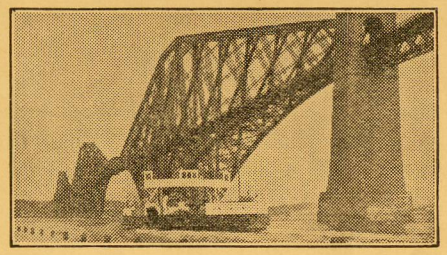
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THE STORY OF THE WATER PASSAGE AT QUEENSFERRY

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM DENNY & BROTHERS LTD., DUMBARTON

— 1964 —

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PREFACE

This is an account of the rise and development of the ferry service across the Firth of Forth at South Queensferry, a service instituted in early days and continued until this time.

In my search for contemporary sources of information I was greatly assisted by C. T. McInnes, Esq., O.B.E., LL.D., formerly Curator of the Historical Department of H.M. Register House, Edinburgh, and his staff, as also by his successor in Office, John Imrie, Esq., to all of whom I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness. I also desire to thank the Provost, Magistrates and Council of the Royal Burgh of Queensferry for affording me opportunity to peruse the Burgh Records.

I wish also to thank Captain R. A. Mason, Manager of the ferry service at Queensferry, for his interest and help.

I am indebted to Messrs William Denny & Brothers, Ltd. for arranging to publish this brochure.

JOHN MASON.

"MAYFIELD"

SOUTH QUEENSFERRY

1964



R A Mason
3/9/64

Ferry Manager.

FOREWORD

TO THE SECOND EDITION

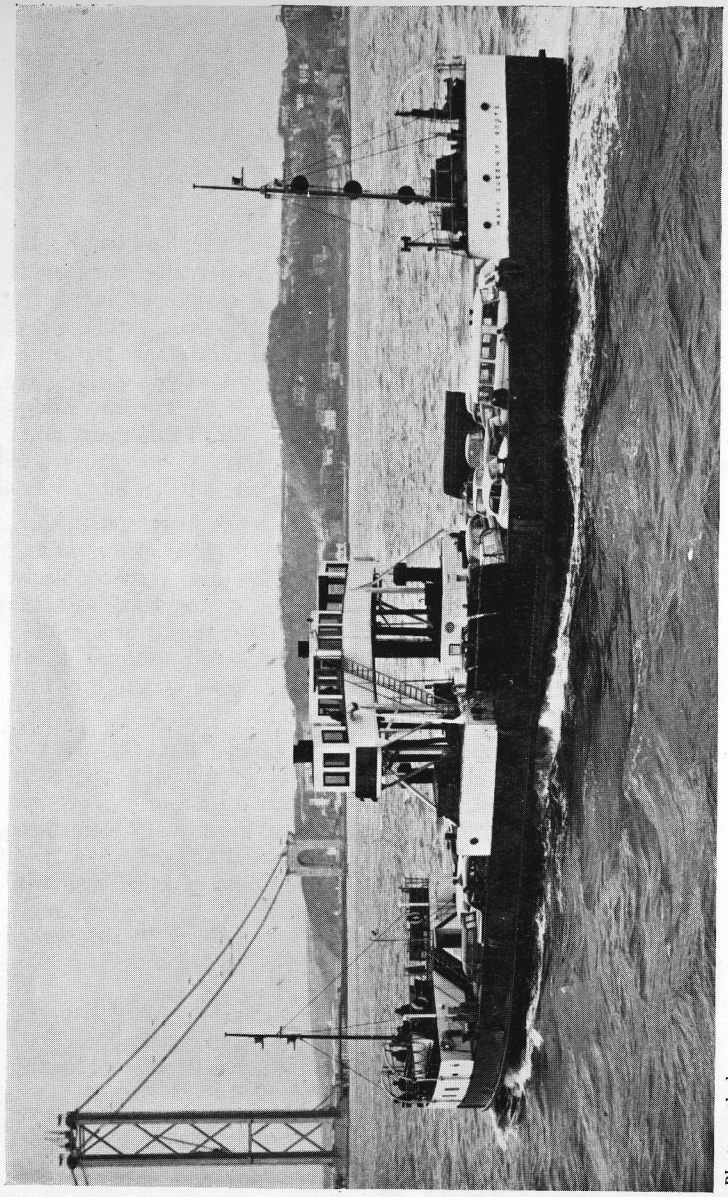
This Foreword to the Second Edition of the booklet, by Dr John Mason, which tells The Story of The Water Passage at Queensferry, is written at a time when the closure of the Ferry Service on the Queensferry Passage is due to occur within a few weeks' time. Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, has graciously consented to inaugurate the new Forth Road Bridge on Friday, 4th September 1964, and it is confidently expected that the Bridge will be opened to traffic on the same day. When this event takes place the Ferries will cease to operate and thus a long chapter in the history of Scottish river transport will come to an end.

The traffic carried by the Ferry Service has increased steadily over the thirty years since the " new " vessels *Queen Margaret* and *Robert the Bruce* were put into service in 1934 to meet, particularly, the needs of the ever-growing volume of motor traffic on the roads. In the year ending 29th February 1964, well over 2 million passengers (including drivers) and some 896,000 vehicles of all descriptions were carried over the water passage, on the four Ferries then operating.

Dr Mason's interesting Story is set against a background of Scottish history stretching back for a period of time now approaching 900 years. The historical link, which he describes, between Queen Margaret of Scotland and the Water Passage at Queensferry will be fittingly recognised on 4th September this year when H.M. The Queen, accompanied by H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh will, as presently arranged, cross the water passage from North to South Queensferry on the last official sailing of the Ferry Vessel, *Queen Margaret*.

F. R. TOPPING
lately Deputy Chairman
William Denny & Brothers, Limited
Leven Shipyard
Dumbarton

August 1964



Photograph by Edinburgh Ciné Society

"MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS"

THE STORY OF THE WATER PASSAGE AT QUEENSFERRY

By JOHN MASON

It may be said that Queen Margaret, wife of Malcolm Canmore, King of Scots, set the fashion of crossing the watergang or passage over the Firth of Forth when she sailed in the royal ferry boat on her frequent journeys to and from the chapel at Edinburgh. On her death within the castle walls in 1093, her remains were borne in sad procession along the route over which she had so often travelled, to the southern shore of the Firth, to the landing place of the Queen, and transported over the water to the place of interment at Dunfermline. Canmore, her lord, his treacherous brother Donald Bane, and his sons Duncan, Alexander, and David all crossed the water on the recognised passage way. In 1123, Alexander — King Alexander I — when crossing the ferry, was caught in a fierce gale, and the boat in which he sailed was "cast upon Inchcombe", where a hermit gave him hospitality. In after years the King, in gratitude, founded a monastery there. In 1153 the remains of King David I, who died in the castle of Carlisle, were borne to the south shore of the Firth and carried over the watergang to the town of Dunfermline.

THE INSTITUTION OF A REGULAR FERRY SERVICE

It was King David I who instituted a regular ferry service when in 1129 or 1130, according to the Register of Dunfermline, he granted to the Abbot and Convent the "Passage and ship of Enderkeithing" which was in his lordship, on condition that all travellers to and from the Court should have free passage over the water. This grant was confirmed by Malcolm IV, William the Lion, Alexander II and Alexander III, thus preserving its rights and privileges. Malcolm IV not only confirmed the rights of the passage to the Convent of Dunfermline, but granted to it certain lands, called hospital lands, on the north side of the Firth, known as the Ferry Field, as well as the lands of Murehall on the south shore.

In 1163 Pope Alexander III confirmed to the Convent rights to "a half of the Passage of Inverkeithing". In the Charter of 1184 granted by Pope Lucius, mention is made of "half the

Passage of Queen Margaret". In the year 1211 Pope Innocent III confirmed the right to "the Passage of the Queen, the hospital lands near Inverkeithing, and the lands on the south side which Malcolm had conferred with all their liberties". In 1234 Pope Gregory confirmed the right of "half the Passage of St Margaret the Queen". About the year 1231 King Robert I gave the Convent "half the Passage of the Queen which the late Roger de Moubray possessed". This was Moubray of Barnbougle who also held the Barony of Inverkeithing. He had been a leader in a rising against the king. Because of this, his estates had been forfeited. So the Convent of Dunfermline became possessed of the rights of the whole passage, with the hospital lands on the north and the lands of Murehall on the south.

THE LANDING PLACES ON THE SOUTH SHORE

The ferry boats landed on the south shore at the Binks, an outcrop of sandstone rocks situated near the west end of the present burgh of Queensferry. In 1342 the ownership of the rocks was disputed between James of Dundas and the Abbot of Dunfermline. The latter based his claim on the Charter granted by David I and its confirmations, as well as upon immemorial use of the rocks by the abbey boats. The matter was referred to the Pope who sided with the Abbot and excommunicated Dundas who afterwards submitted and was reinstated to participation in the ordinances of the Church on condition that he refrained from molesting the ferriers. The rock in dispute, popularly called the Binks to this day, may have received its name from the fact that in the days of the Carmelite Friars, boats landed their passengers and cargoes at this place which was in proximity to the land possessed by William Benks who is mentioned in a letter sent by Mary, the Queen Dowager, to the Laird of Dundas in 1549 as owing victual rent to Prior Thomas Young. The ferry passengers probably passed through Benks' land on their way to the Burgh street.

WHEN THE PASSAGE WAS LEASED TO SUBSTANTIAL SEAMEN

There came a day when the running of the ferry service proved too great an undertaking for the Abbot and Convent. So the

passage was let to substantial seamen who, at their own charges, carried passengers and beasts over the water in their boats. In 1275 Abbot Radulphus granted eight oars of the new passage boat to seven persons — one of them a woman. One seaman had a holding of two oars and the others each a single oar, at a reddendo of eight pence Scots per annum for each oar, together with services rendered to the Convent, use and wont. Such a system was extended and persisted until the beginning of the 19th century.

In the archives of the Royal Burgh of Queensferry there is a Notorial Instrument dated 2nd June 1567 which grants possession of one sixteenth of the Water Passage and one sixteenth of the lands of Murehall to John Little and Margaret Moubray, his spouse conjointly in life rent, and to Richard Little, their son, heritably. This Instrument followed a Precept directed to the Chaimberlain of the Convent of Dunfermline as bailie authorised to give sasine. The Precept was contained in a Charter granted by Robert Pitcairn, Commendator of the Convent, dated 10th April 1567. The Charter was subscribed by him, John Baxter, Prior, and by other monks, as witnesses.

On that day, 2nd June 1567, John Little, his wife, and his son Richard met the Notary Public, with four witnesses, on the south shore of the Firth, and there received their right to the passage by delivery to them of water and sand. They then proceeded up the slope to the land which was to be bestowed, and there as a token of possession they were given earth and a stone.

The Water passage was divided into 16 shares and fued to various people on both sides of the Firth. Attached to each fue were the lands. On the north side of the Firth the lands of Ferryfield consisted of four shares; on the south side the acres of Murehall were fued in 12 shares. In 1599 David Thomson of Queensferry and his spouse, Margaret Allan, held a lease of one thirty-second part of the Passage. Blase Dauling and James Jameson were also lease-holders, employing deck-hands from the Burgh. Through the centuries a succession of seamen worked the ferry service, masters of boats, like James Hill whose ships, the *Amelia* and the *James,* plied regularly between the north and south shores during the 18th century, carrying horses, cattle, sheep,

coaches and carts, besides foot passengers, and whose yawls carried the Packet or Express, or the rich burgher in a hurry to cross the water.

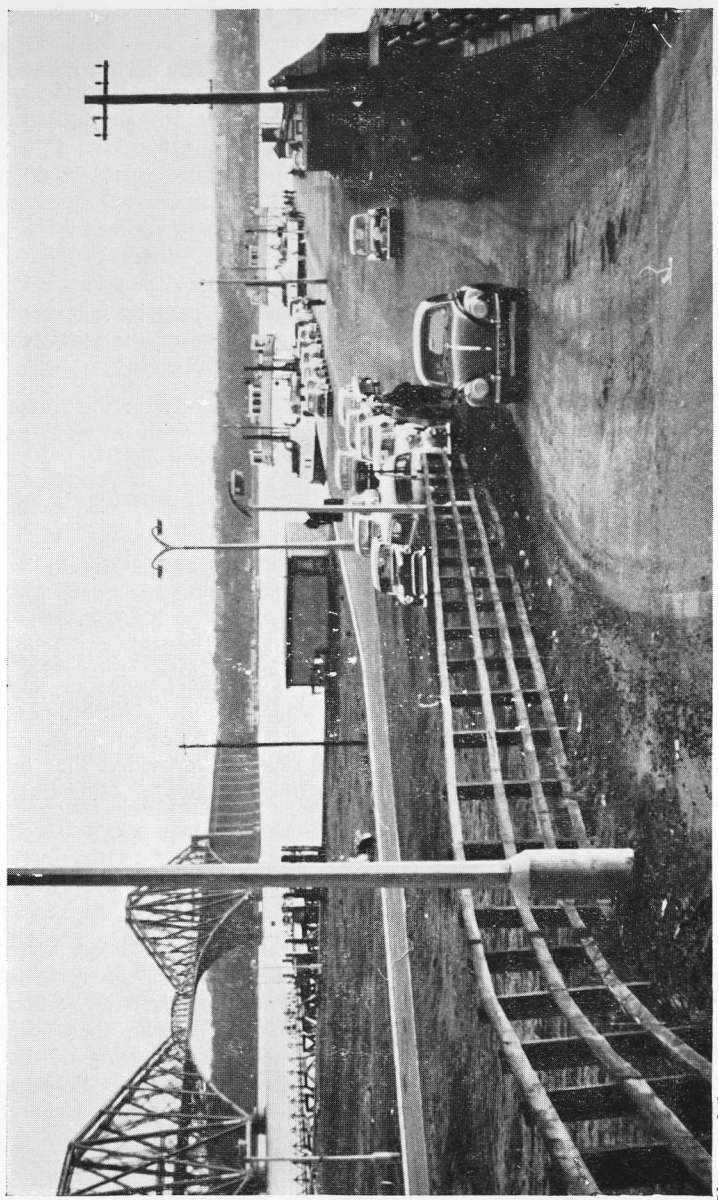
How the boatmen managed to get horses and other large animals aboard in early times is not known. The arrangements for shipment appear to have been unsatisfactory until the middle of the 15th century, when according to Act of Parliament, it was deemed necessary " for the utility & profit of the King's highness & his lieges " who at diverse times crossed the ferry with their steeds, that at the water passages on both sides of the Firth, at Leith, Kinghorn, Queensferry, gangways (briggis of buirdis) should be erected to aid the shipping of beasts. The Act, 1467, demanded compliance within 20 days, under penalty of confiscation of the boat with loss of liberty to ferry for a year and a day.

CHARGES FOR CROSSING THE FERRY

From the time when David I granted to the Convent of Dunfermline the Passage of the ship of Inverkeithing, monks and merchants, courtiers and emissaries, burgesses and noblemen crossed the ferry without let or hindrance until the middle of the 14th century when the boatmen began to charge clerics, even papal nuncios, two pennies for the crossing for a horse while the nobleman and his servants paid only a penny. This imposition upon clerics, who were entitled to travel free, according to " the institutes of the holy father ", was keenly resented, and a Petition was presented to the Pope by the clergy of Scotland craving that the abuse might be removed. The plea was granted on 7th July 1364, the passage dues being fixed at one penny.

In 1474 the charges for crossing the ferry were fixed by Act of Parliament — one penny Scots for a man and two pence for a horse — and he who dared to extort more was liable to a fine of 40 shillings Scots and to suffer the misery of a spell in prison according to the will of the King.

During the 16th century, the boatmen or ferriers, notwithstanding the recognised charges allowed, were claiming part of the cargo in addition. So the former Acts relating to the ferry charges were abolished and it was ordained that owners of boats



Photograph by Edinburgh Ciné Society

" ROBERT THE BRUCE " AND " QUEEN MARGARET " AT THE NORTH PIER

should adhere to the new scale of charges — " If any person desires a boat himself he should pay for his porterage iiijs (4/-) every man and horse viijd (8d.) Ilk man or woman/ alone iiijd (4d.) under pain of deid and confiscation of their goods ".

REGULATION OF THE PASSAGE

In 1634 the Court of Regality enacted:

1. That no person was permitted to transport passengers except in one of the passage boats belonging to one of the stewards of the water, duly licensed by the Court of Regality.
2. That no boatman should presume to lay hands on the horse of any gentleman or any other passenger, with a view to leading it to his boat, without the owner's consent.
3. That all boatmen should serve the lieges on all occasions, wind and weather permitting.
4. That the ordinary freight on any ordinary passage should be — a single person 1/4, a single passenger and his horse 3/4 Scots.
5. That no man or boat should presume to transport passengers on the Lord's Day, either in time of Divine Service or any other time unless the intending passenger be on public business and has authority to travel, given by some office of State, or is going for physician, in case of sickness, provided that he possess certification from a justice of the peace, a Magistrate or a minister of the Gospel.
6. That since there were only now two great boats on the ferry service, it should be arranged for one of them to be always at each side of the Firth.

On 14th January 1669 feuars of the Water Passage were summoned to produce before the Court of Regality " their rights to the fue of the water of the south and north ferrie ", when 13 persons appeared and satisfied the Court, among them the Laird of Dundas and the Lord Register. At the meeting of the Court it was decreed that no person having interest in the Passage should use any boat on the watergang unless he possessed a share

equal to at least four sixteenths and had authority from the Court to ferry passengers and goods across the Firth. A survey of the boats in use revealed that Archibald Wilson was the owner of a new boat called *Yester Friggit* built in the burgh of Queensferry during August and September; that there was a great boat called the *Burgan of Northe Ferrie* belonging to Jean Moubray, a widow, a vessel called the *Issobel,* belong to John Allan of " South ferrie ", and a new boat, a yawl called the *Burgane* belonging to North Queensferry.

The running of the service depended not only upon the clemency or inclemency of the weather and the behaviour of the tides, but also upon the mood and temperament of the ferriers who, when the fit was on them, might refuse to lowse from their moorings. Such abuses were prevalent in the 18th century. In a fenced Court of the Admiralty at Dunfermline, held on the 13th day of October 1749, the state of the service was reviewed, and new regulations were issued for the safety and despatch of the lieges. The judges licensed and authorised four boats and four yawls for the service of the Passage, and ordained the present proprietors or tacksmen of the watergang, within 20 days, to find caution in the Admiralty Books, that they would keep good and sufficient boats, four good yawls, in navigable condition, provided with suitable cables, sails, anchors, rigging and " other apparrel ". The boats were to be inspected twice in the year by an able carpenter and sailor, the visitation to be held 14 days before the meeting of Court held on the first Friday of April and of October and to be reported to the judges on each occasion. On the first Friday of March, June, September and December, the proprietors and tacksmen of the Passage were obliged to name by writ four of the best sailors at the Passage to be " Masters " of the four boats, to navigate them and to receive and account for the freights. For the greater despatch of the boats, and to prevent disorder in the berths, a bell was to be rung every two hours, the time being regulated by the public clock at North Queensferry where, experience had shown, all the big boats had to be moored in the night time for their safety and preservation. The first bell was to be rung at four in the morning and the last at eight in the evening from 1st March to 31st August. From 1st September till the end of February, or earlier if daylight permitted, the first bell was to

be rung at 8 a.m. and the last at 4 p.m. At the ringing of the bell in the morning, the boat in the berth was to set off immediately and the others to follow at two-hour intervals, whether or not they had passengers or goods. At the first sign of the north-based boat leaving its berth, the berth boat on the south side was to set off so that there might be no interruption in the service.

"Any nobleman, gentleman, or other," stated the Act of Regulation, "may hire a boat or yawl, not being the berth boat, who is appointed to keep her berth; which boat so hired, shall proceed immediately with the person or persons that hired themselves and goods."

At the time of markets, "when there are horses, nolt or sheep to carry over, the boatman shall have no regard to the ringing of the bell, but shall immediately cross with the cargo".

The yawls were not intended for ordinary service but only for the "Packet or Expresses".

On each Sabbath day a boat with its crew was to be in attendance on the south side of the Passage, to transport passengers who must needs cross on that day.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MASTERS OF BOATS

The Master of each boat was instructed to pay to the tacksman or collector appointed by the Court, the "ferry silver", conform to use and wont, "to be applied for repairing the Shippings". He was responsible for giving in a signed list of his crew for the next day to the "Possessor of William Hill's public house at South Queensferry", and also a list to the Possessor of John Douglas's public house at North Ferry, and a copy to the Possessor of the public house at Newhalls, "so that passengers may know whom to sue when they are not served in terms of the Regulations". For the purpose of easy identification, the name of each boat and yawl was to be painted on both the outer and inner stern.

Each night the masters of the four boats, by turn, named a sailor to be on the watch, so that "if a Blaze be put up at the south side a boat or yawl may go immediately to serve". The collector of the Ferry Silver was instructed to pay a crown per quarter to the bell ringer and to the keeper of the clock.

THE TABLE OF FREIGHTS

The trustees fixed the following Table of Freights:—

Each person crossing the ferry in daytime		1/6 Scots
,, horse, ass or mule		4/-
,, Lowland ox or cow		4/-
,, Highland or small ox or cow		3/-
,, sheep		-/6
,, swine		2/-
,, calf		1/-
,, lamb		-/4
,, horse load		3/-
,, "Cadgers with Fowls and other Vipers"*		
,, coach or four-wheeled chaise	£3	
,, two-wheeled coach	£1	10/-
,, cart		12/-
,, covered cart or wagon	£1	4/-
,, horse in a coach, cart or wagon to pay the rate (4/-) as already stated		
,, a boat express in daytime	£1	10/-
A boat express "under cloud of night"	£2	
A yawl express by day		12/-
A yawl express by night		18/-

In 1775 the Trustees for Improvement of Fisheries and Manufactures in Scotland allowed a considerable sum of money out of the rents under their management for the repair of the Passage landing places or shippings, but they entrusted the application of the grant to one of their number who "pleased to exhaust the money upon the shippings at Newhalls and on a shipping east of North Ferry", without bestowing a penny "upon the more useful and commodious shippings at the town of Queensferry".

When in 1784, the Estates in Scotland forfeited and annexed to the Crown after the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, were restored to their former owners on their heirs, a large amount of money had accumulated as profits from the wise administration of the

* *The load was free but the Cadger had to pay passenger fare.*

lands, which money the Government intended to expend in Scotland upon works of national and public utility. On learning of this plan, the Magistrates and Council of Queensferry applied for a grant for the repair of the shippings on both sides of the Firth. The grant which was allowed for repairs — £25 or £30 per annum — was insufficient for the requirements. It was indisputable that the Water Passage was what they described as " A great Key of Communication between South and North parts of the United Kingdom ". It was " the most frequented ferry in Britain ".

APPLICATION FOR GRANT TO REPAIR THE GARNOCK AND GRAY SHIPPINGS

For long years there had been no proper pier or shipping on the south side of the Firth for passage boats to land in north west and south east winds at most times of the tide. The members of Council argued that if the shippings immediately west of Queensferry harbour — called the Garnock and Gray Shippings — so long neglected and now almost useless, were repaired and extended about 30 yards further north and made of sufficient breadth to allow a wheel-carriage to pass along it, the shippings could become the most suitable on the South Side for boats to resort to in all winds, as vessels could cross both ways without a single tack. At that time the only place in north west and south east winds at half-tide was at Newhalls. When boats crossed from the north in a south east wind they were compelled to tack many times and beat to windwards for perhaps an hour or two, if the wind was high. On proceeding from Newhalls in a north west wind the boats were equally hindered and delayed. This inconvenience and waste of time to both passengers and boatmen could be avoided if the Garnock and Gray Shippings were repaired and improved. A boat could go or come from either side without tacking. By a like repair and improvement of the Shippings on the east side of Queensferry harbour a commodious landing place for the boats could be offered in almost every other wind. If the Garnock and the Gray Shippings were repaired and extended, a place could be provided — and the only fit place — for moorings for the Passage boat or yawl to lie between half ebb and half flood spring tides. It often

happened that the boat or yawl could not reach any landing place at low water in spring tides for two or three hours. If the Shippings were repaired and improved, advantage would accrue to the sailors responsible for ferrying the " North Mail ". At the moment the Shipping was " a heap of stones justled and separated from one another ". " Bad as it is the sailors must needs resort to it six times a week, late at night and early in the morning for the purpose of taking on board or putting ashore the Mail. In winter they are compelled to scramble in the dark bearing a load of between 16 and 22 stones, over a track of stones lying in disorder and covered with seaweed, with sea water washing between them."

The petition of the Magistrates and Council was never granted. Perhaps vested interests at Newhalls constituted the cause of the refusal. So the Garnock and the Gray Shippings were left to decay.

The difficulties in running the ferry service increased towards the end of the 18th century. There were the feuars of the Water Passage who had no boats of their own and let the passage to boatmen owning boats, and among them the boat earnings were divided after a " portum " had been set aside for the feuars and due provision made for aged and infirm boatmen and for the support of a schoolmaster at North Queensferry. In 1788 the feuars resolved to take over the working of the ferry service, and they engaged seamen from the Royal Navy to man the boats. These men were unacquainted with the currents at the watergang, and so sailings were irregular, and sometimes boats were driven ashore above or below the proper landing places. So the feuars were compelled to abandon the position and to restore the ancient rights of the boatmen.

About the beginning of the 19th century the right of ferrying across the Forth was let at a yearly rental of £2,000. The revenue derived by those who ran the service, carrying goods, and passengers in their yawls and small boats amounted to over £5,000 per annum.

THE FERRY SERVICE IS VESTED IN TRUSTEES

In 1809 the individual proprietors of the Passage were com-

pelled to sell their rights. This they did at a cost to the Treasury of £10,000. Thereafter the ferry was vested in Trustees who were faced with the ill-effects of mismanagement or lack of control on the part of the petty proprietors. Since no superintendent was employed to regulate the conduct of the ferry, passengers had not been sure of certain transit. Insubordination among boats' crews had been rife. This had been accentuated by the fact that all the boats, great and small, were quartered nightly at the North Ferry where all the ferriers resided. So it was to be expected that on a dirty night, the fire signal that blazed on the pier at Newhalls, calling for a boat to ferry over a man of consequence or a body in the hurry of distress, would be ignored. The boatmen were loth to leave the bield of their cottages or to desert the warm atmosphere of the alehouse on a night of storms.

The Trustees set about by engaging the services of a superintendent, James Ross, Captain, R.N., a man of singular ability and shrewdness who was yet to prove his worth. They caused a survey of the Passage to be made by John Rennie, the well-known civil engineer who, in a plan furnished to them, confirmed their expressed opinion that improvements and additions to the landing places on both sides of the Firth were imperative. The existing piers were few in number and were badly constructed — one at North Ferry town, one at South Ferry harbour and one at Newhalls. It was requisite that boats should lie in safety at all times on both sides of the water, and that on the event of their departure from one side to the other, notwithstanding wind and tide being contrary, they could steer for a safe landing place, crossing the water diagonally, and not to one point as was the prevailing custom.

So, according to John Rennie's Plan, the proposed improvements were begun as follows: —

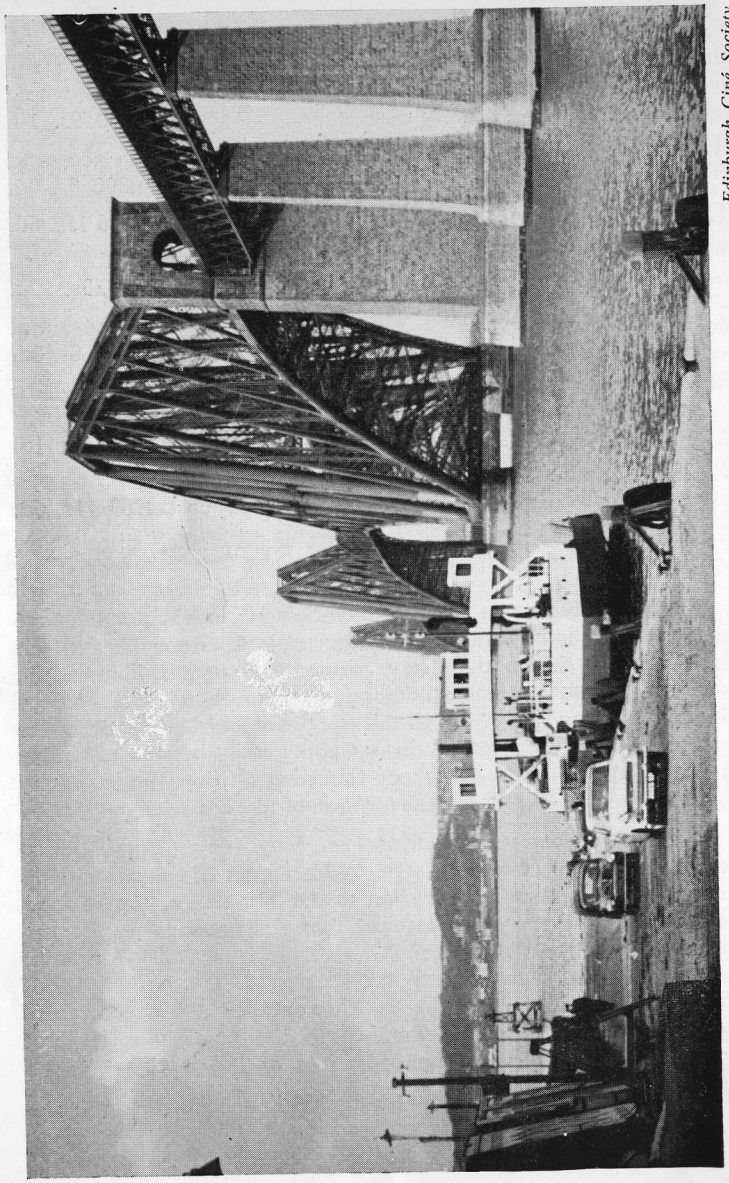
1. A new pier was built at the battery, on the north side, with a " waiting house " for the boatmen and a shed for sheltering foot passengers, etc. cost £4,206 19s. 6d.
2. A signal house containing (on the ground floor) a waiting room for boats' crews and a room for the superintendent — this building to act as a lighthouse cost £406 10s. 0d.

3. A residence for the superintendent, with garden, on a site near North Ferry town, from which he could see the whole Passage cost £260 9s. 1d.
4. A strip of land leading to Long Craig Island, as an access to the shipping place cost £300 0s. 0d.
5. Improvements on the quay at North Ferry cost £206 15s. 6d.
6. A new pier at Port Edgar on the south side of the Firth cost £4,763 13s. 10d.
7. A new pier at Newhalls, with a breakwater in the centre and a paved road on either side cost £8,696 0s. 0d.
8. A small pier as a landing place at Portnuick (east of Newhalls pier) — where rock was blasted to give greater depth of water cost £587 11s. 11d.
9. Six houses built at Newhalls for boatmen's families cost £909 11s. 6d.
10. A new pier at the Long Craig, east of Newhalls, built at later date.

These improvements in the facilities of the Water Passage constituted an important part of the project, already begun, on the Great North Road. They formed a stronger link in the chain of communications stretching from south to north of the Kingdom, giving let, with the least possible hindrance, to the passage of vehicles, persons, beasts and goods, besides providing an easy way to the travelling of the King's troops on necessary occasions and to the daily conveyance of the Post.

During the year which ended 11th May 1811, Captain James Ross kept a strict record of the traffic across the ferry and his account was doubtless a revelation to the Trustees of the Passage. He stated that every day no fewer than 228 persons were transported, the number reaching 447 at a peak period. Moreover there crossed 1,515 carriages, 4,254 carts, 13,154 horses, 18,057 cattle, 25,151 sheep, 2,615 dogs. This entailed a high degree of organisation and a strict adherence to the regulations imposed by the Trustees upon all the operatives of the service.

A set of the regulations was hung up in the inns at each side



Photograph by Edinburgh Ciné Society

"QUEEN MARGARET" DISCHARGING TRAFFIC AT HAWES PIER

of the Firth. Every skipper carried a copy in his pocket, and copies were distributed in Edinburgh and all over the north. It was the duty of the superintendent to ensure that the regulations were complied with and to receive complaints from travellers. To expedite the task of deliberation upon all complaints, the Trustees held a Justice of the Peace Court every Monday. It was natural, as in this present century, that complaints should be lodged concerning the service. There were times when the general public was inconsiderate. In 1809 James Ross informed the Trustees that there was little cause for complaint about the sailing of the pinnace, yawl or half-tide boat which frequently left the pier at the half-hour, instead of at the regulation hour, even when only one passenger was aboard. No one had reason to complain when the service was only six pence per passenger. With regard to the sailing of a large boat at each hour of the clock, as the regulations directed, circumstances often operated against the fulfilment of the rule. The boats' crews consisted of 36 men and boys — four crews for large boats, three for pinnaces, and one for a small boat called *Earl Moray*. In the summer months, the large boats were expected to make 14 or 15 crossings each day — more than two boats and two crews could manage in average weather. The remaining two boats with their crews were left to transport carts, carriages, travellers etc. independent of cattle and sheep, and perhaps troops. Nevertheless, stated Ross, every effort was made to get a single cart or even one man and a horse over at the hour if it arrived at the pier in time.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE STEAM FERRYBOAT

Soon a new difficulty faced the Trustees of the Passage. Henry Bell's adaptation of steam power to the propulsion of ships had its effect. Steamships were plying up and down the Firth from Leith to Stirling, taking the greatest proportion of foot passengers from the ferry. The introduction of steamboats at the Broad Ferry, between Leith and Burntisland, deprived Queensferry of two thirds of its coach passengers.

So the Trustees were forced to consider how steam power could be introduced into the navigation of the ferry, whether

steamboats could be employed to convey passengers and carriages over the water as well as tow sailing boats with cattle, horses, sheep, carriers' carts, etc. The problem could hardly be solved by purchasing a steamboat of the usual build for the service, for the piers had been constructed only for the convenience of sailing boats and had a slope unsuitable for the approach of a steamer. The Trustees therefore decided to experiment by using a hired steamboat in order to ascertain whether navigation by steam power on so narrow a strait, and towing other vessels when contrary winds or calms necessitated help, would be possible and advantageous. A steamboat called the *Lady of the Lake* was chartered for a fortnight at the rate of £6 per day and put into service under the charge of James Scott, superintendent. In his letter to the Lord Chief Commissioner, dated 2nd January 1821, Scott related that the steamboat had begun to ply on the previous morning when the advantage of towing in a light north west wind became apparent to all the ferriers. He kept a record of the steamship's performances and was convinced that she could accomplish the passage in half an hour. He urged that by the employment of one steamboat, two pinnaces and their crews could be dispensed with, as well as one large boat and its crew. This saving, with a strict watch on fuel consumption by day when the boat was not in active use, and on Sundays when she was always out of use, " would render the introduction of a steamboat practicable as far as income was concerned, especially as there was to be no night passage in the steamboat — a saving of night fuel ".

Scott, an ingenious fellow, occupied his time in the evenings making a model of a steamboat to suit the piers. This proved acceptable to the Trustees, and a steamboat was built at Menzies & Company Limited, Leith, to its pattern and put into service on the first day of October 1821. She cost £2,369. They called her *Queen Margaret,* an illustrious name to grace the first steamboat on the ferry service. With her appeared a fleet of new sailing boats — four large sailing boats called *Prince Regent, Blair Adam, Primrose,* and *Earl of Moray,* with three pinnaces called *Pitfirrane, Dunearn,* and *Keavil,* and three yawls for use in fair weather.

In process of time *Queen Margaret's* speed — which was never expected to equal that of other steamboats — gradually diminished

by reason of the absorption of water which increased her draught six inches. Ross was of the opinion that the draught could be diminished and the speed increased if the vessel were lengthened. His opinion was accepted, and in June 1828 the ship's bows were rebuilt, seven feet being added to the length. When *Queen Margaret* returned to her station, she was found to sink eight to 10 inches less in the water, and her velocity was increased. Ross reported that in ordinary weather and contrary winds, she could tow a loaded boat, she herself being fully laden. In calm weather she could tow two and sometimes all three boats carrying cattle and sheep, while she carried passengers, carriages, horses and carts. In oblique winds she generally towed one boat to " the weather shore " far enough to windward so that the vessel could sail to the landing place, and return under her own canvas. Thus with effort, Ross declared, besides the daily average of traffic, 1,000 cattle per day could be transported at the time of the great fairs, should the " winds not be boisterously adverse ".

The ferry service continued to be administered by the Trustees of the Passage until 1867, when the North British Railway Company purchased the rights under the powers of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway (Queensferry) Act, 1863. The Railway Company took possession of the ferry on 19th September 1867 and continued to operate until 1893, in which year they agreed with Messrs David Wilson & Son, Bo'ness, to work the ferry. This arrangement continued until 1919, when the obligation passed to Messrs Wilson's successors, Leith Salvage and Towage Company. On 13th November 1926 the Railway Company resumed control and operation of the ferry. These were the days of such steamboats as the *Willy Adam,* the *John Beaumont* and the *Dundee.* The latter was built for the Tay Ferry and was purchased by the Railway Company for service at Queensferry Passage. She had acted as fleet tender, attached to the battle cruisers *Lion* and *Tiger* during the 1914-1918 War. *Dundee* had accommodation on the fore deck for vehicular traffic, and could carry three motor lorries and two motor cars — or ten motor cars. She possessed ample passenger accommodation in the saloon as well as on the after promenade deck. It is of interest to observe that passengers who occupied the saloon were charged one penny for the privilege. The ship was certified to carry 997 passengers on a number five

certificate. Her draught was 4 feet 6 inches, loaded, her length 149 feet 3 inches, her beam 27 feet 1 inch, gross tonnage 264 tons.

Dundee came to Queensferry to relieve *Woolwich* and *Forfarshire,* owned by Wilson of Bo'ness, then operating the service.

WILLIAM DENNY & BROTHERS LTD.

During the difficult years of the early 1930's Sir Maurice Denny approached the Railway Company with the suggestion that, due to the increase of motor traffic on the roads, the provision of two modern ferry boats would improve the service and be a paying proposition. The Railway Authority was not disposed to accept this suggestion, but instead, proposed that William Denny & Brothers Limited might undertake the construction and financing of two new ferries and also the management of the service, with the Railway Company taking an agreed proportion of any profits.

These were the years of depression in Shipbuilding and Engineering, when orders were few and unemployment was widespread. William Denny & Brothers Limited decided to accept the Railway Company's offer and entered into a 10 years agreement to take over the management of the ferry and provide two vessels.

On 1st March 1934 they began to operate the service with their first vessel, *Queen Margaret,* a diesel-electric paddle-driven boat. Some few weeks later, *Robert the Bruce* was put into service, the first all-welded ship to be built in Scotland. Her builders, taking advantage of the new technique in shipbuilding, had decided to compare the performance of welding with that of riveting of the plates and frames in ship construction. This break with tradition demanded all the knowledge and skill of the ship designer since, while the vessel had to be strong enough to withstand the stress and strain of the sea passage from the dock at Dumbarton to the Firth of Forth via the notorious Pentland Firth, she had to be designed so as to be of light draught in order that she might provide a continuous service at all states of tidal conditions. The loaded draught could not exceed five feet with a deck load of 60 tons.

Both vessels being of "double-ended" construction, a saving in time was obtained by dispensing with the necessity of turning round at the piers north and south. This enabled the new vessels to keep a half hourly frequency under peak period conditions when fully laden in each direction.

The accepted efficiency of screw propulsion was abandoned in favour of paddles because of the shallowness of the water at the piers.

The main propulsion machinery in both vessels was in advance of the times. Diesel engines driving electrical propulsion machinery were connected to the paddle shaft by a chain drive. the available power on the shafts being 190 B.H.P. from each engine, giving a service speed of eight knots.

Both vessels are 149 feet in length, 28 inches in beam with an overall beam of 48 feet. The carrying capacity is 28 motor cars and 500 passengers.

The half hourly frequency soon attracted more and more motorists, and it became evident in the late 1930's that a further vessel would be required to allow for the winter overhauls and the increase in tourist traffic in the summer. The outbreak of war in 1939 delayed the construction of the third vessel until 1949.

Mary Queen of Scots, similar in outward appearance to *Robert the Bruce* and *Queen Margaret,* arrived in 1949, and was pressed into service immediately. Due to post-war difficulties in the engineering industry this vessel was fitted with a geared drive from the diesel engines and has worked remarkably well.

The demand for ferry services, due to the increase in traffic on the roads, soon occupied the available space on the ferries and a further vessel *Sir William Wallace* was laid down in 1955 to bring the fleet up to four. To avoid any delays in loading and discharging, a second slipway was constructed at North Queensferry and the west side of Hawes Pier was resurfaced. These works were completed in time for the arrival of *Sir William Wallace* in March 1956 and from then on a four vessel frequency at intervals of 15 minutes has been in operation between early March and the end of October in each year. In the winter months a 20 minute service is provided, as each vessel is taken off for a

statutory overhaul lasting about five weeks. During the year some 40,000 crossings are made carrying over 1¼ million passengers. 600,000 motor cars, and 200,000 commercial vehicles and miscellaneous traffic.

It is interesting to note that in 1934 the new management drastically reduced the fares for all classes of traffic, and even in this present day the fares are still considerably lower than those in force in 1933.

It is also worthy of notice that *Robert the Bruce,* the all-welded ship, is still in active service after 28 years.

The engineer's dream of a roadway over the Forth is now shortly to be realised. The cessation of this ancient ferry, which has played such an important part in the history of transport in Scotland, will bring to an end a chapter of endeavour and ingenuity which has been continuous for centuries.

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