

During the early part of last century, the shipping belonging to the Port of Perth was very trifling. Peats and wood from the Town's Muir, Craigie, and Kinnoul hills, were much used; such quantity of coals as were then used were all brought from the Frith of Forth by vessels belonging to Alloa and Kincardine. When the vessels arrived, the seamen, if there was no vessel ready to take them, travelled home on foot, as their vessel had to lie until the cargo was sold from the hold. The coal shore was covered with weighing apparatus; for each of these, a man, under a *coal deacon*, was stationed, who sold the coals for the owner, and weighed them for the purchaser, for which a certain rate of dues was paid by the former. This obnoxious tax was kept up even after this mode of sale was abandoned. When the coal trade was thus conducted, there was a chance of getting coals cheap in the summer season; but sometimes in a severe winter, the price rose to the enormous sum of fifteen shillings per boll. In the winter of 1794, when the river was closed by ice for three months, and for many weeks when the roads were blocked up with snow, even at that price it was considered a great favour to get them from a cellar where a stock was laid in for a bleachfield. English coal were scarcely known in this quarter; they came in trifling quantities by the Newcastle traders, laden with crockery ware. A few metts of coals were with difficulty sold for baking fires in genteel families. There was then a duty of two-pence a bushel on them, which made the price about two shillings and four-pence a mett. About the year 1796, this duty was taken off, when the price was reduced to eighteen-pence and lower; but although the price fell, a considerable time intervened before people could be induced to use them generally, from not knowing the method of burning them. By degrees, however, they came into general use, and a trade of bringing vessels fully loaded from Newcastle commenced. It has been observed that the coals were sold from the vessel on arrival, but after the scarcity of that article during severe winters, the price rose so high that several individuals filled cellars with coals to sell out during the winter: it so happened that a season or two gave them a handsome return for their money. A young man named Inehes took the whole of that ground now occupied as coal slips, as a coal yard, and freighted a number of vessels with Scots and English coals; but as the

old practice of selling from the vessels still continued to be extensive, this person was, from the heavy rent of L.160 per annum which he paid, joined to slow sales, obliged to relinquish what was called a bad speculation. The hint was improved on by the Town Council, who let the ground out in lots at high rents, which caused yards to be opened in other parts of the town.

About the close of last century, when the improvements in agriculture commenced, a new trade in lime began, and increased to an amazing extent. Every farmer freighted a vessel, some of them even two, for a number of seasons, until their farms were limed. During the summer months, these vessels would average between twenty and thirty every spring tides. When a farmer's sloop arrived, he mustered all the carts in the neighbourhood to drive his lime home, and he in turn gave his carts to all who aided him; they were thus enabled to have the whole cargo laid down on the farm within three days. Formerly there was a lime shed on the shore, where lime was kept to supply the masons; but now a practice commenced of selling lime to farmers who did not bring a vessel of their own; and thus a number of sheds were built for this purpose, and a successful trade established.

About the year 1774, a carpenter introduced the trade of ship building here. The first vessel he launched was about 25 tons burthen, called the *Busy Bee* of Newburgh. Immediately after this, the business was taken up and carried on extensively by Mr David Gibson for a long period. This gentleman, who was considered one of the first in the trade, built several vessels, many of them upwards of 300 tons register. Before the late Provost Robertson's time, it was thought impossible to float a vessel of that size down the river. Ship building was briskly carried on, and numbers of large vessels constructed, some of which were wrecked in the American trade, and others were, during the greater part of the late war, employed by Government as transports. The building yard was then in front of the *Allea* coal yard, the road leading down within a few feet of the *Grey Friars'*, and turning round the carpenter's yard, to the east of the alley, one side of which was lately cut down. Mr Gibson got this ground gratis from the town; also the ground lately taken into the *Grey Friars'* on the south side, which was bounded by an alley of trees that ran right west by the back of *Marshall Place* from the shore road, having the north trench of *Cromwell's Fort* on the south. Besides these advantages, he received a sum of ten pounds a year from the town for his great enterprise and public spirit. A few years before his death, he sent in

a petition to the Town Council for liberty to build a house on the ground he possessed ; but the Council considered, if he had made money by his business sufficient to build a house, that he had no need of a bounty—and withdrew it.

This piece of ground having soon afterwards changed possessors, several coal slips were erected on it; part was also taken into the Grey Friars'; the trench was filled up; the building yard demolished, and the road straightened to the new shore. On Mr Gibson's death, the business was taken up by Mr James Brown, who has for some years carried on an extensive trade. Since the year 1815, he has launched 76 vessels, some of them upwards of 400 tons burthen; several steam-vessels have also been built by him; amounting in whole to about about 8000 tons register, and averaging 93½ tons each, which, at L.9 per ton, amounts to L.72,000; being nearly L.2,600 a-year during the time he has been in business. Mr Brown is the gentleman who so greatly distinguished himself by his success in raising the Comet steam-vessel, after she had been long sunk in the Clyde. The late Duke of Athole, who was very anxious to introduce his larch into ship building, employed Mr Brown to build a brig entirely of his own fir—a vessel of about 200 tons. At the launch, the Duke and a number of nobility and gentry assembled on the ground, where a large marquee was erected, and an elegant entertainment provided. The Duke himself christened the vessel "The Larch;" she went off in fine style, in the midst of a vast concourse of spectators. This vessel kept the sea for many years, and was found to answer the Duke's most sanguine expectations. Some years ago she sank in the Black sea. Last year she was raised, and is again active in business; and what is singular, after lying upwards of two years at the bottom of the ocean, her timbers have been found to be as fresh as the day she was launched. About the same time, the Duke prevailed on Government to introduce larch into the navy. The Athole, a frigate of 36 guns, was built of the Duke's larch, and sent out on foreign service. After having been for a number of years in various quarters of the globe, she was on her return taken into dock, and her timbers narrowly inspected. Another frigate of the same class, built the same year of English oak, was also taken into dock; when it was found that the timbers of the Athole were quite sound, while those of the other were completely rotten.

A few years ago, Thomas Graham and Sons, general merchants, commenced ship building, chiefly for their own trade. They have already built seventeen vessels, amounting to 1334 tons register, some of which have been to the West Indies. These gentlemen lately sent to Jamaica

singular article of export, namely 100 barrels of Perthshire potatoes, which brought a fair return. Mr William Taylor has also engaged in ship building, within these few years, and has built a number of vessels.

It has been already observed, that most of the shipping engaged in the Perth trade belonged to the Frith of Forth. A few vessels, however, belonged to the port, of small tonnage, the owners and masters of which were so cautious, that they never ventured to sea after the month of November. Some were regularly laid up from that time until spring set in, when they made a trip to Rotterdam for flax, and various descriptions of seeds. At this period there was much smuggling in gin, spices, &c. Various methods were resorted to, the best of which were frequently detected; the vessels sometimes being seized and sold by the custom-house. One season a flaxdresser brought in 300 ankers of gin in one vessel, which were all safely landed, and sold at a high profit. Not contented with his success, he imported another large cargo; but, unfortunately for him, an information having been lodged with the custom-house, the ship and cargo were both seized, condemned, and sold. This put an end to his smuggling, and rendered him a beggar. Another bold attempt was made by Mr Robert Foggo. This gentleman had been bred to the sea in his youth, but had long been settled here in the manufacturing line, though he still retained his rambling propensities. Whilst in London on one occasion, he took it into his head to attempt running a cargo of gin from Holland to Perth. Having fallen in with the master of a small vessel belonging to Perth then in London, he procured as many porter hogsheads as filled the vessel; filling a few with porter and the rest with water, he got them on board the vessel and cleared out at the custom-house as with a cargo of porter for Perth; but instead of steering for Perth he sailed to Rotterdam, filled his water casks with gin and arrived at Perth shore with his clearance from London with porter. The few hogsheads of porter were placed nearest the hatches. Some of these on being brought ashore were pierced and tried as to quality, and being found all right, it was deemed useless to pierce any more: the whole cargo was thus safely landed without exciting suspicion. Previous to the year 1800, one or two vessels were annually freighted from Oporto with wine and fruit for the merchants. Vessels were freighted from Petersburg with hemp, tallow, &c.; from Riga, with flax, flax-seed, wood, and iron; from Dantzic, with deals, battens, black beer, and honey; from Gottenburgh, with wood and iron; from the Danish and Prussian ports, with grain; and from Bremen, with bark and hides. From Memel and other Baltic ports, a great deal of logs were imported. A Mr Campbell contracted

with Mr Gibson the ship carpenter, in 1785, to build a vessel for the wood trade, of upwards of 300 tons register. Since that period the wood trade has greatly increased : in place of one yard, as at that period, there are now a number of houses in the line. Many cargoes of American timber are also imported.

It has been already remarked that Mr Richardson kept several vessels for conveying his fish to the London market, which he often freighted in the return voyage with London porter. About the year 1780, the fishing company built two beautiful smacks for this trade, with cabins fitted up in a superior manner for passengers. The charge for a cabin passage was one guinea; steerage, half a guinea : these vessels brought goods from London to the shore. Since that period, by the junction of the Perth and Dundee Shipping Company, the trade has been completely altered. The Perth goods are now brought down in Dundee vessels, and transferred to lighters at Dundee, which are towed up the river by a steamer. About twenty years ago this trade greatly declined, a number of grocers having got into business who were compelled to take their goods at second hand from merchants in Leith and Dundee. Of late the London trade has again revived. Two Newcastle traders were formerly pretty regularly employed in bringing down English goods, great part of which consisted of crockery ware, grinding stones, spades, shovels, and such like ; but for these articles other channels have been opened, which has had the effect of putting down these regular traders. The vessels going up with wood for pit props and bringing down coals, afford the most ample opportunity of conveying all kinds of merchandise. At the period we speak of, the vessels loaded with coals came all up to the coal shore, where there were scales for weighing them. Merchant vessels were all delivered at the lower pier, and lime vessels in front of the lime sheds. Near the top of this shore, and all the way up behind the barracks, now the county buildings, the water was of sufficient depth to float a vessel of large tonnage even at low water, and the only ford of consequence was right in front of the recently erected water house.

Since the potato trade for the London market commenced, there has been a rapid increase of the shipping belonging to the port. Sixty years ago, the tonnage of the vessels belonging to the port would not amount to 600 tons; it may now be taken at upwards of 6,000. This increase, independent of goods carried by passengers in the steam vessels plying between Perth and Dundee, shews that Perth has advanced her shipping trade extensively : and it is not improbable that a few years will find the average of goods nearly doubled. Upwards of 90,000 bolls of potatoes are now annually shipped from the port.

About forty years ago, the communication between Perth and Dundee was kept up by means of a caravan. This diligence held four passengers, was drawn by one horse, and went daily; though not always successful in obtaining passengers. The first attempt to establish steam communication on the river was on a very limited scale. It was predicted that the projectors would never find passengers. Since that period large and elegant boats have been put on the passage. During the summer months upwards of 1200 persons have been known to sail down the river in a day.

Since that period, the fords on the river have shifted amazingly. At various times, plans have been proposed for removing these obstructions to the navigation. The first attempt was made under Provost Allison; but the means employed were so inadequate to the end, that the project was speedily abandoned. During the time Thomas Hay Marshall, Esq., was at the head of the magistracy, it was proposed to excavate a dock at the back of the lime sheds, to communicate with the Tay, at the Friarton, by means of a canal through the old water course, termed the Gulloch. This plan lay over until a few years ago, when P. G. Stewart, Esq., was chief magistrate, when the proposition was taken into serious consideration; and it was at length determined to carry it into effect. But here a difficulty occurred,—the Council were inclined to improve the river by deepening the fords, and building a new pier; whilst a party among the inhabitants were for a dock and canal, under a set of commissioners. The Magistrates, as conservators of the river, were inclined to maintain their rights; whilst the others were as determined to carry their object. Application was therefore made to Parliament, and a bill obtained for deepening the fords, and building a new pier, under a set of commissioners; but, unfortunately, the bill was so defective, that the operations under it were confined between the Friarton-hole, and an imaginary line, drawn 450 yards below the County-buildings, without any reference to the fords below; although it was well known that these fords had become an almost insuperable bar to the navigation of the river. During the progress of the bill in Parliament, in consequence of the numerous objections that were started, and the opposition given by each party to their antagonists' views, as well as from those connected by the fishings, or otherwise with the river, an immense expense was incurred. The new pier was intended to be carried up in a line to the north shore.

Dredging the fords was commenced under this act, with a kind of leveling-boxes, about 3 feet wide, which were dragged by two horses, followed by a man guiding it. In the operation, the horses and the man crossed the river in perhaps ten minutes, bringing ashore as much gravel as would fill a couple of wheel-barrows. After much expense, and the loss

of a whole season, the absurdity of this plan was sufficiently manifest. Punts were then got, with capsterns, two of which were placed at a certain distance from, and opposite to, each other. From one of these, a box, shod with iron, was let down into the river, which was dragged across the bottom by a number of men working at the capstern on the opposite punt. After a heavy and tedious pull, the apparatus was landed with a modicum of shingle, when the empty box was drawn back to be refilled. If the other plan was absurd, this one was still more ridiculous, as the horse machine did more work, at a tithe of the labour.

It was soon found that this farce could not continue long. In working this wonderful engine, about twenty men were employed; in the course of thirty minutes, these twenty men brought up just as much shingle as would load a very small cart. This trifling was at length seen in its true light. At same time, the new pier had been proceeded with on a scale as if it had to withstand the fury of the Northern Ocean. It was also extended into the centre of the river, thereby exposing the shipping to the whole force of the mountain floods, which, on the breaking up of the ice after a severe storm, is sufficient to do much injury to the vessels exposed to the drifting ice. The whole plan soon came to be denounced by the public, as useless and most expensive.

Another eminent engineer was consulted, who gave it as his opinion, that the plan of thus deepening the fords and building the new pier, was impracticable, recommending the formation of a dock behind the lime sheds, to be entered by a canal from the Friarton, with the addition of a large tide harbour at the lower end of the canal, immediately above the Friarton. A new bill was obtained for this purpose, by which the commissioners under the act are empowered to deepen the lower fords. This bill met with much opposition from the proprietors of the fishings, during its progress through the House of Commons, which involved the commissioners in much expense. A compromise which they were obliged to make with the fishing proprietors, has been the source of much delay and expense; and, in addition to these difficulties, they have been dreadfully annoyed and subjected to great expense, by the litigious conduct of the trustees on the estate of Moncrieff.

A dredging machine, for clearing the fords, was built at a great expense, but which has been found to work most effectually. It is understood that two feet of water has been gained on the lower fords, and this branch of the operation has every appearance of doing much good. For the dock and canal a contract was entered into with two individuals from England, who were to complete the whole work in a given time; but, unfortunately, in consequence of the differences which arose between the

Moncrieff trustees and the commissioners, followed by interdicts, and other machinery of the law, the progress of this important part of the work has been completely arrested during the past half-year. The commissioners have been placed in such difficulty, that it is now doubtful whether they would be justified in proceeding further under the present act ; the opinion being that they should rather go again to Parliament to get either a new bill, or the present one amended.