

## CHAPTER XII

## OPPOSITION

During the internationally famous Clyde Fortnight in 1920 His Majesty King George V's yacht "Britannia" won the Trophy which had been presented by the Town Council and Harbour Trust. On 11th July His Majesty visited the Town accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Mary and the Princess Mary. The Royal party landed at the steps which had been built in 1899 at the head of the old west pier. After the visit a plaque was erected to commemorate the visit and the steps were officially named "The King's Stair." The plaque unfortunately is now at the bottom of the harbour. When the steps were being demolished in 1972 the plaque fractured in two and gravity did the rest.

Towards the end of 1919 a remit was made to Mr J. B. Brodie to produce plans for the provision of additional cargo berths at the harbour. On 2nd August 1920 the results of Mr. Brodie's deliberations were laid before the Harbour Trustees. Mr. Brodie's plan was for a northeastward extension of Albert Pier, the reclamation of the area between the existing piled section of Albert Pier and the Battery Place promenade wall, and the reclamation of the area between Albert Quay and a line drawn southwestwards in continuation of the face of Albert Pier from the southwest corner of the Pier to Albert Place. The extension was to be of open piling. The reclamation works were to be retained behind solid harbour walls. The estimated cost of the work was £9000.

Mr. Brodie's plan was approved by the Trustees and in 1921 a Provisional Order was prepared for approval by the Board of Trade. The following works were proposed:—

- A.: A Harbour Wall 210 feet in length commencing at a point on the Harbour Wall fronting Albert Place 8 feet distant measuring in a westerly direction along said wall from the south east corner of the Outer Harbour and terminating at the southwest end of Albert Pier and the filling of the space between the proposed Harbour Wall and the face of Albert Quay.
- B.: An extension of Albert Pier 100 feet seawards in a north

northeasterly direction on the same line of frontage as the existing Albert Pier.

C.: A Retaining Wall commencing at a point on the north face of the old Albert Quay measuring 8 feet westwards from the west end of the store and lavatories situated there and terminating at the end of the existing Albert Pier and the filling in of the space between the proposed retaining wall and the existing sea wall.

D. and E.: Dredging.

What a magnificent end-loading car ferry berth these extensions would have provided.

Objections were not slow to materialise. A joint objection was lodged by The Glasgow and South Western Railway Company, David MacBrayne Ltd., Turbine Steamers Ltd., Williamson-Buchanan Steamers Ltd., and Clyde Cargo Steamers Ltd., and a separate objection was lodged by each of the North British Railway Company, the local fishermen, and the Ratepayers of the Burgh led by Dr. James B. Lawson. The Ratepayers' opposition was organised at a public meeting held in the Norman Stewart Institute on 9th December 1920 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Lawson. Mr. Thomas MacLagan of Rothesay, the present writer's grandfather, was appointed to prepare the objections.

A meeting between the Trustees and the principal objectors failed to produce a solution. Despite the formidable opposition the Trustees, by a majority, decided to press ahead with their application.

On 2nd May 1921 the Ministry of Transport held a Public Inquiry within the Sheriff Court House in Rothesay. The outcome was success for the objectors. In the opinion of the Minister:— "It appeared at the Inquiry that several alternative schemes to that embodied in the draft Order were worthy of consideration and that one or other of these, if modified in certain respects, might avoid the objections raised to the present scheme while effecting the objects which the promoters have in view. While, therefore, the Minister is of opinion that a case has been established for effecting an improvement in the facilities for handling passenger and cargo traffic at the Harbour, he would suggest that the Trustees should reconsider their proposals in the light of the evidence given at the Inquiry

and should at the same time consider the alternative schemes suggested, and that they should embody the result of their further consideration in a new draft Order to be promoted in the next or a later session."

A meeting with Ministry officials produced the information that while admitting the need for additional pier accommodation to deal with goods traffic the Minister was of the opinion that for financial reasons the scheme had to be postponed. As a temporary measure the sea bed adjacent to Albert Pier was dredged in 1922 so as to make the Pier accessible at low water, and the back of the Pier was boarded up in an effort to prevent further silting up. Albert Pier was never extended and a new cargo berth never materialised.

On 12th May 1924 Treasurer George Hicks gave notice of a motion which 50 years later would still be appropriate. The motion was:— "That it be remitted to the Harbour Committee to consider and report on the advisability of providing a slip on the Main Pier for motors and other vehicular traffic." After considering two plans prepared by Mr. Alexander Stephen, the Harbour Engineer, the Trustees decided that it was not desirable to have such a slip constructed because one was not needed and also because the construction of one would weaken the pier as it would be necessary to remove a pile. One of Mr. Stephen's plans was for an adjustable ramp; the other was for a series of fixed slips to take account as far as possible of the rise and fall of the tide. Both the ramp and the slips were envisaged as being constructed at the front of the pier to abut the sides of the steamers.

In 1926 the Albert Quay crane was removed, it having become redundant.

In 1927 Mr. Stephen submitted plans for new turnstiles which it was proposed should be erected at the main entrance to the pier. The plans were after the style of the existing pier buildings. Contracts were awarded to individual contractors in September and the work was completed the following April. The total cost of the job was approximately £1250.

Motor vehicles again appeared on the Agenda of the Trustees in 1929 when on 14th January Mr. James Fisher, one of the Town Council representatives on the Trust, moved:—

"That with a view to the safe and expeditious embarkation and disembarkation of motor cars at Rothesay Pier the Harbour Committee be directed to make full enquiry and to report as to the cost of and erection of an electric crane and equipment of suitable power for that and general purposes of trade. Further that the Harbour Committee be empowered to interview the Caledonian Steam Packet Company on the matter of transport charges for motor cars from and to Wemyss Bay and Rothesay and to ascertain if the Company would be prepared to consider the introduction of improved appliances for handling motor traffic." Although the motion received the unanimous support of the Trustees and a discussion took place with the Packet Company naught came of the suggestion. In relation to costs it is worth recording that the charge for shipping a light car from Wemyss Bay to Rothesay at that time was £1.5:-d. The charge at the beginning of 1974 was not so very different — £1.10 for a vehicle up to 12 feet, £1.43 from 12 to 15 feet and £1.76 over 15 feet.

1933 was the first year for which returns were kept of the numbers of persons passing through the turnstiles on the pier. The numbers — 726,171 in all — reflect a bye-gone era of the popularity of the Clyde Coast.

In January 1934 the Clerk to the Trustees received a letter from Rothesay Merchants' Association asking the Trust to alter Rothesay Pier so that motor cars could be loaded and unloaded from steamers at any stage of the tide and stating that the L.M. and S. Railway were prepared to make similar alterations at Wemyss Bay Pier. The Railway Company confirmed their willingness to alter Wemyss Bay Pier provided Rothesay Pier was altered by the Trustees. A mechanically operated lift inserted in the front of the pier was in contemplation but for the third time nothing materialised.