

CHAPTER VIII

HARBOUR EXTENSIONS

On 13th August 1866 the Harbour Trustees remitted to the Harbour Committee to consider and report as to the propriety of providing increased harbour accommodation and the best mode of accomplishing that object. Mr. Andrew Duncan of the Clyde Navigation Trust was retained by the Committee as consulting engineer. By October, the Committee were considering Mr. Duncan's report and plan.

The next step was to obtain Parliamentary Authority for the work. This was done by obtaining a Provisional Order from the Board of Trade under the General Pier and Harbour Act 1861 and having this confirmed by Parliament. The Provisional Order received Parliamentary approval on 17th June 1867 with the passing of The Pier and Harbour Orders Confirmation Act 1867.

The works authorised by the Order were:—

- (1) *An increase of the breadth of the front or north pier to the extent of 30 feet or thereby additional on the north side thereof; and an extension of the said pier in a northwesterly direction to a point in a line with the western boundary of the west pier and distant 115 feet or thereby from the northern extremity of the said boundary.*
- (2) *A wharf or pier extending from the northwestern extremity of the north pier as so extended 256 feet or thereby in a northwesterly direction to a point opposite to and at a distance of 250 feet or thereby from the north west corner of the ship building yard the property of the Burgh of Rothesay.*
- (3) *The filling up and embankment of the space between the said wharf or pier and Victoria Street.*
- (4) *A small boat slip at or near the northwest extremity of the said wharf or pier.*
- (5) *General dredging.*

The time for completion of the works was seven years

and the Trustees were authorised to borrow up to £21,000 to finance the project.

Other matters dealt with by the Order were the fixing of rates for the use of cranes, weighing machines and gangways and the extension of the Trustees' jurisdiction 500 yards *ex adverso* of the harbour undertaking.

The only work which went ahead was the first.

While the Provisional Order was proceeding through the legislative channels of Westminster, Mr. Duncan prepared specifications for the first and second works covered by the Order and also obtained estimates.

Mr. Duncan's own estimate was that the first work would cost £8236:16:-d, this figure covering wharfing, sheet piling the east end of the existing quay, erecting a retaining wall at the west end, causewaying, embanking and erecting a shed or waiting room. Mr. Duncan estimated that the second work (which was never proceeded with) would cost £11,800:4:-d. The tenders for the first work ranged from £8004:16:4d. to £8971:8:1d. The lowest from Messrs. James and Allan Waddell of Coatbridge was accepted on 25th February 1867, rather presumptuously four months before the Act approving the Provisional Order received the Royal Assent.

The work awarded to Messrs. James and Allan Waddell fell into three main parts. Firstly the east end of the pier which was in poor condition was to be sheet piled to prevent it from sinking. Secondly at the northwest corner of the pier a solid triangular extension was to be built to unite the west face and the north face at an angle of approximately 90°. A new cattle slip was to be built into the west side of this extension. Thirdly an open piling extension was to be built along the entire north face of the pier with cobbles laid on its wooden decking.

The third work for which power was obtained, but not utilized — the filling up and embankment of the space between the intended new wharf and Victoria Street — entailed the suppression of both the Patent Slip and the shipbuilding yard. The latter belonged to the Town Council. Very conveniently for the Harbour Trustees, however, the Town Council resolved on 12th November 1866 to sell the shipbuilding yard subject to its existing Lease and exposed it for sale by public roup on

8th April 1867 at an upset price of £4000. Two days before the roup the Harbour Trustees agreed to offer the upset price.

The Articles of Roup were cleverly framed in such a way as to discourage private bidders. The conditions included a prohibition on the purchasers from using the ground for any trade or business after the expiry of the Lease and an obligation to demolish all the existing buildings on the tenant's outgoing and not to erect any others without the Town Council's permission. The Town Council was also to be allowed to resume up to a quarter of the ground at any time in the future at proportionally the same price as paid by the purchaser. Not surprisingly the Harbour Trustees were successful in acquiring the shipyard. It is sad that within 30 years of their establishment the Patent Slip and shipbuilding yard were about to be taken apart. At no time, unfortunately, during their existence were they paying propositions for either the Town Council or the Harbour Trustees. One consolation is that, had they succeeded, Rothesay might now be fronted by industry instead of by its attractive promenade.

The extension contract awarded to Messrs. James and Allan Waddell proceeded reasonably quickly to begin with and the first new berth — at the east end — was ready for use by 24th June 1867. On the Wednesday morning following, the new berth was officially opened with the arrival of Hutcheson's Iona on its way to the Loch Fyne ports. The Trustees were present to witness the event.

Thereafter work fell behind schedule, leading to some friction between the parties and a claim being made by the Trustees against the contractors.

The Trustees could not have been too dissatisfied with the Waddells' work for they awarded them an additional contract to extend the sheet piling as far as the stairs on the south side of the pier.

The extension to the pier was eventually completed in March 1868. The final cost was £9043:15:11d, exclusive of Mr. Andrew Duncan's Account of £450 for supervising the work.

During the currency of the contract the existing east pier crane was replaced by a new 3½ ton crane at a cost of approximately £90.

An additional shed was ordered from Donald McMillan

on 16th June 1868 at a cost of £177:19:2d. It was erected on the west pier to the west of the drawbridge balancing the existing shed to the east of the drawbridge.

In 1869 a new slip was constructed at the south west corner of the outer harbour adjacent to the Albert Breast and opening on to the old east quay, which by then was being referred to as the mid quay. The work was carried out by direct labour.

During the same year work was proceeding on Provost Daniel Macbeth's far sighted but controversial scheme for the reclamation of the foreshore to the north of Victoria Street between the shipbuilding yard and the Gallows' Craig. The new sea wall, in the opinion of Mr. Robert McLea, the tenant of the yard, prevented him from making full use of the yard by depriving him of the use of the shore to the west of the yard and he accordingly intimated a claim for damages to the Harbour Trustees. The sum claimed was £150.

The Trustees decided to take the opinion of Mr. Rutherford Clark, Advocate (later Lord Rutherford Clark) but before they did so they learned that the Board of Trade had approved the formation of the esplanade. The Trustees accordingly rejected Mr. McLea's claim and pointed out to him that the works complained of were not the doing of the Trustees.

The dispute dragged on into the following year and Mr. McLea redirected his claim against the Town Council. The Town Council decided that a settlement would be prudent and offered £60 to Mr. McLea of which the Harbour Trustees resolved to pay £15. There the matter closed.

Mr McLea's lease of the building yard and graving slip was now nearing its end. A sizeable proportion of the town's population was, however, still unconvinced that the removal of industry from the harbour area would be to the advantage of the town. On 16th November 1871 a Petition from the ships' carpenters and others employed at the building yard and concurred in by a large number of ratepayers, praying that the building yard be retained, was laid before the Trustees. On 12th December the same year, Mr. William Herbert, the Procurator Fiscal, led a deputation to a meeting of the Harbour Trustees and presented another Petition signed by 391 electors and 214 other inhabitants. This petition appeared to favour the

closing down of the existing yard and slip and their re-establishment elsewhere in Rothesay or its vicinity.

Even within the Harbour Trust there was now a majority in favour of retaining the yard and slip where they were. Notwithstanding the terms of the 1831 Act and the conditions under which the Trustees had acquired the yard from the Town Council this majority forced the Trustees to obtain the opinion of Counsel. The minority led by Provost Daniel Macbeth was strongly opposed to this squandering of the Harbour Trustees' funds.

Even the majority must have realised that they were fighting a lost cause, for the Trustees unanimously decided to form a joint committee with the Town Council to investigate the feasibility of constructing a new yard and slip elsewhere. One site suggested was opposite the Skeoch Wood adjacent to the small yard of Messrs. Fyfe, but this, not surprisingly, did not find favour with the residents of Argyle Place. The joint committee's work came to naught.

On 28th May 1872 after a period of 19 years, Mr. McLea's lease of the yard and slip came to an end. The Trustees allowed him to stay on in the yard rent free for another two months to finish a schooner, but thereafter the yard was silent. The Trustees requested the Council to alter the conditions of sale of the yard to allow it to remain open, but the Council refused and the Trustees had no option but to allow the buildings and machinery to be dismantled, the new sea wall extended and the yard filled in. This was done at the expense of the Town Council who made use of part of the yard for widening Victoria Street.

The position regarding the slip was quite different. No undertaking had been given to demolish it and so estimates were obtained for its repair and it was advertised for let. Not one of the offers which were obtained was accepted by the Trustees and accordingly no repairs were carried out.

After the slip was vacated by Mr. McLea, only very intermittent use was made of it. It was only a matter of time before it too became part of the new promenade. The death sentence came on 9th February 1874 when the Trustees approved a recommendation of the Harbour Committee that the slip should be dismantled and its site filled up to the level

of the building yard for esplanade purposes. The slip was not yet 34 years old.

The Trustees resolved to give the Council the free use of the site of the slip until it was required for other harbour purposes on condition that the Council carried out the infilling work at their own expense. The Council were also given the use of the site of the building yard until it was required for other harbour purposes, and in consideration the Council reduced the amount of interest payable to them by the Trustees by £50 per annum. The £50 reduction was reduced to a £5 reduction in 1887. The site of the slip is now occupied by the taxi rank adjacent to the entrance carriageway of what is once again the only access to the pier, and putting is now played where sailing vessels were once built.

In 1875 the proposal to build a pier at Craigmore was revived and again came before the Harbour Trustees. As in 1861 there was no opposition, but one condition imposed by the Trustees was that in the event of any steamer calling at Craigmore and not calling at Rothesay thereafter, the Craigmore Pier Company would require to pay the Harbour Trustees a sum equal to the dues the steamer would have paid had it called at Rothesay.

In 1878 Princes Street, or Albert Place as it was by then known, was extended and given a uniform width by taking in part of the outer harbour. A new sea wall was constructed along a line from the plat head of the slip at the southwest corner of the harbour to a point at the southeast corner 18 feet from the existing wall. The original proposal mooted in 1877 was for a uniform 25 feet extension, but this was vetoed by the Board of Trade after a group of 43 shipowners and masters protested. The objectors pointed out that since the slip and shipbuilding yard had been closed and the foreshore to the west of the pier reclaimed, the outer harbour was now the only place at the port where ships could be beached for bottom repairs and cleaning. The Town Council in addition to paying for the new wall paid £200 to the Harbour Trustees by way of compensation.

The next problem to face the Trustees was only just round the corner and came from an unexpected quarter. In 1881 a judicial decision in relation to a steamship by the

name of "Isabella" put a new interpretation on section 23 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1854, as a result of which the tonnage of steamships was remeasured. The remeasurement resulted in a reduction of almost 50% in the tonnage of the vessels using Rothesay Pier. The prospect of the harbour dues payable in respect of these vessels — which were based on tonnage — being correspondingly reduced caused considerable concern to the Trustees, as the dues then being exacted were the maxima authorised by the 1831 Act.

The Athole for example had her net tonnage reduced from 76 to 40, the Marquis of Bute from 70 to 37, the Sultan from 54 to 29 and incredibly the Ivanhoe from 71 to minus 7! The other vessels which were regular visitors in 1881 were the Guinevere, Sultana, Marquis of Lorne, Viceroy, Lord of the Isles, Gael, Eagle, Scotia, Columba, Adela, Lancelot, Argyle, Bute, Mountaineer, Iona, Inveraray Castle, Chevalier, Glencoe, Elaine, Sheila and Dunoon Castle. An impressive list.

The total income of the Trust for the year ended 30th September 1880 was £2250 of which £1872 was derived from passenger steamboats. The reduction in the tonnage of these vessels would mean a loss of £900 of income. It was therefore essential for the Trustees to protect their interests.

Correspondence and discussions with the Board of Trade did not produce a solution, and the Trustees were therefore compelled to seek authority from Parliament for increased dues. The new rates proposed by the Trustees did not find favour with the shipowners and the Provisional Order had a difficult passage through Parliament.

In 1881 the Trustees had also again been giving consideration to the question of additional pier accommodation. Princes Pier was not considered to be suitable, and as the powers contained in the 1867 Act had expired, new powers were sought in the Provisional Order. The additional wharfage was envisaged to the west of the then existing main pier and to the north of the sites of the former shipbuilding yard and slip.

The opposition to the new harbour dues was eventually overcome and the final hurdle was surmounted when, on 19th June 1882, the enabling Bill passed through the House of Commons. The Pier and Harbour Orders Confirmation (No. 2) Act 1882 received the Royal Assent and came into force on 3rd

July 1882. The Rothesay Harbour Order was one of three orders approved by the Act.

The most important sections of the Order were 11, 12 and 13 which repealed the existing harbour dues and authorised new increased dues.

Sections 7 and 8 authorised the following works:—

(a) a wharf or pier extending from the northwest extremity of the front or north pier 256 feet or thereby in a north-westerly direction to a point opposite to and at a distance of 250 feet or thereby from the northwest corner of the ground formerly the shipbuilding yard the property of the Trustees.

(b) the building up of the lower part of the small boat slip at the northwest extremity of the front or north pier and the construction of a new small boat slip at or near the northwest extremity of the front or north pier and

(c) general deepening of the harbour.

The sanctioned works were to be commenced within 3 years. Further borrowing consent of £5000 was given to the Trustees.

The only other section of the Order which deserves special note is 2, which provided that the Trustees acting under the 1831 Act should be incorporated by the name of "the Rothesay Harbour Trustees" and should have perpetual succession and a common seal. A seal was never in fact obtained.

The extension proposed in 1882 suffered the same fate as the extension designed by Mr. Andrew Duncan in 1866.

It is worth noting in passing that on 5th March 1882 the clock tower at the pier suffered damage by fire. The insurers were the Bute Insurance Company Limited. This Company had its office at 15 Castle Street, Rothesay and was later incorporated into the State Assurance Company which in turn was absorbed by the Royal Exchange Assurance Company and is now part of the mammoth Guardian Royal Exchange Assurance Group.

On 12th February 1883 the Trustees charged the Harbour Committee to procure estimates for such work as was necessary to make Princes Pier more suitable for use by cargo steamers. Basically this involved piling and dredging, but

unfortunately the details of the contract which was put out to tender were not recorded in the Minutes of the Trustees. Contemporary photographs show that the quay was faced with wooden piles. As concrete work was also involved it is possible that the existing foundations were deepened and strengthened to allow dredging to be carried out without endangering the pier. The principal contractors were Messrs. Christison and Scott whose tender was £675:10:2d. A dredger and three lighters were chartered from Greenock. Total expenditure on the project was £1253:12:2d.