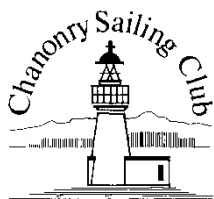


HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR

PART 3



THE PIER AND FERRIES

In the mid 1800s Kenneth Mackenzie used to run a small steamer called the *Speedwell* which traded between Fortrose and Inverness. He had a rival in the Moray Firth Shipping Company whose boat agent, Duncan Macpherson, ran a steamer called the *Eilean Dubh*. Apparently Macpherson took harbour dues from Mackenzie for a whole year then sued him for landing in the Fortrose harbour area! Fair or not the Moray Firth Shipping Company had the better case in law¹.

While the harbour was considered to be 'safe and convenient', steamers could only enter the harbour near high water. This was acceptable for cargo ships used to waiting for the tide (as they still do today if docking at Inverness) but hopeless for passengers requiring a regular service. Consequently, in 1878, the Fortrose Town Clerk, John Henderson, put up a provisional order to build a wooden landing stage or pier at a cost of £3500 (around £317260 in today's money²). The provisional order map was drawn in 1878 by James Fraser CE engineer of Inverness and it would seem that it was amended to include an intermediate landing stage which held-up Board of Trade approval until 26 August 1881³. In the meantime the Fortrose Pier & Harbour Order 1879 was raised by John Henderson and granted in the 42 & 43 Victoria Session (of Parliament) for a 230 yard pier with a principal landing stage of 22 by 10 yards and an intermediate landing stage of 22 by 8 yards, 103 yards from seaward⁴.

*There are 2 High
Waters most days but
successive tides
become 'later' in the
day*

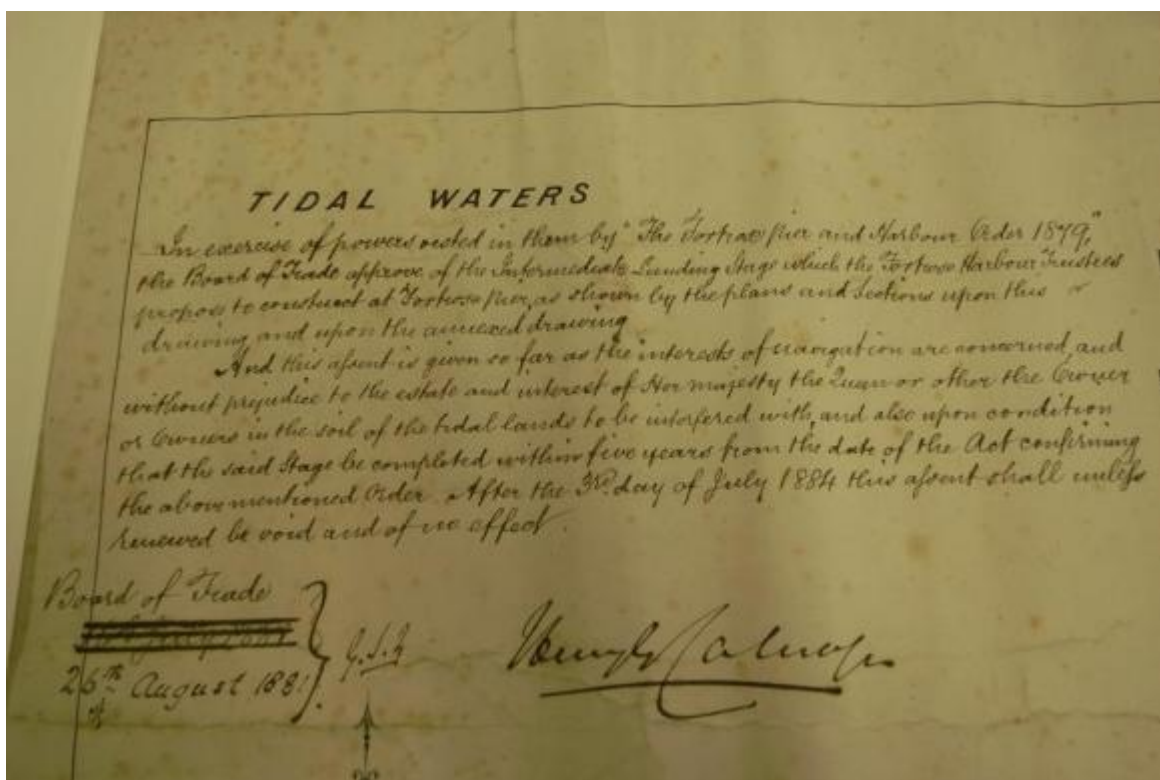
¹ Information from Elizabeth Sutherland

² In 2009 from the Bank of England's Inflation Calculator for Goods & Services

³ Groam House Museum Collection

⁴ Groam House Museum Collection

HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 3



This is the Board of Trade note on the 1878 provisional order map. It reads:

'TIDAL WATERS

In exercise of powers vested in them by "The Fortrose Pier and Harbour Order 1879", the Board of Trade approve of the Intermediate Landing Stage which the Fortrose Harbour Trustees propose to construct at Fortrose Pier, as shown by the plans and Sections upon this drawing and upon the annexed drawing.

And this assent is given so far as the interests of navigation are concerned, and without prejudice to the estate and interest of Her Majesty the Queen or other the Owner or Owners in the soil of the tidal lands to be interfered with, and also upon condition that the said Stage be completed within five years from the date of the Act confirming the above mentioned Order. After the 3rd day of July 1884 this assent shall unless renewed be void and of no effect.'

The 'Board of Trade' is formally 'The Lords of the Committee of Privy Council appointed for the consideration of all matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations'

HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 3



The above shows the detail of the 1878 pier plan with **X** against the Intermediate Landing Stage.⁵

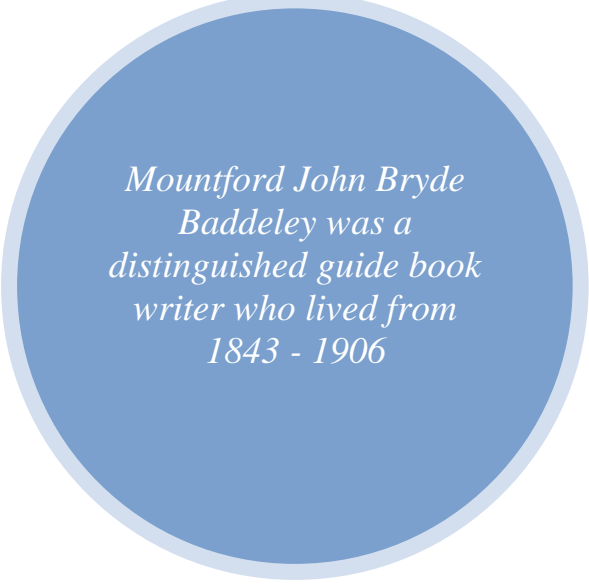
By 1882, the wooden pier was built and the old harbour was also thoroughly repaired. You can still see where the pier joined the stone structure in the gap in the original wall filled by the present sailing club's starter's box.

⁵ Groam House Museum Collection

HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 3

The pier gave steamers access at any state of tide allowing passenger timetables to be established and in 1882 the Black Isle Steam-Ship Company was formed with Mr James Douglas Fletcher of Rosehaugh as chairman. John Henderson had become JD Fletcher's Factor in 1878 and was clearly this 'right hand man' in the local area. J Henderson is also listed as a Manager & Director of the Black Isle Steam-Ship Company; he must have been a very busy man as in addition to his Town Clerk post he was also Depute Clerk to the Justices of the Peace, Clerk & Treasurer to the School Board, Clerk & Treasurer to the Academy, Vice-President of the Mechanics Institution and Secretary & Treasurer to the Fortrose Golf Club and Secretary to the Rosehaugh Rubber Company. John Henderson lived in Canonbury off the main road above the harbour and the Estate Offices were built next door in what is now Kindeace Lodge.

The first action of the Black Isle Steam-Ship Company was to try to buy the *Speedwell* but Captain Mackenzie refused to sell. The new company then bought a second hand steamer, the *Rosehaugh* which was commanded by Captain Grieve (also listed as the Harbour & Shore-master in 1885). By 1885 the Black Isle Steam-Ship Company's steamer ran between Inverness and Fortrose twice a day on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and once on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, during summer, and once a day in winter; other steamers afforded communication with Inverness 2 or 3 times a week. The service would not have supported regular commuting to Inverness but Fortrose and Rosemarkie were holiday destinations so the steamers would have carried day trippers and holiday makers to the seaside from Inverness. As MJB Baddeley's Thorough Guide of 1884 says '*A good steamer has been put on to this route and those who enjoy a pleasant sail in calm water and amid softly beautiful scenery will not repent of devoting a few hours to the excursion. Passengers are allowed about three hours at Fortrose, during which they may visit the charming scenery of St Helena⁶, or enjoy a capital bathe on the sands of Rosemarkie, one mile distant.*'



*Mountford John Bryde
Baddeley was a
distinguished guide book
writer who lived from
1843 - 1906*

⁶ St Helena refers to a small house and grounds south of the Rosemarkie Burn built in 1815. In 1877 George Dunlop bought land along the burn and erected the villa 'Fairy Glen'. Dunlop was a shareholder in the Black Isle Steam-Ship Company and the owner of the Royal Hotel in Fortrose (now the Anderson) – Historic Scotland

HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 3



This illustration of Fortrose harbour and pier is taken from Angus J Beaton's 'Illustrated Guide to Fortrose and Vicinity, with an appendix on the Antiquities of the Black Isle', published in Inverness in 1885. It shows the pier and a small steamer moored inside the southern wall. The schooner is very probably the *Annie* (see Part 4).

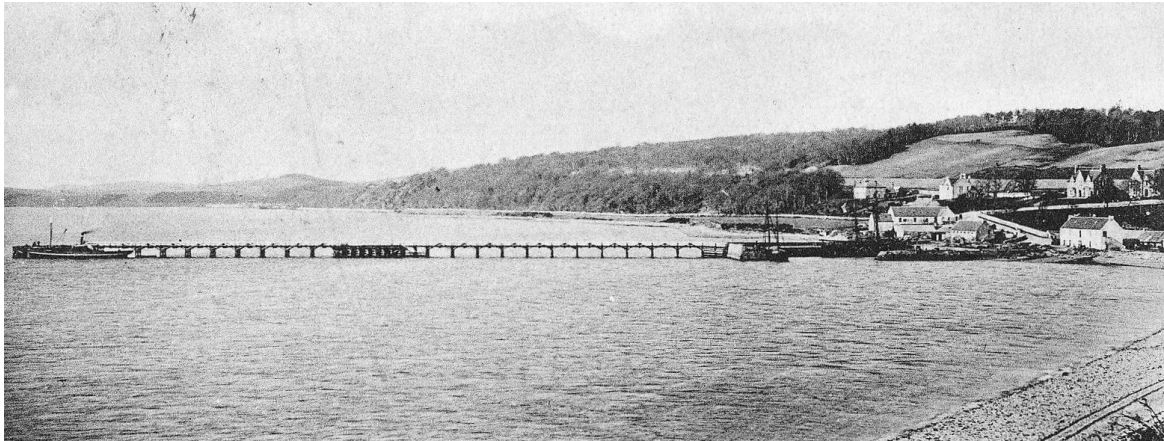


This 'tinted' picture⁷ taken some time before the First World War gives a good impression of

⁷ Pocock collection

HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 3

the length of the pier looking back to the harbour from the outer landing stage. It also shows the various harbour buildings starting with the back of the West End stores on the left. The lad on the bicycle us thought to be Jack Stewart who was a grocer on the High Street⁸.



This picture also illustrates the length (230 yards) of the pier and the long walk passengers would have experienced to the small steamer tied-up at the outer landing stage.

*Several of the images of the
harbour and pier were taken
by Valentine & Sons of
Dundee established in 1851.
Valentine Picture Postcards
date from 1894*

⁸ From George Taylor

HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 3



This very atmospheric photo shows the pier looking rather worn. It was taken during an Easterly and shows at the lower level the harbour buildings from left to right as the Scaffie's hut, the gas works chimney, the Harbour Store, Marine Cottage, the Shore Inn, Quay House and the 4 cottages still standing on St Andrew's Walk. It probably dates from around 1910.

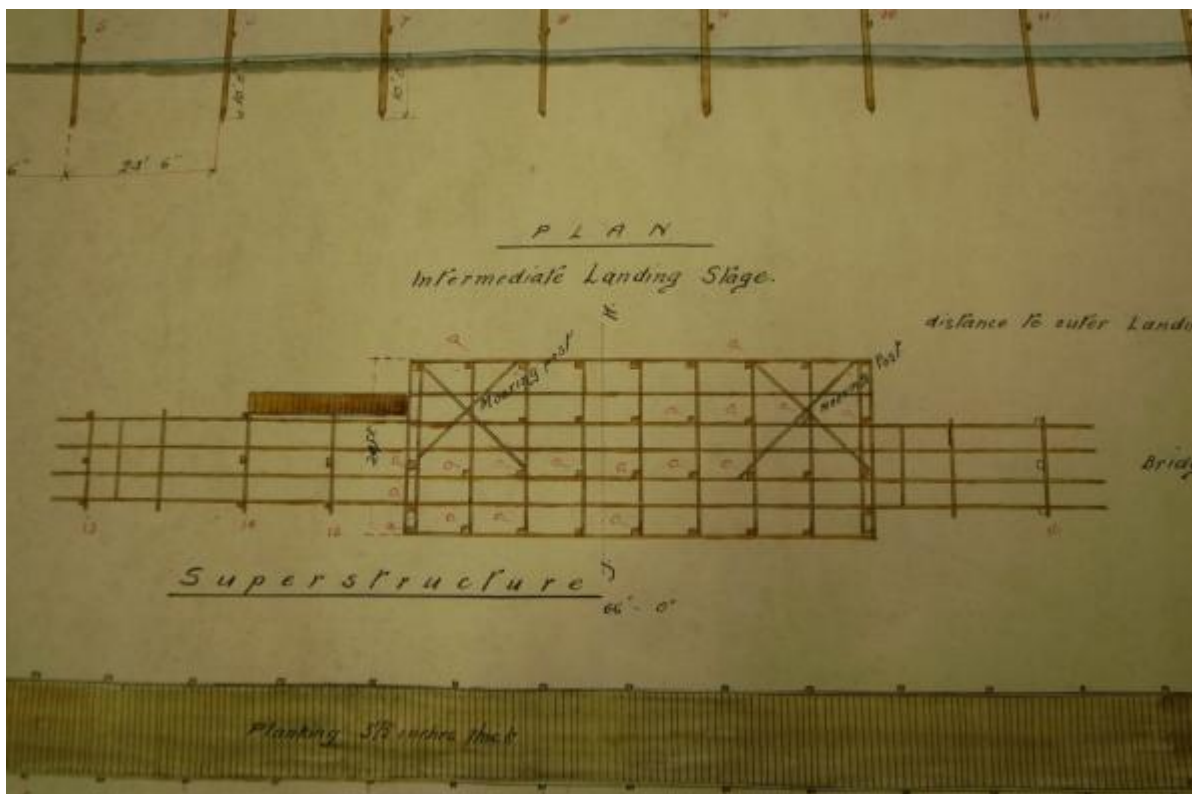
The opening of the Black Isle Railway (more properly the Fortrose Branch of the Highland Railway) opened in 1894 and brought an end to the Black Isle Steam-Ship Company which went in to voluntary liquidation on 5 April 1898 (John Henderson was elected Liquidator⁹). The book *Fortrose – a Garden City by the Sea* published in 1912 records the fine pier in a 'ruinous condition' and the author goes on to suggest that it should be repaired to allow steamers to call again and to provide an alternative to the '*long, round-about, slow and tedious railway journey*' to Inverness although he did acknowledge that in 1912 an excellent service of motor cars now runs between Cromarty, Fortrose and the Kessock ferry which enables the journey to Inverness to be made in about an hour.

The suggestion to repair the pier was clearly taken seriously – the pictures below¹⁰ show details from a 1912 plan to repair the pier (new timbers in red) – sadly it was not to happen.

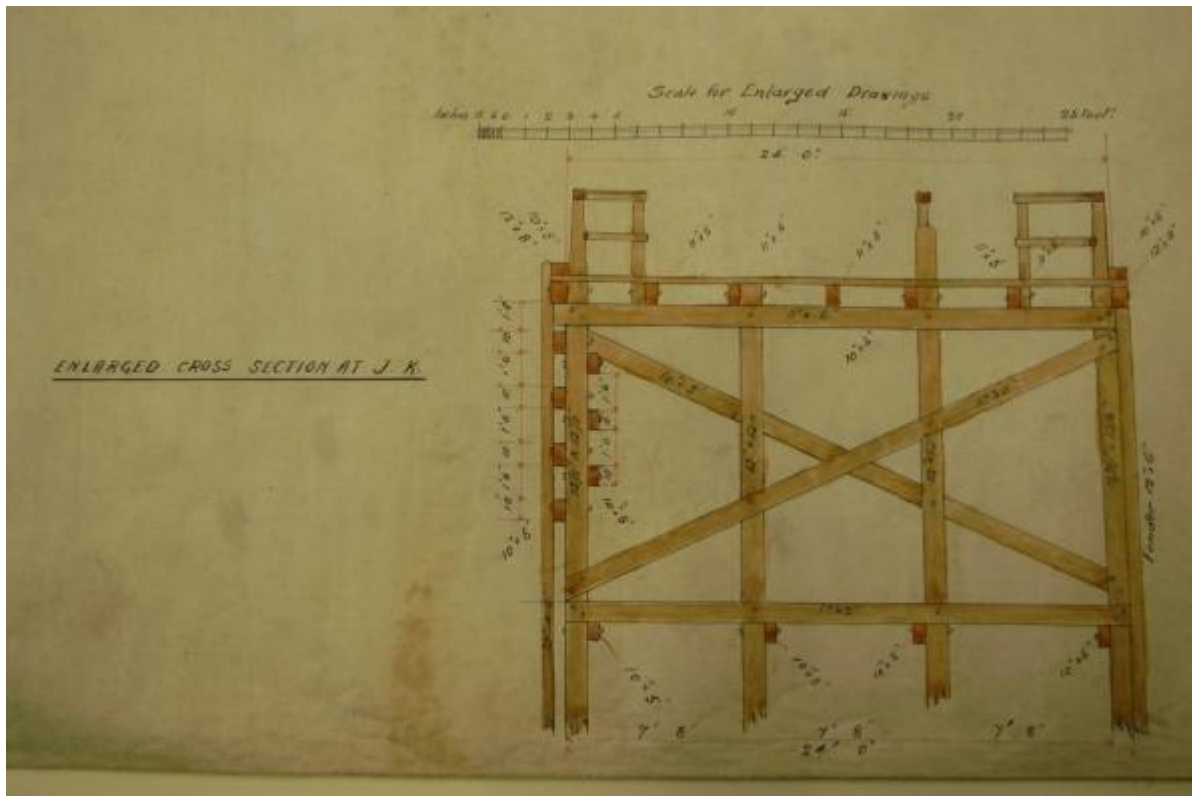
⁹ Edinburgh Gazette 12 April 1898

¹⁰ Groam House Museum collection

HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR
PART 3



HARBOURING HERITAGE – A HISTORY OF FORTROSE HARBOUR PART 3



In 1927 the most of the wooden pier was swept away in a storm and remnants went in a gale in 1935 or 36.



The 'short' pier sometime after the storm of 1927.