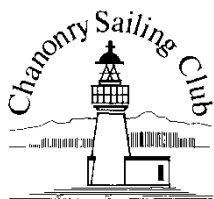


# HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR

## PART 2



### ESTABLISHING THE HARBOUR & HARBOUR INDUSTRIES

#### BEFORE THE HARBOUR

There is evidence of shipping from Fortrose before the harbour was built. The Aberdeen Shore Accounts have in August 1668 'ane bark going of Chanrie of Ross' (*Chanonry being the old name of Fortrose*) with '40 gades irone' and '70 bolls bey salt'. When a customs establishment was created after 1707 the 'tidesman', who was the officer in charge, was appointed to 'Fortrose and Cromarty' and was paid more because of the size of the district. In 1722-3 the *William & Catherine of Fortrose*, Hugh Watson, master, traded in the area<sup>1</sup>. Small fishing cobbles lined the shore and the fishermen's cottages still exist on St Andrew's Walk (formerly Shore Street).

#### ESTABLISHING A HARBOUR

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there were no railways or airports and most roads were little more than rough tracks. People and freight moved by preference by sea – harbours and ports had huge significance in everyday life and a town wanting to prosper needed to have one. Nine prominent citizens of Fortrose saw their opportunity in **1813**.

The Scottish Highland Roads and Bridges Act 1803, (43<sup>rd</sup> Parliamentary Session of George III), established a Commission to supervise the expenditure of moneys on the construction of Highland roads and bridges. Some of the money for construction came from the residual funds of the Commissioners of the **Forfeited Estates**. Estates of Jacobite chiefs were forfeited to the Crown, post the Battle of Culloden in 1746, and placed in the control of Commissioners, who carried out many of the improvements in the Highlands. Money was spent organising surveys and prospecting for coal and minerals; on land reclamation and afforestation; on premiums and bounties for linen and hemp production and on public works programmes aimed at providing roads, bridges and **harbours**.

In March 1813, the 9 citizens sent a 'Memorial'<sup>2</sup> (*a statement of facts, especially as the basis of a petition*<sup>3</sup>) to the Commissioners petitioning them for a pier (*harbour*) to be constructed at Fortrose. The Memorial was sent by the Magistrates of the Royal Burgh of Fortrose on behalf of themselves, the Community, the local laird (Roderick Kilgour Mackenzie of Flowerburn) and 'other Proprietors and Gentlemen interested in the welfare of the Burgh.' The case was made that there were no landing places between Munlochy Bay and Cromarty

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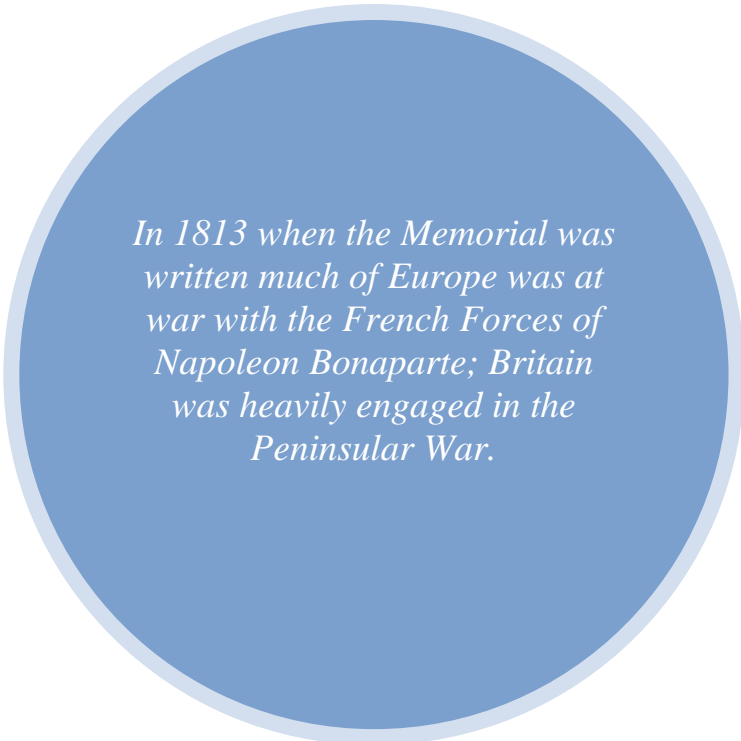
<sup>1</sup> Information from Dr David Alston, Cromarty

<sup>2</sup> Appendix L to the 7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges

<sup>3</sup> Concise Oxford Dictionary

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2

where lime could be unloaded and grain carried away and that this was ‘a circumstance very detrimental to the improvement of the country’. They mention establishing some form of manufacture in the town in the interests of agriculture, the town and commerce. These were seen as ‘desirable ends’ and the ‘Memorialists are *exceedingly* desirous to have a Pier erected at Fortrose...’. The anticipated in bound cargoes were coal and lime (presumably for fertiliser) with return loads of grain and other produce. Those familiar with making grant applications will realise that a clincher was probably an offer by the Memorialists to foot half the bill – a very generous offer considering no survey had been done. They conclude by asking that ‘some engineer be forthwith directed to make a Survey, Report and Estimate’.



*In 1813 when the Memorial was written much of Europe was at war with the French Forces of Napoleon Bonaparte; Britain was heavily engaged in the Peninsular War.*

# HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR

## PART 2

Extract from the 7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges<sup>4</sup>

### Appendix (L.)

#### MEMORIAL respecting FORTROSE HARBOUR.

To the Honourable the Commissioners appointed by an Act of Parliament of the Forty-third of His present Majesty, for making Roads, and otherwise encouraging Improvements, in the Highlands of Scotland.

The Memorial of the Magistrates of the Royal Burgh of Fortrose in Rosshire, on behalf of themselves and the Community of that Burgh, Roderick Kilgour Mackenzie of Flowerburn, and other Proprietors and Gentlemen interested in the welfare of the said Burgh,—

Respectfully Sheweth,

THAT the Royal Burgh of Fortrose is situated on the North Side of the Moray Frith, nearly opposite to Fort George, in the midst of a country highly improvable and populous.

That between Cromarty and Munlochy Bay, a distance of more than twelve miles, there is not one place at which any small Coasting Vessel can with security unload lime, &c. or carry away grain; a circumstance very detrimental to the improvement of the country.

That it is in contemplation to establish some branches of useful manufacture at Fortrose; which must prove of the greatest importance to the agricultural interest of the country, as well as the town itself, in a commercial point of view.

That in order to obtain these desirable ends, and in some measure encourage the proposed establishments and remedy these defects, the Memorialists are exceedingly desirous to have a Pier erected at Fortrose, which may enable Vessels at all times to discharge coals and lime, and such other articles as are called for by the wants of the town and surrounding country, and in return load grain and other produce.

That the Memorialists understand that the depth of water is such as to admit, by means of a Pier, of Vessels of considerable burthen; and from the other local advantages, it is hoped that the expense to be incurred will be comparatively small.

Upon consideration of the whole of these circumstances, and many others that might be urged, the Memorialists humbly submit, that the great utility of the Pier now proposed, will be found worthy the attention of the Commissioners as well in an agricultural as a commercial point of view; and as they are willing to contribute one-half of the expense of the undertaking, they most earnestly solicit the aid of the Honourable Board, and suggest that some engineer be forthwith directed to make a Survey, Report and Estimate of the proposed Pier, and fix upon and determine the most eligible situation for the same, and the probable expense thereof.

(Signed)

DAVID DAVIDSON,  
JOHN DAVIDSON,  
JOHN DEMPSTER,  
WM. YOUNG.

ROD. MACFARQUHAR,  
MICHAEL MILLER,  
ALEX. MACKENZIE,  
J<sup>s</sup>. FOWLER, of Grange,  
R. K. MACKENZIE, of Flowerburn.

} Magistrates  
of  
Fortrose.

March 1813.

<sup>4</sup> Courtesy of Highland Libraries and Am Baile website

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2

The 'some engineer' was of course **Thomas Telford**. Thomas Telford 'the Colossus of Roads' was sent in 1801 to survey the rural roads in Scotland which were mainly the military roads constructed by General Wade and Major Caulfeild between 1725 and 1767. In 1803 he was asked to implement his survey proposals and became the civil engineer for the huge government scheme to improve communications in the Highlands. In so doing, Telford built nearly 1000 miles of roads and 120 bridges over the next 20 years. He constructed the Caledonian Canal and he built or improved numerous harbours such as Fortrose. In 1818 he helped to found the Institute of Civil Engineers and became its first president in 1820. Telford was a likeable and convivial man who was always ready with a story or a joke. Telford died on 2 September, 1834 aged 77 and was buried in Westminster Abbey. He continued to act as a consultant and engineer to the end of his life. Despite his prodigious output, he left very little in the way of wealth - he had often taken on projects for which he was not paid.

By April 1815 the survey had been completed and the Commissioners noted<sup>5</sup> that they had offered to defray half the costs (estimated to be nearly £3500) to build a substantial pier 170 feet long with a return pier of 60 feet. They noted that the Contributors had undertaken to complete the work by November of the next year (1816).

**FORTROSE HARBOUR.**—Nearly opposite to Fort George is situate in the Burgh of Fortrose, the Inhabitants whereof addressed to us a Memorial, setting forth the advantages which might be expected to result from a Pier, whereby the Importation of Coals and Lime, and the Exportation of Grain and other produce, might be facilitated.

Appendix (L.)

In compliance with this Memorial, We directed a Plan to be prepared, and offered to defray half the estimated Expense of a sheltered Landing Place, formed by a substantial Pier, One Hundred and Seventy Feet long, with a Return Pier of Sixty Feet long. The Expense will be nearly Three Thousand Five Hundred Pounds; and the Contributors themselves have engaged to complete the work in November next.

Extract from page 22 of The 7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges<sup>6</sup>

In the end the harbour was completed in **October 1817** at the cost of £4016 – around £255500 in today's money<sup>7</sup>. The origin of the rose sandstone is thought to be the Munloch Quarry (source of the stone for Fort George).

The 9<sup>th</sup> Report of the Commissioners (1821) explains the cost overrun (a result of requirements creep)<sup>8</sup>:

<sup>5</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges

<sup>6</sup> Courtesy of Highland Libraries and Am Baile website

<sup>7</sup> In 2009 from the Bank of England's Inflation Calculator for Goods & Services

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2

FORTROSE HARBOUR.—The Burgh of Fortrose is situate at the Eastern extremity of the Black Isle-Road, on the North side of the entrance of the Bealey Frith. The expectation of extensive utility from the formation of a sheltered Harbour appeared so well founded, that we readily engaged to afford the usual aid. The Estimate was increased from £.3,500 to £.4,000 by the addition of Forty feet to the extent of the Return Pier, whereby the water at the entrance of the Harbour became a Yard deeper, and the Spring Tides rising Fourteen Feet, access is given to Vessels of considerable burden. The inside of the Harbour is about Thirty Yards Square, and three sides of it form an extensive Wharf. It was finished in October 1817, and we understand it to have fulfilled the expectations of the Contributors.

Expenditure:  
2,008 0 0  
2,008 0 0  

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£ 4,016 0 0

App. (Y.)

*By October 1817 when the harbour was completed, Napoleon had been defeated and exiled to St Helena where he died in 1821. The United Kingdom emerged from war as the most powerful country in the World*

The Commissioners duly took the money for their share of the harbour expenditure from the 'Balances arising from the Forfeited Estates as shown in Appendix Z to the 1821 report'<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Courtesy of Highland Libraries and Am Baile website

<sup>9</sup> Courtesy of Highland Libraries and Am Baile website

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2

1821]	FOR HIGHLAND ROADS AND BRIDGES.	109
- - - - - Appendix (Z.)		
HIGHLAND ROADS and BRIDGES, under the "Act for applying certain Balances HARBOURS and other Public Works there;" 46 <sup>o</sup> Geo. III, c. 155.		
to 31st December 1820. - - - - - C'		
	By Payments towards the Improvement of	£. s. d.
	£. s. d.	
	AVOCH HARBOUR - - - -	527 17 —
	BALLINTRAED HARBOUR (in part) -	638 18 9
	BAMFF HARBOUR (in part) - - -	6,200 — —
	BURGH HEAD HARBOUR - - - -	2,000 — —
	ST. CATHERINE'S PIER - - - -	83 10 —
	CULLEN HARBOUR - - - -	2,070 9 7
	DINGWALL CANAL - - - -	1,904 2 1
	FORTROSE HARBOUR - - - -	2,007 13 3
	FRAZERBURGH HARBOUR - - - -	5,277 17 7
	GOURDON HARBOUR - - - -	994 18 8
	INVERGORDON PIERS (in part) -	616 18 11
	JURA SMALL ISLES PIER - - - -	373 10 —
	KEILL'S PIER - - - -	64 18 7
	KIRKWALL HARBOUR - - - -	1,972 2 2
	KYLE RHEA PIERS - - - -	372 16 3
	PETERHEAD { SOUTH HARBOUR - - - -	3,900 — —
	{ NORTH HARBOUR - - - -	7,880 4 —
	{ (in part) - - - -	
	PORTMAHOLMACH HARBOUR - - - -	1,584 9 2
	PORTREE PIER - - - -	338 1 2
	TARBET HARBOUR - - - -	863 11 9
	TOBERMORY HARBOUR - - - -	1,455 5 4
	By Payment to Mr. Rickman as Secretary to the	41,327 4 3

The £2007 13s 3d would seem to represent a more accurate 50% of the £4016 noted earlier for the cost of the harbour.

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2



This picture is an engraving dated 1821<sup>10</sup> and shows the harbour much as it is today. The building on the right was the Harbour Store (not to be confused with Quay House which was built later).

### THE BUSIEST PART OF TOWN – HARBOUR INDUSTRIES

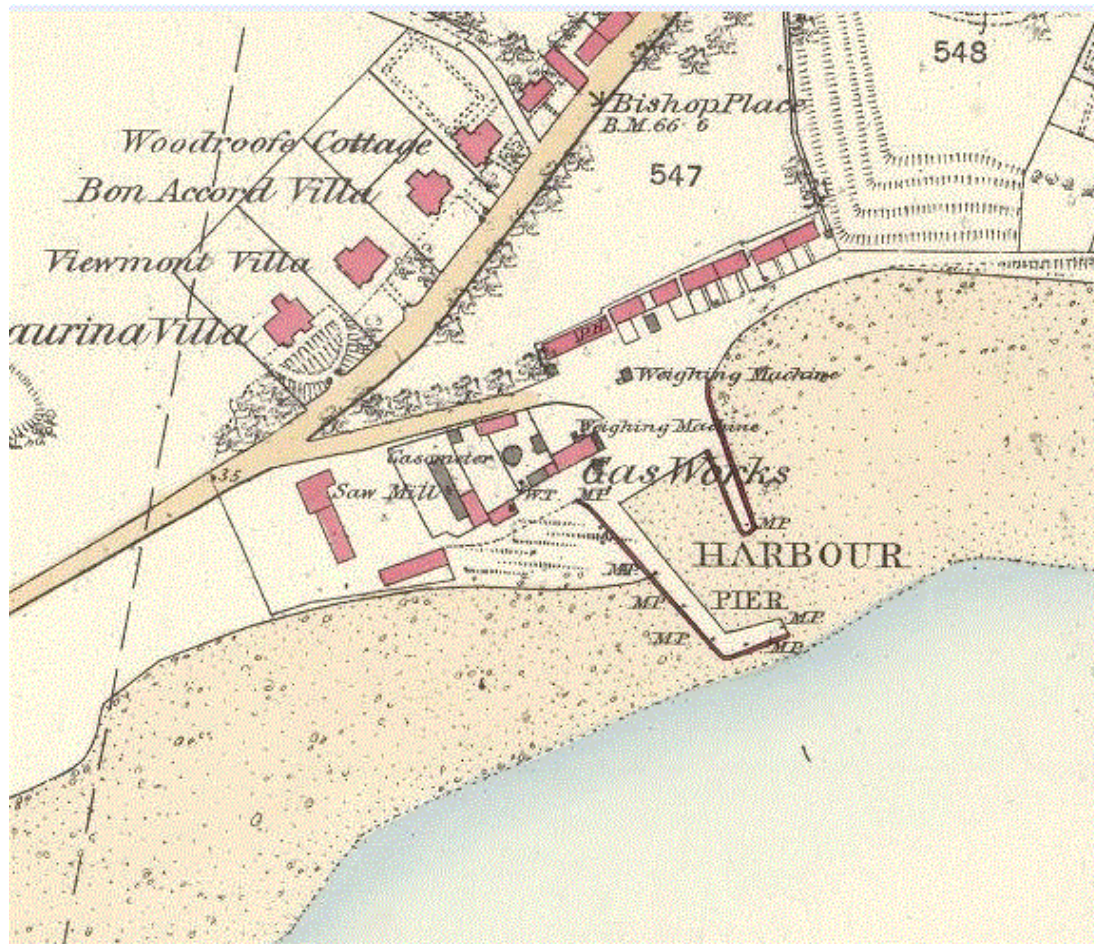
In those early days the harbour was the busiest part of the town as everything and nearly everybody travelled by sea. The harbour area also supported a distillery - the Eilean Dubh - and in 1868 the Fortrose Gaslight Company built a gas works to provide gas to the few who could afford it. Unfortunately it went bankrupt after five years although the buildings still appear in photos from the 1890s. At various times around the harbour there was also a pub – the Shore Inn – a smithy, a piggery, a saw mill and a mason’s yard, various stores and more recently even a Fire Station<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> D Pocock collection

<sup>11</sup> Information from Elizabeth Sutherland

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2



This is a map from the 1870s. This names the gas works and the saw mill (space presently occupied by post Second World War bungalows). The long building west of the saw mill aligned NNW – SSE was the distillery and this building still exists and is partly converted in to apartments. The water for the distillery came from a dam to the north of the main road in the area occupied now by The Oaks. The mason's yard was attached to the saw mill. The 'PH' is the Shore Inn – now a garden for Marine Cottage. The building nearest to the harbour and with a weighing machine to its rear was the Harbour Store (also known as the Steamer Store) and was the earliest building established at the harbour.

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2



This is the only known picture of the gas works with its circular 'gasometer' which is butting on to the Harbour Store left of the chimney<sup>12</sup> (today this space is occupied by 'Harbourside' built in 1956). It would have been taken after 1892 (which was when the *Dispatch* – the large vessel in the harbour – was brought to Fortrose by an Avoch man). The various large metal mooring posts around the harbour today are thought to be part of the gas retorts – 'reuse' is nothing new!

*The first public piped gas supply was to 13 lamps in Pall Mall, London, in 1807. By the 1850s most towns had gas street lighting. By the 1860s gas lighting started to replace candles and oil lamps in homes.*

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<sup>12</sup> Groam House Museum Collection

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2



This is the Shore Inn probably taken early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup> Below is a close-up of the sign above the door which says 'Shore Inn, John Smith licensed to retail beer, spirits & wines'. The lady may be 'Frugal Maggie' – the publican was known as 'Thrifty John'.



The Shore Inn still appears on the 1905/6 map but had gone by 1930<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Groam House Museum Collection

<sup>14</sup> Information from George Taylor

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2



This photograph<sup>15</sup> shows the Harbour Store ‘through’ the masts of the small fishing boat. The Harbour Store stood until around 1949<sup>16</sup>. The gap in the buildings in the foreground is where the Shore Inn stood. The building to the right is the present day Quay House. The origins of Quay House are obscure. In some references it is listed as a granary built in 1813 however it does not appear on the 1870 map and is first seen on the application to build a pier dated 1878. Another story is that it was built by Lipton’s the grocers as a store in anticipation that Fortrose would be used as a naval base and would require supplies – however, this did not happen despite many fleet manoeuvres in the Firth before the First World War and it was bought by SAI for use as a grain and potato store. Quay House was converted to a dwelling in the 1960s.

The enormous stacks of wood show how active the saw mill (owned by Wylie’s) was. The mill produced pit props, railway sleepers and wagon beds<sup>17</sup> and worked through to the 1920s although the harbour continued to handle timber cargos until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. For those intimate with the mud in the harbour it is interesting to note that the level 80 to 90 years ago is similar to today’s judged by the steps in the North West corner.

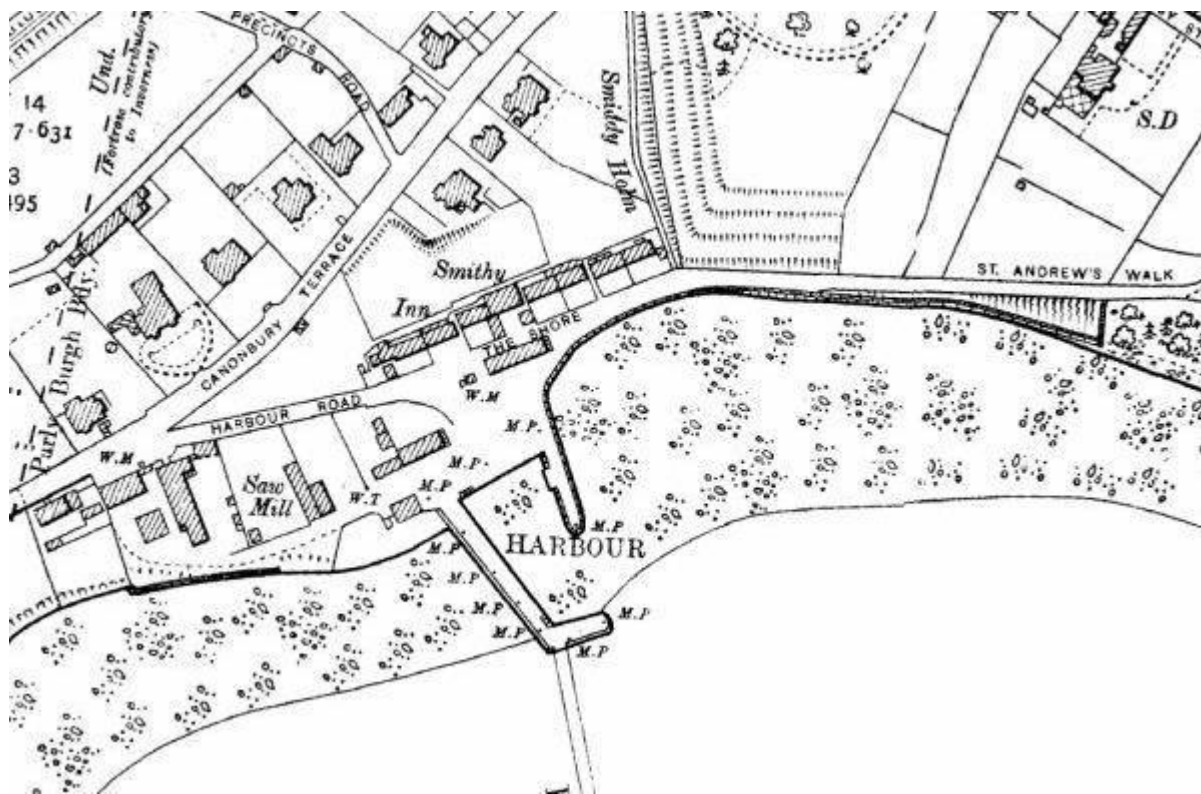
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<sup>15</sup> Groam House Museum Collection

<sup>16</sup> Information from George Taylor

<sup>17</sup> Information from George Taylor

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2



The map above shows the situation in 1905/6. The gas works is no longer noted although some of the building is still shown. The row of 3 houses on the brae above the shore cottages has been built (Arawa – the middle house – is known to have been built in 1896<sup>18</sup>) and there is now a smithy east of the Shore Inn. Quay House also appears to the south of the smithy. There is a building south of the old gas works - this was the scaffie's hut where the 'bin' men kept their horse and cart. The hut disappeared in the early 1950s<sup>19</sup> and the area around the hut was the town midden – now part of the dinghy park (which was extended seawards in the 1960s)! The 'M.P' on the map denotes mooring posts and the 'W.M' weighing machines. At the top of Harbour Road there is a W.M outside a building which still exists and is known as the West End Stores (now 2 dwellings). This had been a general merchants store run by J & T Henderson (we will hear more about John Henderson later on) selling cattle feed, iron mongery, coal and stoves<sup>20</sup>. The West End Stores carried on until the 1990s owned by the MacKay family before being converted to dwellings. West of these stores was the Taylor family home (Craigwood – built in 1875 by George Taylor's Grandfather) and workshops (originally on the ground floor but later on in a separate shed as the ground floor was need for living space as the family expanded) for wheel making, joinery and funeral services including coffin making.

<sup>18</sup> Information from David Pocock

<sup>19</sup> Information from George Taylor

<sup>20</sup> Information from George Taylor

## HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 2



This photo shows a very quiet scene taken shortly before the Second World War. The Shore Inn has gone and the Harbour Store and Quay House appear to be deserted. The piles of timber are also gone but mooring lines on the left indicate the presence of a vessel. The motor boat (the Lizzie) and dinghy belonged to Bob Home<sup>21</sup>. The remains of the wooden posts used to hold vessels off the sloping wall of the mole or Eastern wall are still evident. The car in front of Marine Cottage is a Morris 8 and may be the same car that appears later on with the *Jesmond* and *Fernside* (Part 4).

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<sup>21</sup> Information from George Taylor