

## CHAPTER IV

## THE EARLY YEARS OF THE TRUST

The new Administration for the harbour — the Trustees appointed under Section I of the Harbour Act — held their first meeting at 12 noon on the 22nd of August 1831 within the Court Room under the Chairmanship of Charles Mackinlay, the Senior Bailie of the Burgh. John Gillies, the Town Clerk, was appointed Clerk to the Trustees, Archibald McKirdy to be Treasurer and John Leitch to be Harbour Master. The dues authorised to be levied by the Act were lowered to the following levels:—

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Each vessel under 5 tons           | 6d.          |
| Each vessel between 5 and 10 tons  | 1/-d.        |
| Each vessel between 10 and 20 tons | 1½d. per ton |
| Each vessel over 20 tons           | 2d. per ton  |

Steamboats over 20 tons were to be allowed to compound their dues and thereby secure a discount. A Committee was formed to frame Regulations for the harbour and the two Bailies present were appointed to obtain plans and specifications for a drawbridge to link east and west piers. The business took two hours.

Four ship owners were appointed on 10th October 1831 to join the Local Authority representatives, the meeting having been convened in accordance with the provisions of the Act by placing a Notice on the door of the Parish Church. The first ship owners' representatives were Messrs. John Sharp, James Gilchrist, John McKinlay and James Bannatyne. At the same meeting at which the election of the ship owners' representatives was reported to the Local Authority representatives, it was reported to the Trustees that the Parliamentary Agents' Account for putting through the Act was £657:11:5d. — a very considerable sum in 1831. The Harbour Trustees' share of this Account was one half.

The employment of two harbour police was authorised by the Trustees on 17th February 1832 "to prevent vagrants, idlers, suspicious and improper persons from landing on or

lounging about the Quays." At the same meeting a Committee was formed to consider the best place for erecting and to present a plan to the Trustees for "a public necessary near to the Harbours." The "necessary" was duly erected on the west breast and, at a cost of 3/-d., a lock and six keys were acquired for it. Unfortunately there is no record of the identity of the six persons who were privileged to make use of it!

The Trustees enacted their first regulations under section XXXIX of the Act on 1st May 1832. These covered not only the berthing of vessels and their navigation within the harbour, but also the manner in which porters, carters and hackney coachmen were to pursue their trades and the charges they were to be permitted to make. Porters were authorised to charge from 6d. to 10d. for a full barrow load depending on distance from the Quay. Hackney coaches cost 1/6d. to 2/-d.

The Accounts for the harbour from 21st August 1831 to 1st October 1832 were laid before the Trustees on 31st October 1832. These contained a breakdown of the commencing Capital Debt of the Trustees and details of the Trustees' income and expenditure for the first full year of their operation up to 1st October 1832.

The steamboats in respect of which harbour dues were compounded during that year and which presumably were regular visitors to Rothesay were St. Mun, Maid of Islay, Dunoon Castle, Arran Castle, Windsor Castle, Superb, Rothesay, George Canning and Earl Grey. At least a dozen others were less frequent callers.

On 10th December 1832 expenditure of £35 was approved for the construction of a punt for use in clearing and deepening the harbour.

A contract was placed with Messrs. Claud Girdwood and Co. of Glasgow on 21st March 1833 for the erection of a draw-bridge with a span of 29 feet to link the east and west piers. This was the first of the works authorised by section IX of the 1831 Act to receive the attention of the Trustees. After some delay the bridge, which was prefabricated in Glasgow, arrived in Rothesay in mid September on board the Lark. It was then discovered that in several respects the bridge and its foundations were not in accordance with the specification.

It was not until 17th September 1834 after considerable correspondence and meetings between the contractors and representatives of the Trustees and after various alterations had been made to the original specification, that the Trustees received a report that the bridge had been satisfactorily completed. The original contract price for the bridge was £195 exclusive of mason work, but various minor adjustments were made to this sum on account of the alterations in design. All inclusive the bridge cost £258:17:-d.

The Trustees' satisfaction with their new bridge was short lived, for only twelve days after it was opened it was reported that the three mid beams of the south half of the bridge had fractured and the bridge would not work. Matters did not improve and eventually two shipowners wrote to the Trustees claiming damages on account of their vessels being trapped in the inner harbour. Repairs were thereafter carried out. The fact that the Trustees contributed £10 towards the cost of repairs and later resolved that no cart or carriage should cross the bridge under a penalty not exceeding £2 suggests that the design of the bridge was not entirely suitable.

While the bridge was being erected the harbour was dredged using the Trustees' new punt.

1835 saw fresh water laid on to the harbour and the tower of the municipal buildings being raised by 6 feet in order that the clock might be seen from the harbour. The latter work, it was decided by the Trustees, justified a payment of £50 to the Burgh.

During the winter of 1835/36 the north/south section of the west pier sustained quite extensive storm damage. Notwithstanding the recommendation of the sub-committee appointed to look into the matter that the pier should be widened, the Trustees decided that only temporary repairs should be carried out and authorised expenditure of £70.

On 24th November 1836 the Trustees decided that henceforth the Clerk should receive an annual salary. The amount was £8 per annum. Hitherto the Clerk had only received a donation.