

CHAPTER XIV

THE POST WAR YEARS

In 1947 fresh plans were drawn up for new passenger buildings for the Main Pier and for additional goods buildings for Albert Pier.

During this period after the war, building materials were in such short supply that the Trustees had the greatest difficulty in getting materials even for repairing the pier. It is not therefore surprising that initially the Government refused to grant a building licence for the Albert Pier buildings. The buildings never materialised, for by 1951 when the Trustees were in a position to erect the buildings, the Caledonian Steam Packet Company were on the verge of providing new vessels capable of carrying cargo and passengers and it was expedient that both should be handled at the Main Pier rather than at Albert Pier. The contract for the new goods shed for Albert Pier was allowed to lapse and three years later its place was taken by a 40 feet by 30 feet shed to the north of the turnstiles at the main entrance to the Main Pier.

The proposed passenger buildings received consideration by the Trustees for nearly ten years, the discussions lasting on and off from 26th December 1946 to 13th September 1956.

The probability of dual purpose vessels being placed on the Rothesay run also resulted in the Trustees on 1st November 1951 commissioning Messrs. Babbie, Shaw and Morton, Civil Engineers, Glasgow to produce plans for extending the Main Pier westwards to provide additional space for handling the traffic which was envisaged.

Both main pier projects ran in parallel. On 21st January 1952 an adjusted scheme was approved by a majority of the Trustees. The Trust's architect, Mr. M. Purdon Smith, estimated the combined project as finally adjusted by the Trustees would

cost no less than £88,110 made up as follows:—

Pier Extension (1485 sq. yds.)	£22,275:--d.
Goods sheds etc.	9,800:--d.
Adjustments to walls and fences etc.	2,100:--d.
Reconstructions	950:--d.
Turnstiles etc.	4,422:--d.
Downtakings	1,200:--d.
New Pier Buildings	44,160:--d.
Allowance for increase in price	3,203:--d.
	£88,110:--d.

The 21st January decision was an unhappy one and was reversed on 26th November 1953 when it was decided by a majority to defer consideration on the question of the extension until a test had been made by the dual purpose vessels in operation at the pier and information had been obtained with regard to their operation elsewhere. It was also unanimously decided to delay further consideration of the new pier buildings until the question of the extension was again before the Trust.

The dual purpose vessels came into operation on the Rothesay to Wemyss Bay run on 1st October 1954, the first vessel on the run being the Cowal. The event was to be one of the most significant in the history of the harbour, its repercussions being felt right to the present time.

Discussions about new pier buildings were reopened on 10th May 1954 and closed on 13th September 1956 again without any buildings materialising. The reason for the project being shelved a second time was that an underwater survey of the Main Pier made in 1956 revealed that some £28,000 worth of repairs were required. Of the 450 wooden piles examined, 55 were found to be in need of attention and the weakest of the remaining 395 were estimated to have a life of only 20 years. 14 of the 55 defective piles were grouped together at the east end of the pier which was found to be dangerous. The cost of repairing this section of the pier alone was estimated at £8,000. Such expense was too large to be met from revenue and put new buildings well outwith the reach of the Trustees. The repiling programme was spread over

the five financial years 1956-57 to 1960-61 and in total entailed expenditure of £30,478:12:3d. which compared favourably with the original estimate of £28,000 taking into account the increases in the cost of labour and materials during the intervening years.

In 1954 the Trustees also gave consideration to widening and strengthening the mid pier. The estimated cost—£64,650—was also outwith the resources of the Trust and the project lapsed.

On 27th January 1958 the last visible link with the old cargo steamers disappeared when the Albert Pier crane, which was in an unserviceable condition, was sold for scrap for £20.

During the afternoon of Saturday, 19th May, 1962 another link with the past disappeared when fire dramatically consumed a much loved landmark — the Victorian Clock Tower of the pier buildings. Its destruction saddened many. The fire, besides destroying the tower, gutted the Harbour Master's Office, caused major damage to the glazed verandah over the turnstiles at the mid pier and damage by flooding to the ticket and parcel offices. As a result of the damage it was necessary for the tower to be demolished to first floor level. To house the Harbour Master a prefabricated timber building was purchased and erected at first floor level on the base of the old tower. The insurance payment was £6,660.

New pier buildings were still out of the question as the Trust had an outstanding Capital debt of £29,059:10:1d., and just before the fire had been forced to place a contract for extensive repairs to the north end of the mid pier and the solid base of the swing bridge which resulted in expenditure of £2,974:12:6d. Quite considerable movement had occurred in the old quay and in the bridge base, and in an effort to stabilise them cement was injected into them under pressure to grout the stonework.

The repairs were completely unsuccessful and subsidence continued to such an extent that in the autumn of 1966 the swing bridge was put out of operation. Messrs. Babbie, Shaw and Morton were commissioned to make a complete inspection of the mid pier and the Inner Harbour, and report on the remedial measures required and the reconstruction work which would be necessary to allow dredging.

Their report of 18th October 1966 made depressing reading. The south, west and north walls of the Inner Harbour were reported to be in reasonable condition, but the north end of the mid pier was found to be in poor condition with a serious local failure of the foundations of its west wall. These foundations were found to be only 3 feet below the harbour bed and had been exposed in places by the scouring action of ships' propellers.

An underwater inspection of the north end of the mid pier revealed a serious crack in the concrete foundation which made a complete repair of the north west corner prudent. The same inspection found the concrete base and foundations of the bridge abutment in extremely poor condition.

Messrs. Babbie, Shaw and Morton produced three repair schemes none of which was to materialise. The first scheme the engineers considered to be essential, and recommended it should be undertaken as soon as possible to avoid the possibility of a collapse of part of the mid pier and the abutment supports for the bearing end of the swing bridge.

Scheme I was for sheet piling the northern end of the mid pier and the complete reconstruction of the base of the swing-bridge in concrete and sheet steel and box piles. The estimate for the work was £40,000 to £48,500 depending on the length of the piles.

Scheme II was for extending the sheet piling the full length of the west wall of the mid pier at an inclusive cost between £54,250 and £75,500 depending on the length of the piles.

Scheme III was for the overall reconstruction work necessary for deepening the harbour bed to provide a depth of 7 feet of water at low water ordinary spring tides. The estimate was a massive £208,000.

Lack of finance dictated that nothing could be done.

In January 1963, in an effort to off-load their financial mill-stone, the Trustees endeavoured to persuade the Ministry of Transport to regard the harbour as a trunk road for grant and maintenance purposes. Not surprisingly central government was unsympathetic.

Undaunted by their financial position the Trustees in 1965 embarked yet again upon providing new pier buildings.

Just over 27 years after the original replacement plans were approved, a contract was placed. On 12th September 1966 John R. Hunter and Sons Ltd., of Rothesay were awarded the several works contract which included the foundations and Vic Hallam Ltd., were awarded the contract for the super structure. Electrical work went to Modulec Ltd. The total price exclusive of furnishings and professional fees was £86,046:4:-d. All the old buildings and sheds on the Main Pier excluding the main turnstiles and adjacent sheds were swept away, and replaced with a modern two storey system structure building. The centrally situated concourse is two storeys in height and is flanked by offices, toilets and cafeteria. East and West extensions, which are only a single storey high, house parcels and left luggage rooms and stores. There are two internal stairs. The east stair leads to a lounge bar and restaurant and also gives access to an open-air observation gallery. The west stair gives access to the Harbour Master's Office.

The Trustees' enthusiasm and determination to provide modern facilities for the travelling public against all odds was rewarded when, at 11.00 a.m. on 11th May, 1968, the new terminal buildings were officially opened by Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. The King's Stairs were again the Royal landing place. The steamers calling at Rothesay that day were dressed overall, but unfortunately security dictated that no vessels should be berthed at the pier during the opening ceremony.

The final cost of the new buildings, including temporary accommodation and the provision of tie bars under the foundations for securing sheet piling, should this at a future date be provided for the Inner Harbour, was approximately £100,800, the buildings themselves accounting for some £85,000. The buildings were financed by means of a temporary loan from Rothesay Town Council.

The question of roll-on/roll-off facilities for motor vehicles was raised once again on 10th February 1969 after it had been announced by the Caledonian Steam Packet Company that they were intending to order two new car ferries which would perpetuate the hoist system of loading pioneered in 1953-54 by the Arran, Cowal and Bute. These vessels failed to materialise and there was a complete about

turn of policy in favour of roll-on/roll-off ferries.

Notwithstanding the conversion to stern loading of the Glen Sannox which was placed on the Rothesay to Wemyss Bay run for the 1970 summer season no roll-on/roll-off facilities were provided at Wemyss Bay and their cost put them out of reach of Rothesay Harbour Trustees. Detailed surveys of the harbour have been carried out, alternative schemes have been prepared, discussions between the Trustees, the Scottish Transport Group and Central Government have taken place, the question of grants has been investigated, other piers have been inspected, but as yet no link span has materialised.

The nearest the harbour came to having roll-on/roll-off facilities was in 1972 when a pontoon supported link span was temporarily installed at the "Kylemore's Berth" (Berth 1A) to the south of the west arm of the Main Pier. At this time Western Ferries Ltd., were shipping in building material to Rothesay on the stern loading Sound of Islay and obtained permission from the Trustees to remove the King's Stairs and build a reinforced concrete deck between their site and the solid part of the pier. The new deck was supported on four steel piles. To allow the use of the berth at all states of the tide a 20 metres link span was installed.

On 28th September 1972 the fate of the swing bridge was decided. Both the base of the bridge and the north end of the mid pier had been continuing to move and their instability was now beyond question. On account of this and also to allow a dredger to enter the inner harbour it was resolved to remove both the bridge and its base. The result was unfortunate. It was found impossible to remove the foundations of the bridge abutment and even at high tide the gap between the main pier and the mid pier was not wide enough to admit the dredger to the inner harbour. The removal of the abutment also endangered the foundations of the new pier buildings.

Removal of the bridge and abutment cost just over £1000. Replacement of the abutment cost £22,091.17. The new abutment was contained by sheet piling and was constructed by C. D. A. Jones Contractors Ltd. The reconstruction was carried out during the winter of 1973-74.

From 1st July 1965 pier dues payable in respect of steamer passengers were included in the steamer tickets and

charged on both incoming and outgoing passengers. The turnstiles were thereafter only used for casual visitors to the pier until automatic ticket issuing machines were provided. On 12th October 1970 it was accordingly resolved to demolish the turnstiles. The large shed to the north of the turnstiles was the next building to vanish, the decision to remove it being taken on 12th February 1973. Thereafter of the old pier buildings only the toilet block and the shed to the north of it remained leaving the pier as it now is.