

CHAPTER XIII

NEW BUILDINGS AND THE
SECOND WAR

On 29th August 1935 Mr. James Fisher, the author of the 1929 motion, raised the question of the possible extension of the Main Pier and the reconstruction of the pier buildings. Mr. J. B. Brodie was again appointed consulting engineer and instructed to prepare plans. The following April Mr. M. Purdon Smith was appointed to design the proposed new buildings.

Detailed plans were submitted to the Harbour Committee on 22nd September 1936. The estimated cost of the improvements — £50,747 — was not surprisingly considered by the Committee to be beyond the means of the Harbour Trust. The improvements were accordingly pruned, the proposed work being confined to the rebuilding of the offices and waiting rooms and consequential extensions of the back of the main pier 34 feet into the inner harbour and 19 feet into the outer harbour. It was envisaged that the modified scheme would cost approximately £33,000.

After further minor adjustments were made it was resolved on 8th February 1937 to apply for a Provisional Order for the following works:

- Work A: A widening to 34 feet southwards into the Inner Harbour of that portion of the Front Pier between the West Pier and the Mid Pier commencing at a point on the east side of the West Pier distant 245 feet from the southwest corner of the Inner Harbour and terminating at a point on the west side of the mid pier distant 38 feet northwards from the north face of the entrance to the Inner Harbour.
- Work B: A widening southwards into the Outer Harbour of the east arm of the Front Pier varying in width from 25 feet to 0 feet commencing at a point on the east side of the mid pier distant 35 feet northwards from the north face of the entrance to the Inner Harbour and terminating at the north end of the circular knuckle on the south east corner of the Front Pier.
- Work C: The dredging of 6500 cubic yards or thereby of

material from the area of the Outer Harbour between the east arm of the Front Pier and the Albert Quay Wall.

Parliamentary approval was not of course required for the erection of the proposed new buildings.

True to form an objection to the draft Order was lodged with the Board of Trade. It was, however, only of a minor nature relating to the removal of stranded or sunken vessels which came under the jurisdiction of the Clyde Pilotage Authority. The matter was resolved and the Rothesay Harbour Order 1937 became law with the passing of the Rothesay Harbour Order Act 1937 on 22nd December that year.

The preamble to the Order narrates that the indebtedness of the Trustees amounted as at 30th September 1936 to the sum of £1113:7:1d, that the Trustees had borrowed and expended the whole of the monies they were authorised to raise and that it was expedient that they should be authorised to borrow additional money for widening the pier, dredging, erecting new pier buildings and procuring a travelling crane.

To carry out these works the Trustees were authorised by section 28 of the Order to borrow £33,000 and with the consent of the Secretary of State for Scotland such further sums as might be required.

The Order was largely concerned with financial matters. Section 38 is however worth considering in detail. Over the years the practice had grown up of the Town Council borrowing sums required for capital expenditure on the harbour, pledging the Common Good in security thereof, and relending the borrowed money to the Harbour Trust who gave a Bond to the Town Council. This was necessary because, as has already been noted, the Harbour Trust could not attract capital itself. The Town Council itself had experienced difficulty in satisfying lenders of the security offered so advantage was taken of the Provisional Order to authorise the Town Council to act as cautioners to the Harbour Trust on money borrowed by the Trustees. This scheme was intended to add considerably to the security which could be offered to lenders and facilitate the obtaining of loans.

By February 1938 inflation had added £5000 to the estimated cost of the work taking the total to £38,000. In an

effort to offset this increase in cost the Trustees decided on the advice of their engineer to construct Work B — the extension into the outer harbour — of reinforced concrete instead of wood. This had the effect of reducing the cost of Works A, B and C from an estimated £19,424:18:4d. to an estimated £17,185:5:11d. which was only £223:8:11d. over the Parliamentary estimate. The engineering work was awarded on 9th September to John Adam and Co. Ltd. of Glasgow at a contract price of £16,185:8:11d. The remaining £1000 was a provision for professional fees including a Clerk of Works.

Work started almost immediately and by March 1939 it was envisaged that the west portion would be finished by the end of June and the east portion by the end of the year and that the foundations for the proposed new buildings would be ready by the end of October.

On 12th June 1939 Mr. M. Purdon Smith's plans for the new pier buildings were approved by the Trustees and Mr. Smith was instructed to prepare a specification in order that offers could be taken in July. On 31st August 1939 the offers which had been received for the construction of the new buildings were placed before the Harbour Committee. The Minutes forebodingly recorded: "In view of the present International situation the Committee continue consideration of these offers." The little Austrian was to ensure that consideration was never resumed, the Trustees resolving on 11th September that work on the buildings should not proceed.

During the period of the war the only work which was carried out on the structure of the pier, apart from normal repairs, was the rebuilding of the north east corner of the front pier. The old stone wall was strengthened by having its base sheet-piled in steel and the open structure rebuilt in reinforced concrete. The contractors were John Adam and Co. Ltd., who unfortunately were forced into liquidation as a result of the contract.

Above deck level, however, a proliferation of sheds appeared for Admiralty use. Although rents were paid for use of sheds and offices the Admiralty were exempt from paying harbour dues by virtue of section 19 of the 1831 Act. The dues lost by the Trust were very considerable and resulted in a loss of revenue from which the Trust never really recovered. Unlike

the position which existed during World War I there was no untapped source of revenue available during World War II.

The only compensation which the Trust received was (a) £1500 from the Admiralty plus the residual value of three huts built on the Pier at Admiralty expense this being "in view of the excellent co-operation extended to the Government by the Harbour Trustees during the war which involved the extensive use, without charge, of harbour facilities," (b) a further sum of £211:4:11d. in respect of deterioration of Albert Pier during the period of the Admiralty's requisition and (c) £589:10:-d. from the Government in respect of War Damage.

World War II was the last nail in the coffin of nearby Craigmore Pier. The pier by 1940 was in need of repair and in need of strengthening to fit it for modern passenger steamers. On 23rd May that year the New Craigmore Pier Company's solicitors wrote to the Clerk to the Harbour Trustees advising him of their clients' proposal to demolish the pier and asking whether the Trustees had any observations to make. The only remnants of the pier are its stone head and buildings and a brass name plate on the door of the solicitors' office.