paid the £2 demanded and in return received a Feu Disposition which was recorded in

the New Particular Register of Sasines for the Royal Burgh of Rothesay on 23rd February 1910.

Early in 1911 the Trustees approved plans for a building on Albert Pier to provide storage accommodation for goods and public lavatories. The inhabitants of East Princes Street and Battery Place were not enamoured and arranged for a Petition against the proposal to be lodged on their behalf by local solicitors. The residents of the Bogany and Craigmore districts also objected as did David MacBrayne Ltd., and Captain John Williamson.

The objections fell on deaf ears and the building was duly erected at a total cost of £630:8:1d. The building was positioned on the original solid section of the pier with its rear wall flush with the north east face of the pier.

The years immediately before the Kaiser's War were undoubtedly the hey-day of the Clyde River Steamers and were years when thousands of Glaswegians and inhabitants of the other industrial towns of the central belt flocked to Rothesay, Dunoon, Largs and Millport for their annual holidays. The passenger traffic passing over Rothesay pier was immense and led to considerable congestion.

On 6th April 1911 the Harbour Master reported to the Harbour Committee:—

"There is occasionally great congestion of passenger traffic on the pier which is due to a variety of causes.

Passengers landing are materially inconvenienced by the general public crowding round the gangway exits to meet their friends, and the agents and their staff are hampered in their efforts to place the gangways for the same reason.

The necessary landing of luggage and goods carried by every steamer close to the passenger gangways causes confusion which is unavoidable and difficult to deal with effectually. This is most apparent in the case of the Wemyss Bay steamers which have often no margin of time between arrival and departure, and especially so at the end of a month or on busy Saturdays. This congestion is increased by the presence of porters' barrows and the lorries employed in the immediate removal of goods, and the agents are being constantly urged to remove such goods as expeditiously as it is possible to do so.

The congestion due to the extra Excursion traffic has been lessened by the use of Albert Pier and it is possible more may be done in this direction."

During this period of intense activity the centenary was celebrated of the launch in 1812 of Henry Bell's Comet which had resulted in the Clyde watering places becoming accessible to so many. To mark the event the Harbour Trustees donated £20 to a foundation to inaugurate Henry Bell scholarships in the Glasgow Royal Technical College.