

## NEW BUILDINGS AND FURTHER EXTENSIONS

Early in 1884 new sheds, offices and waiting rooms were ordered for the pier. Considering that the buildings with their clock tower were to be a Clyde landmark for the next eighty years it is disappointing that so little was recorded of their construction.

On 11th February 1884 the Harbour Committee was authorised to obtain specifications and estimates for putting into effect the plans prepared by Messrs. James Hamilton and Son in 1876 and approved by the Trustees on 8th January 1877.

In March 1884 the principal contract was awarded to John Christison and during the following months the contracts for a new clock, furniture, painting etc. were awarded.

The new buildings were a substantial improvement on the wooden buildings which they replaced. The central feature, a square clock tower, provided office accommodation for the Harbour Master at first floor level and was adorned with small baronial turrets at each of its four corners. The ground floor of the tower was open to front and rear providing a covered entrance passage opposite the drawbridge. This passage was extended southwards as far as the north end of the drawbridge. The extension had a glass roof and was flanked by subsidiary offices. The tower itself was flanked by single storey buildings which provided office accommodation for the steamboat owners, waiting rooms, a refreshment room and store rooms. Along the entire facade and at each end was a glass covered verandah. The buildings were constructed of brick and roofed with slate. From the roof at each extremity rose a flagstaff. Although not an architectural masterpiece the design was pleasing and found a place in the affections of Brandane and Glaswegian.

The new buildings were completed by April 1885 and the total cost, inclusive of the demolition of the old buildings, was £3020:10:5d.

One of the lesser functions of the Harbour Trustees was

the licensing of boathirers. In 1886 the Minutes record that there was a total of 14 boathiring stations ranged along the bay from Mountstuart Road to Argyle Place at which no less than 207 boats were licensed for hire.

In 1886 the crane at the western end of the pier was removed as it was no longer used to any great extent.

Although a haven for ships the waters of Rothesay Harbour were seldom calm for the Trustees. At the end of 1886 the next storm was just over the horizon. On 13th December that year Mr. Lachlan Milloy gave notice of motion "That the Harbour Trust give the Town Council permission to extend the present breast wall . . . forty feet further into the Inner Harbour in order to relieve the congested traffic in Guildford Square." On 10th January the following year the motion was carried by a majority of two. After a detailed inspection of the harbour in February the proposed reclamation was reduced to 30 feet. Even this found disfavour among the shipowners. Forty eight fishermen of Rothesay, Port Bannatyne and other parts of Bute sent a simple objection to the Commissioners of the Fishery Board for Scotland stating that the reduction of the harbour area would be injurious to them as the harbour was the only harbour of refuge in the district. A much more elaborate memorial was also submitted to the Board of Trade by and on behalf of fourteen other boat owners.

There were various heads to the objection, but the most interesting one was that the finances of the Trustees could not stand any diminution of the harbour area with the resulting loss of revenue. To set the record straight the Trustees sent detailed answers to the Board of Trade which contained the following passage:— "Prior to 1831 when the Rothesay Harbour Act was passed the Rothesay Harbour belonged entirely to the Town Council who have since lent to the Harbour Trust from time to time such sums as they required for extensions or improvements, and now (December 1886) the whole debt of £13,679 is due to the Town Council who are the only creditors of the Trust and are not likely to do anything which would lessen their security. Whilst the debt, which in 1869 was £16,803, was on 30th September last only £3,424 less, yet, during the intervening period, additional sums amounting to £4,924 were borrowed and expended on exten-

sions and improvements on capital account, so that the debt paid off during that period was really £8,366 representing an average yearly payment of £473 instead of £200 as stated in the memorial; and during the last five years the repayment has been at the rate of £735 per annum. The whole works have, out of Revenue, been thoroughly maintained and, where necessary, renewed from time to time and are at present in a satisfactory condition."

After enquiring from the Harbour Trustees under what Statutory Powers they proposed to relinquish a portion of their Harbour for Town Improvements the Board of Trade, in true political fashion, withdrew from the argument and stated that while they were not prepared to give their sanction to the work, they did not propose to interfere with any work which the Town Council and Harbour Commissioners of Rothesay might consider necessary.

There the objections fell and the work proceeded. The contractor was William Hunter whose price for taking down the existing wall and rebuilding it was £94:10:-d.

Petitions were very much in fashion in the 19th Century. In 1887 the Trustees presented a Petition to Parliament against the Clyde, Ardrishaig and Crinan Railway Bill which was then in the House of Lords. The reason for the Petition was that Mr. David MacBrayne had indicated that if the railway was built he would require to withdraw his steamboat service to Loch Fyne during the winter months. The railway was one of many which did not materialise during the railway mania era.

Five years later another Petition was transmitted to Parliament, but this one was in favour of a Railway Bill. The proposed line was from Dalry to Largs for the Glasgow and South Western Railway.

By 1891 steamers had increased in length to such an extent that three vessels could no longer be comfortably accommodated along the north face of the Pier. Plans were accordingly prepared for an extension and the Trustees resolved to apply for a Provisional Order. Very sensibly the Trustees decided to discuss the matter with the steamboat owners before proceeding further. The plan which the Trustees had approved appears to have been similar to the plan authorised in 1882. The shipowners suggested that the face of

the pier should be straight or be slightly convex. This was the eventual form which the pier took, although not till several years later, as the proposal was dropped without any explanation being recorded.

Yet another attempt at extending the pier was made in 1895. A Provisional Order for a 250 feet extension westwards and a boat repairing slip in the Inner Harbour got as far as Parliament but was later withdrawn. Opposition to the Trustees' wishes came from two quarters.

On 15th January 1894 the proprietors of steamboats carrying passenger traffic to and from Rothesay wrote to the Trustees requesting a reduction of the existing Harbour Dues. A reduction of 25% in the compounded dues was granted, but the shipowners were still not satisfied. The result was that The Caledonian Steam Packet Company Limited, The Glasgow and South Western Railway Company Limited, Mr. David MacBrayne and other owners objected to the Trustees' Provisional Order.

The other objectors were the Board of Trade who insisted that a clause be introduced into the Order to charge Harbour Dues on goods being discharged in the harbour.

This was not acceptable to the Trustees so the Order was abandoned.

In 1896 the crane on Albert Pier, as Princes Pier was by then called, was put out of commission by a broken wheel and was found to be off-level. A new 5 ton crane was accordingly ordered from Messrs. P. and R. Fleming and Co., Iron Merchants, Glasgow at a price of £123.

Relations between the Harbour Trustees and the steamboat owners were still strained in 1896. On 5th November that year a letter was sent by solicitors acting for some of the owners to the Clerk asking whether the Trustees intended to apply to the Board of Trade for a Provisional Order for authority to alter the constitution of the Trust so as to give the owners a fair representation in the management of the affairs of the Trust. The reply, not surprisingly, was in the negative, but in the circumstances the Trustees very graciously advised the owners that if they were dissatisfied with the existing constitution they — the Trustees — would be prepared to

consider any representations on the subject.

In October 1897 the proposal to extend the pier was revived, plans were obtained and the matter was discussed with the steamboat owners. The steamboat owners agreed not to oppose the proposed Provisional Order on the following conditions:—

- (1) *That the Plan and Estimates obtained by the Trustees and a Financial Statement of the probable position of the Funds of the Trust be submitted to the steamboat owners.*
- (2) *That the present due on steamboats be not exceeded.*
- (3) *That the surplus Revenue of the Trust after the extension is completed be applied only on upkeep of the pier, credit to contingency fund or reduction of debt.*
- (4) *That the residential qualification for steamboat owners be revoked.*
- (5) *That a contingency fund be established, and*
- (6) *That the Trust agree to refer any differences occurring between the Representatives of the Town Council and the Representatives of the Shipowners to an Arbiter, but only when the four Representatives of the Shipowners are unanimous for such reference.*

These conditions were accepted by the Trustees subject to the proviso that the dues then being paid in respect of steamers would not be increased, but only so long as the revenue from steam vessels of 20 tons and over did not fall below the revenue from that source for the year to 30th September 1877 viz: £2953.

Even after going to such lengths to appease the steamboat owners, the owners were still not satisfied and lodged objections to the Provisional Order sought by the Trustees. The objections were of no great significance and accordingly the Trustees agreed to the alterations sought by the owners simply to get the Order approved *quam primum*.

In April 1898 the Board of Trade approved the Provisional Order. In May the confirmatory Bill was introduced into the House of Commons and in July it received the Royal Assent, but only after an eleventh hour objection by the steamboat owners to the borrowing powers sought by the Trustees.

The works authorised by section 9 of the Order were as

follows:—

- First: A Wharf or pier to be of open piling throughout extending from the northwest extremity of the front or north pier of the harbour 250 feet or thereby in a westerly direction to a point opposite to and at a distance of 182 feet or thereby from the northwest corner of the ground formerly the shipbuilding yard the property of the Trustees such intended Wharf or pier being of a width throughout of 50 feet or thereby.
- Second: The building up of the small boat slip at or near the northwest extremity of the said front or north pier and the construction of a new small boat slip or landing stair at or near the eastern extremity of the said intended wharf or pier and on the south or inner side thereof.
- Third: An enlargement of the said front or north pier by increasing its breadth to a maximum extent of 35 feet or thereby additional on the north side thereof and extending throughout its entire length from east to west a distance of 570 feet or thereby.
- Fourth: The filling up, piling and embanking of a space of 145 feet or thereby in length and of a width of 30 feet or thereby along the western side of the west pier and extending between the said intended wharf or pier and the said ground formerly the shipbuilding yard.
- Fifth: The deepening, cleansing and scouring of the harbour and of the approaches thereto.

Section 23 of the Order authorised the Trustees to borrow £20,000 for the purposes of the Order. Section 27 required the establishment of a contingency fund to meet any extraordinary claim or demand. Section 3 removed the residential qualification for shipowner Trustees and Section 4 established the Arbitration procedure. Section 15 limited the increase of harbour dues.

On 8th August 1898 the contract for the work envisaged under heads First to Fourth inclusive was awarded to Mr. George Halliday, the price being £13,257:3:10d. A £10 bonus was to be allowed to Mr. Halliday for every day the work was completed before 1st June 1899. The eventual cost of the extension inclusive of extras was £14,341:9:-d.

As is indicated in the Order the major part of the extension was to be of open wooden piling. The only solid part was the southern half of the extension along the western side of the west pier between the face of the Promenade and what was to become known as the King's Stair.

The extension was completed in less than a year being in full use by July 1899. The Trustees and the Town Council contemplated holding a cake and wine banquet to mark the opening of the extension and the installation of public electric lighting in the town and new filters at the Dhu Loch, but nothing materialised. The extension was a great success. As a result of the face of the pier being changed from concave to convex there was considerably less wear and tear to the outside piles and facings.

The reason the steamboat owners wanted the residential qualification for Trusteeship removed was to enable them to get representation on the Trust. Unfortunately for the steamboat owners they did not achieve their object. Even as amended, section 2 of the 1831 Act only authorised owners or part owners in their own right of vessels trading to and from Rothesay to be elected as Trustees. The owners of the Railway Companies' vessels did not fit this definition so the steamboat owners were thwarted.

The Harbour Trustees hardly surprisingly declined to promote a special Provisional Order when they were asked to do so by the steamboat owners. The Glasgow and South Western Railway Company were however on the verge of obtaining Statutory Authority for an extension from Kilmacolm to Largs and accordingly incorporated a section in their Bill authorising Companies which owned vessels to nominate a representative to vote in the election of or to be nominated and elected as a Harbour Trustee. The Railway Companies had at last the means of securing a voice in the running of the harbour which they had so long sought.

Shortly after work on the extension started the Trustees were told by the Board of Trade that they would require to purchase from the Crown so much of the sea bed adjacent to the pier as was required for the pillars and supports of the proposed extension. The Trustees were of the opinion that on account of the "ancient rights of the Burgh" they did not

require any conveyance of land from the Board of Trade, but they soon hauled down their colours and agreed to pay £5 to the Board for not only the land currently required, but also the solum of the 1867 extension. In return a Feu Disposition was granted to the Harbour Trustees which was recorded in the New Particular Register of Sasines for the Royal Burgh of Rothesay on 29th December 1898. This title, along with a title granted in 1910 for an extension to the Albert Pier, appear to be the only titles which the Trustees have to the harbour. The 1831 Act did not vest in the Trustees any part of the harbour undertaking as it then existed. The harbour therefore remained the property of the Burgh whose only title to it appears to be their Charter of Erection of 1400 and Charter of Confirmation of 1584. The 1831 Act may have been treated as a title for the breastwork at the entrance to the outer harbour and the Patent Slip, even although it falls far short of what would be accepted by a Conveyancer.

There is no record of the Town Council having acquired a title to the shipbuilding yard, if they ever did. Nor is there any obvious evidence of a Disposition having been granted by the Town Council to the Harbour Trustees in 1867, but this is not surprising as no part of the harbour undertaking was then vested in the Trustees. If the Town Council didn't have a title to the shipbuilding yard it would have been rather embarrassing for them if a third party had offered more for the yard than the Trustees and demanded a marketable title.

1899 saw not only a major extension to the pier, but also the erection of a new goods shed at the western edge of the west pier, as extended, just to the north of the promenade. Individual contracts for the different trades were placed for the shed which in total cost £605:18:4d.

Both the extension and the shed had to be financed with the aid of the Burgh. No private investor could be found to lend money to the Trustees and even negotiations with the Public Works Loans Board<sup>1</sup> fell through. The only solution was for the Burgh to borrow the required £17,000 and relend it to the Harbour Trustees — a practice which continued right up till the reorganisation of Local Government in 1975.

The dissatisfaction of the steamboat owners with the amount of the harbour dues which were levied upon them at

Rothsay and which had manifested itself in 1897 smouldered on until 1901. In that year three of the four steamboat Trustees endeavoured to persuade the Board of Trade that all four of them were unanimous in opinion that an Arbiter should be appointed under section 4 of the 1898 Order. They failed, but an interesting fact which emerged from the Memoranda which were prepared by both sides was that during the summer at that time passenger steamers were making about 100 calls per day at the pier.

In 1903 it was decided to erect a new building containing a large General Waiting Room, a Ladies' Waiting Room and office premises to the west of the existing Waiting Rooms. The new building was to be 76 feet long, 26 feet wide and 17 feet high. The successful architect was Mr. Andrew M. McKinlay of Rothsay. Separate contracts were awarded for masonry, joinery, roofing, plumbing, plastering, gas fitting and painting. The total contract price was £964:7:6d. Shortly after the most attractive new waiting rooms were opened Mr. David MacBrayne made a handsome gift to the Trustees of a photograph of his famous Columba which was hung in the new building. This photograph unfortunately disappeared with the building when it was demolished in 1967, its significance having long been forgotten.

In December 1905 Captain James Williamson, who represented the Caledonian Steam Packet Company Ltd. on the Trust, submitted designs to his co-Trustees for an overhead Promenade on the pier. No details of the designs were recorded, but it seems probable that a deck at first floor level along the front of the pier buildings was envisaged. The Trustees no doubt foresaw opposition to what was really needless expense and convened a meeting of all harbour rate-payers to discuss the proposal. Not surprisingly every ratepayer present voted against the scheme and others not able to attend, intimated their disapproval by letter. The overhead Promenade was still-born.