ABERDEEN HARBOUR'S SHEAR POLES

2022-v1

STANLEY BRUCE

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Cover photograph – 3rd September 1910, load test of the newly erected **100-ton shear poles**, with the smaller **80-ton shear poles** in front. (Photographer - George Washington Wilson).

This book has been published on an entirely non-profit basis and made available to all free of charge as a pdf.

If you have any comments regarding this book, or any further information, especially photographs or paintings please get in touch. Since this is an electronic edition, it will be possible to update and include any new information.

I can be contacted at bardofthebroch@yahoo.com

If printing this book, it is best printed as an A4 or A5 booklet.

ABERDEEN HARBOUR'S, SHEAR POLES

First electronic edition.

Whilst I have taken great care in preparing this publication, I have of course relied on some previous historic information by others. Where conflicting information was found, I have added what seemed the most credible, at least to my mind, I therefore accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions.

ABERDEEN HARBOUR'S, SHEAR POLES

BY

STANLEY BRUCE

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*Aberdeen Harbour **Shear Poles** and Swing Bridge c1970. (Douglas Winton).*

Introduction

During my research into ***'The Shipbuilders of Aberdeen'*** series of books, I came across many times references to the **'Shear Poles'** or **'Shear Legs'** which were being used to install masts on sailing ships, and later used for heavy lifts, such as engines, machinery and boilers lifted onto steamships. So, I thought it was appropriate that a small volume on the **Shear Poles**, as I will call them (simply because that's what the Aberdeen Harbour Board and the Press called them) should accompany my shipbuilding books. The Aberdeen **Shear Poles** in various forms were a notable landmark, visible from all around the harbour and beyond for well over a century. Personally, I can't remember them, as when the **100-ton** set were taken down in 1975, I was only eleven-years old and lived in Fraserburgh, only venturing to Aberdeen occasionally with my parents for shopping, cars weren't as reliable then as they are today, so to be honest we rarely visited Aberdeen, perhaps only a handful of times per year.

These 3-legged structures were basically a simple mechanism used to lift large and heavy items. I believe they were originally used at Aberdeen Harbour and similarly at other harbours to load and discharge heavy cargoes, and by shipbuilders when erecting masts on newly built or repaired vessels.

The earliest reference I could find for **shear poles** at Aberdeen Harbour in the local newspapers is 1854, these wooden **shear poles** reportedly stood *"opposite Church Street",* however this article refers to erecting new **shear poles** *"in place of present",* so **shear poles** existed at Aberdeen Harbour pre-1854. They would have at least existed in the shipyards themselves long before this date, but probably as smaller capacity wooden examples as they were needed to erect masts on newly built vessels. As sailing vessels got larger, so did their masts and larger **shear poles** were required to erect them.

Larger **shear poles** capable of lifting **80 tons** (Often referred to as **75-tons**, I guess they were later down-rated) were erected in Aberdeen in 1874, simply due to the building of bigger steam driven vessels; steam engines and boilers were getting bigger and heavier. The larger lifting capacity wasn't needed for erecting masts as they were much lighter than machinery, a large mast being typically 5-tons. The larger again, **100-ton shear poles**, 95 feet high, were erected by Aberdeen Harbour Board in 1910 prior to the launch of the ss **"Intaba"** (4,832 tons) by **Hall, Russell & Co., Ltd.,** simply because they were needed to install her heavy machinery. She was the largest vessel built at Aberdeen up to this date.

The shipbuilders of Aberdeen, employers, and employees, were a very charitable lot, donating money regularly to Aberdeen hospital, however the employers had businesses to run and often complained about the charges imposed by Aberdeen

Harbour Board for using the **Shear Poles**. Amongst the complaints were complaints about the charges imposed based on tonnages lifted for the erection of masts versus the lifting of boilers and heavy machinery. Shipowners also complained, but mostly about the location of the **Shear Poles** and about the shipbuilders using them for weeks on end. The shipowners thought the **Shear Poles** should be moved to another site so the shipbuilders couldn't block the north lock gates with their vessels. The moving of the **Shear Poles** would have incurred a huge cost and due to this were not moved.

At Aberdeen Harbour Board meetings held in 1940, it was suggested that the **80-ton Shear Poles**, erected in 1874, should be taken down and melted down for the War Effort, however at a later meeting the decision was deferred. They still stood at the end of 1941, but I found no mention of them after this date, so I assume they were taken down c1942. Perhaps press coverage of their removal was censored due to the war.

The press reports tell us that when the **100-ton shear legs** accidentally crashed to the ground in 1950 during a gale, the watchman Peter Halley (63-years) was killed, and rigger Alfred Caird (38-years) suffered cuts to his neck but survived. There were several other accidents, you'll find these later in the text.

The **100-ton shear poles** at Waterloo Quay were taken down and removed in 1975, a notable landmark gone forever. This was after a new 50-ton heavy lift crane was installed by Aberdeen Harbour Board at Pacific Wharf and sometime after **Hall, Russell & Co. Ltd** had erected a 65-ton heavy lift crane at their Outfitting Quay (An exact date for erection of the 65-ton crane I could not find).

I wonder if anyone filmed the **100-ton Shear Poles** crashing to the ground. Gordon Stephen, Aberdeen told me that they were painted a dark red in colour, not that different from the colour of the Forth Rail Bridge. Perhaps they were painted with 'red lead' paint.

I have added to the text, the Aberdeen Harbour Board annual revenues, where I came across them, simply for information, but I do not have a full account.

In this volume you will find many press articles; the reporters of the day did a very good job of reporting the events that occurred related to the **Shear Poles,** and I didn't consider it to be my job to rewrite the history, but to convey it to others, so most of the reports that I found during my research have been left exactly as reported.

I hope this small volume is useful to current and future generations interested in Aberdeen Harbour and the shipbuilders of Aberdeen.

Stanley A. Bruce, BSc., I.Eng., I.Mar.Eng., MIMarEST.

Former shipyard employee, Hall Russell Ltd., Footdee, Aberdeen, (1980 to 1991).

Basic Description of Aberdeen's 100-ton Shear Poles.

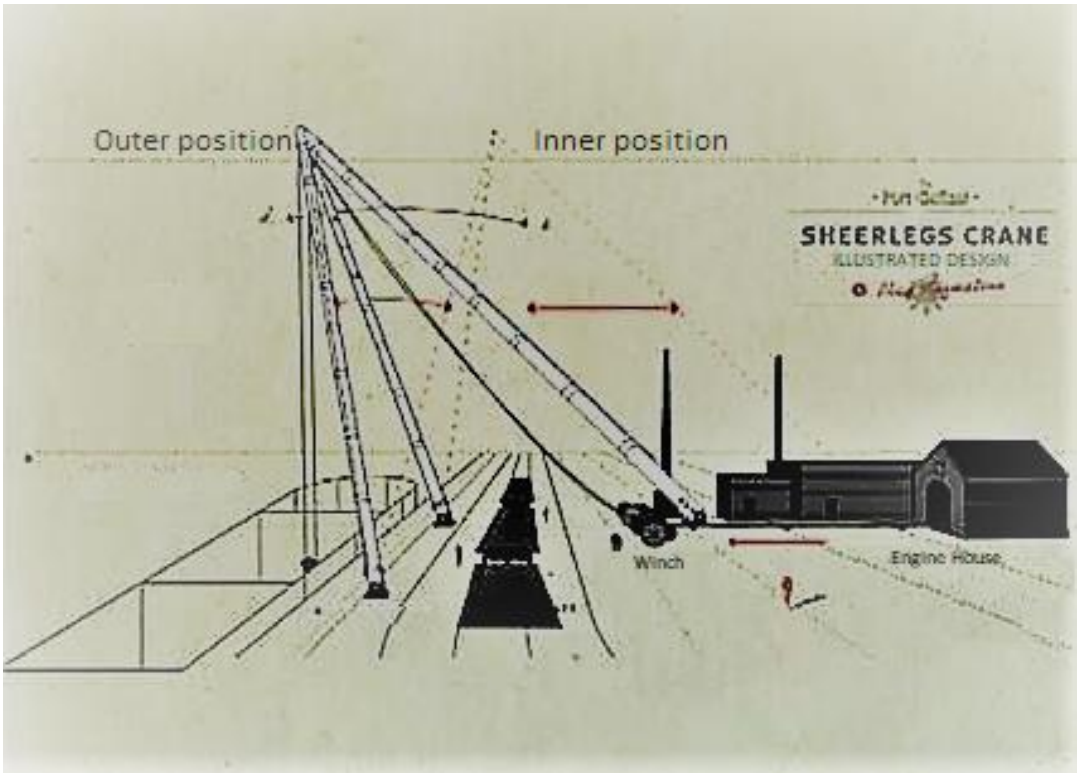
A three-legged structure, manufactured from steel, comprising of two legs that form a large triangle with the ground, these are pinned at the ground near the edge of the quay and attached to a third longer leg at the top that reaches backwards. The longer leg is attached to a rail at the ground and by means of a worm screw, powered by a steam engine it can move back and forth enabling equipment to be lifted from the quay and onto a vessel and vice-versa. A winch also powered by steam can hoist the weight up or lower it using a steel wire fitted around a crown block and a travelling block, both were fitted with seven sheaves. The steam engine and boiler had its own house.

The basic dimensions of the Aberdeen Harbour **100-ton shear poles** were as follows:

Two front legs 130 feet long.

Rear leg 170 feet long.

Max. Height 95 feet.



*Sketch showing proposed **sheerlegs** crane for Aberdeen Harbour.*

Abbreviations.

AHB Aberdeen Harbour Board.

Summary.

1854, 28th August: At a meeting of the Aberdeen Harbour Board the harbour commissioners discussed *"the erection of a crane of sufficient power or a new **shear pole** in place of the present".* Thereby confirming that **shear poles** owned by Aberdeen Harbour Board existed at Aberdeen Harbour before 1854.

1855, 10th November: The Aberdeen Herald and General Advertiser, confirmed the **shear poles** opposite Church Street were removed.

1856: New wooden **Shear Poles** were erected at the east end of Waterloo Quay capable of lifting **50-tons.**

1874: New iron **Shear Poles** with **80-ton** lifting capacity (sometimes referred to as the **75-ton Shear Poles,** perhaps later downrated) were erected at Waterloo Quay at a cost of £5,000. (Equivalent to approx. £600,000 in 2021).

1910: The **100-ton** lifting capacity steel **Shear Poles** were erected at Waterloo Quay at a cost of £12,170. (Equivalent to approx. £1.33 million in 2021).

1940: Suggestion was made several times at Aberdeen Harbour Board committee meetings to dismantle the **80-ton Shear Poles** for the War Effort.

c1942: Around this date the iron **80-ton shear poles** were taken down by Messrs Allison for melting down for the War Effort.

1944: Inspection platforms were erected at the head of the **100-ton Shear Poles.**

1950, 17th September: The watchman, Peter Halley (63-years) was killed, and rigger Alfred Caird (38-years) suffered cuts to his neck but survived when the **100-ton Shear Poles** crashed to the ground whilst being lowered for maintenance in a gale at 1.30am in the morning.

1950, 22nd December: The **100-ton Shear Poles** were repaired and re-erected.

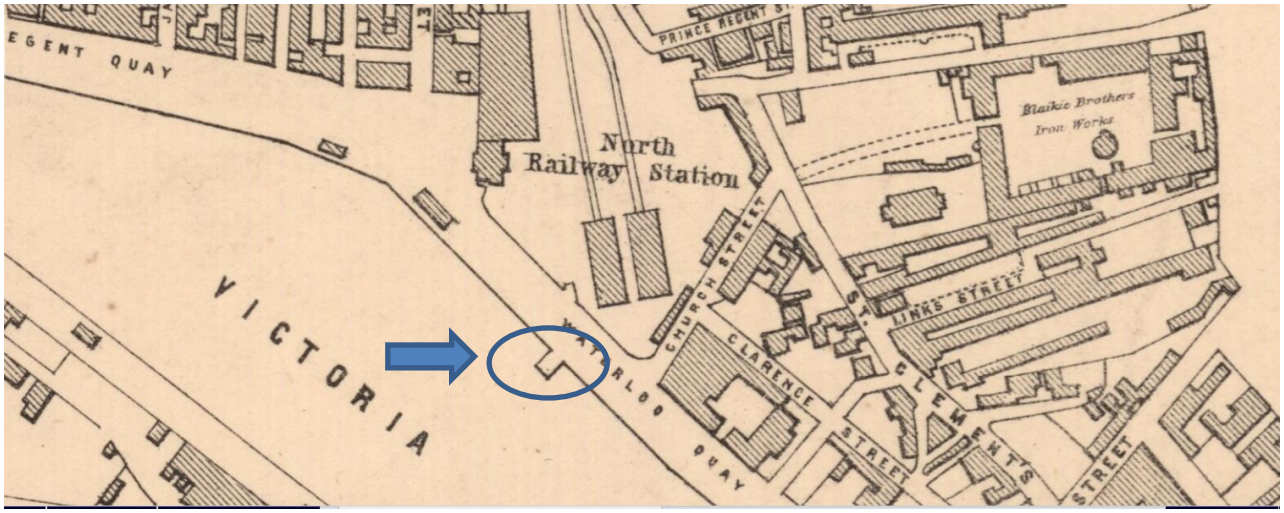
1975: After the erection of a 50-ton lifting capacity heavy-lift crane at Pacific Wharf the **100-ton Shear Poles** became obsolete and were taken down and removed. By this date **Hall Russell & Co., Ltd.** had a 65-ton crane installed at their Outfitting Quay, thereby allowing them to do their own heavy lifts.

More detailed information regarding the above events can be found in press articles later in this book.

Timeline.

1854, 30th August: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"…The Committee, taking advantage of Mr Abernethy's presence in Aberdeen, requested him to take into consideration the subject as to the erection of a crane of sufficient power, or a new **shear pole** in place of the present, and to give in a report on the subject, and on a proper and convenient site for the same. They also remitted to the Master of Shore Works, and Mr Abernethy, to examine the temporary wooden landing place at Waterloo Quay, which is now very generally used at the unloading of timber laden vessels, and to report on the state of the same..."*

1855, 10th November: The Aberdeen Herald and General Advertiser, reported as follows: *"…That it be remitted to the plans and Works Committee get erected at the harbour, where they shall consider it most convenient, a temporary **shear-pole,** similar to the one lately removed from opposite Church Street, using all the materials of the old one as far as possible, where not decayed….."*



*Former location of pre-1856 wooden **shear poles**. (1862 map).*

1856, 7th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: ***"SHEAR POLES, ETC.** - The Plans and Works Committee reported in favour of certain works for improving and strengthening the **shear poles**, recommended by the Harbour Superintendent, being carried out.*
Seems AHB had approved strengthening of the **Shear Poles,** but it looks like they were deemed unsafe, and they decided to get new ones.

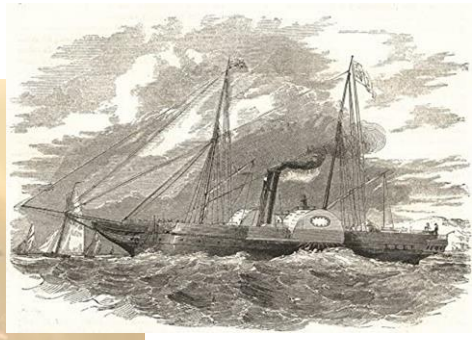
1856, 13th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"…..They further stated that, having considered the necessity for erecting a temporary **shear-pole** for lifting heavy weights, in place of the old one recently removed from Waterloo Quay, which had been found unsafe, they were of opinion that a **shear-pole** should be erected on the east side of the lock of the Victoria Dock…"*

1856, 4th April: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"**THE SHEAR POLES**. A letter was read from Messrs **Hall, Russell, & Co.,** stating that the chain in*

*connection with the **shear poles** had broke under strain of 17 tons, and that the **poles** were themselves of inferior material."*

1856, 21st May: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported on an Aberdeen Harbour Board meeting, as follows: *"**MISCELLANEOUS** - A report was read from the Plans and Works Committee embracing a variety of topics. An arrangement had been affected with **Messrs Hall** for slip and ground on former terms. It was reported as a necessary step that the Royal arch should be removed — the materials to be advertised for sale. A site for the **shears-pole** was recommended, viz., the north side of the lock of the Victoria Dock near the end of Waterloo Quay. The report was adopted."*

The Royal Arch (aka triumphal arch) was erected at the north end of Waterloo Quay in 1848, under the supervision of Aberdeen architect John Smith (1781 to 1852) prior to the visit of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. They arrived at Aberdeen for the first time on the 7th September 1848 on the Royal Yacht paddle steamer the **'Victoria and Albert'.** Although the arch appeared to be made from granite, it was actually made of wood. It comprised of three arches, one large central arch and two smaller ones, and measured approx. 37 feet (11.2 metres) high.

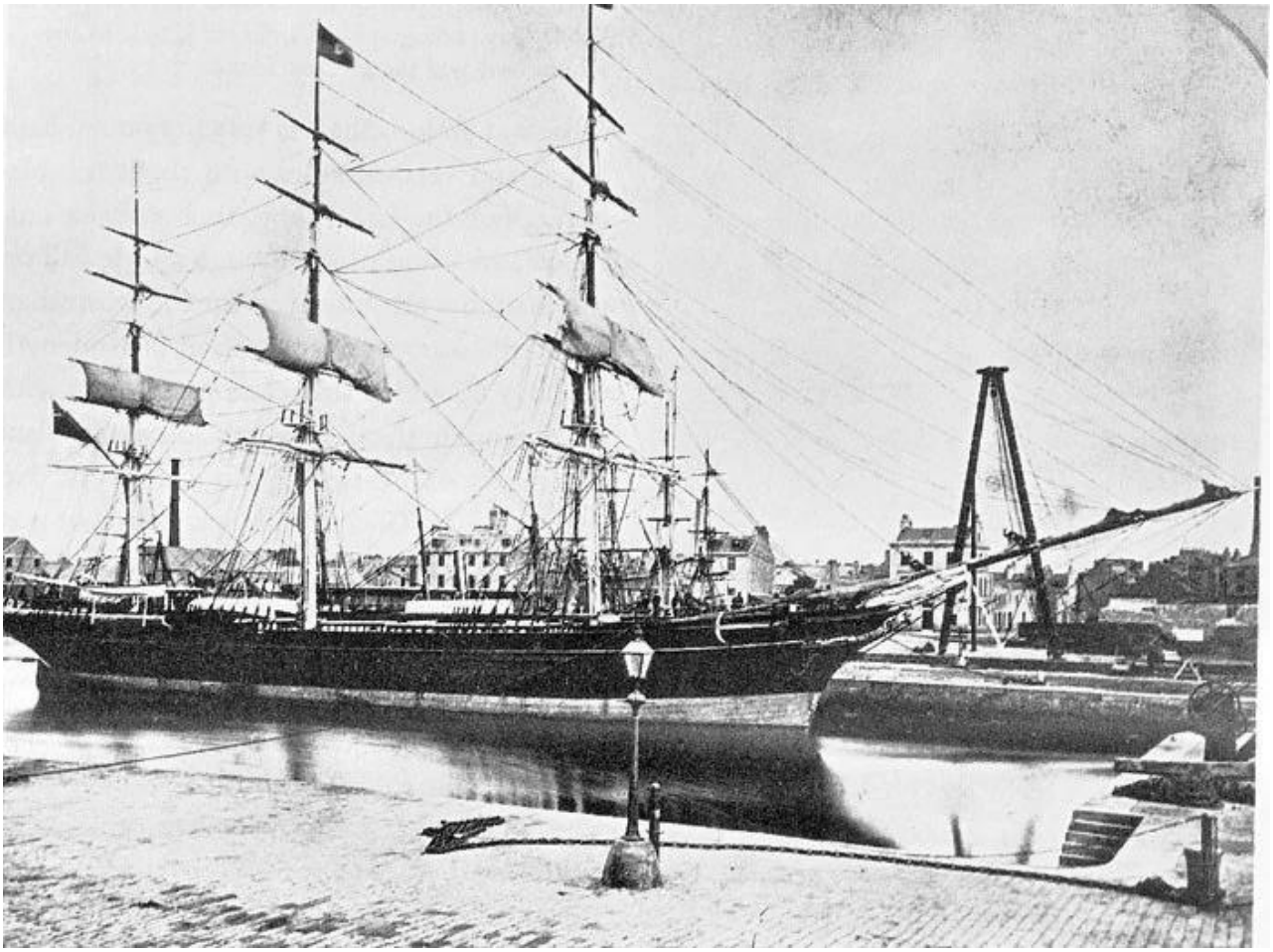


*Royal Yacht **'Victoria and Albert'.** (1850).*

Painting of the Royal Arch, Aberdeen, titled "The landing of her Majesty Queen Victoria at Aberdeen', painted by John Harris (1791 to 1873) in 1849. (Original kept in the Aberdeen Maritime Museum).

1856, 8th October: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"The new **shears-pole** is in complete working order. The additional rails have been laid along the harbour quays at Waterloo Quay and the upper and south sides of the dock, and will shortly be in complete working order."*

1856, 13th December: The Aberdeen Herald and General Advertiser, reporting on a Harbour Board meeting reported that Mr. Catto *"…called attention to the cost of the new **shears pole**, and expressed the opinion that its utility warranted a higher charge than the present being made for using it, and which he had reason to believe would cheerfully be paid. The matter was remitted to the Plans and Works Committee, with powers."*



*3-masted ship **'Ann Duthie'** (994 tons) with the 1856 wooden **Shear Poles** behind on Waterloo Quay, c1868. (Photographer unknown).*

1857, 24th January: The Aberdeen Herald and General Advertiser, reported as follows: *"**REPORT FROM PLANS AND WORKS COMMITTEE.** - By report read from this Committee, it appeared that they had agreed to recommend to the Board that 530 yards of the ground at the end of Waterloo Quay, leading to the **shear poles,** should be substantially causewayed, so as to prevent waggons, etc. with heavy weights from sinking in the ground. The probable cost of the work, Mr. Dick intimated, would be £102."* (Equivalent to approx. £12,272 in 2021).

1857, 18th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"A new set of rates and regulations connected with the new **shear-pole** were tabled and sanctioned. A report was read from Mr Dick, Superintendent of Works, on the state of the rails around the Harbour. The report, which recommended some repairs and additions, was given to the Plans and Works Committee for consideration. Estimates for Harbour repairs were sent to the Finance Committee with the usual*

*powers; and estimates for paving the quay in the vicinity of the **shears-pole**, three in number, were opened, and the lowest-that of Mr Bernard McDonald-accepted."*

1859, 29th January: The Aberdeen Herald and General Advertiser, reported as follows: *"A communication from the shipbuilders of the port, in reference to the charges for masting by the **shear-poles** being proportionately too high, was remitted to the Plans and Works Committee."*

1859, 2nd March: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"The Plans and Works Committee gave in a report on the rates charged for the use of the **shear-poles** belonging to the Harbour. The rates had been revised, — in some instances lowered, in others increased. Adopted."*

1859, 25th March: The Peterhead Sentinel and General Advertiser for Buchan District, reported as follows: *"Having made some inquiries, he found that at Aberdeen nothing was charged for Iifts up to three or four tons. Above that the **shear poles** were used, and while the charge on these for five tons would be 25s at Peterhead for the same weight it would only be 8s 6d. The charges for heavy lifts were thus higher in Aberdeen, while the cranes were given for free for lighter weights. The revenue at Aberdeen was about £80, and according to the new regulations they would be increased at Peterhead to some £30. As the committee who understood, had no intention of making revenue off the cranes, he thought the rates might be reconsidered. If any one were to require the handles occasionally during the day, it would certainly be a great hardship if he were made to pay for the whole day, and that part at least required some explanation or modification."*

1868, 15th January: the Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows:

HARBOUR OF ABERDEEN.

Decrease in **shear poles** revenue £49 17s 4d. (Approx. £6,000 in 2021).

1868, 9th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: ***"**Mr WOOD called attention to the condition of the Dock gates. He understood that there was something seriously wrong with them, and they might get worse if not repaired. He would suggest that Mr Cay should examine them, and make a report on them to the Plans and Works Committee. While on this subject, he would take leave to say further that he thought the present site of the **shear poles** to be most objectionable. It was desirable that the access to the Dock gates, north and south should be as open as possible. But the situation of the **shear poles** was such as that the north entrance was continually occupied by vessels receiving boilers and masts, using the **shear poles**. He supposed it was possible to find another site, but at all-events Mr Cay could report upon the subject, as they had had an accident or two at the Dock gates, and it was not desirable to have many vessels lying waiting to get into the Dock at one time. THE PROVOST thought there could be no objection to having a report sent to the Plans and Works Committee by Mr Dyce Cay with reference to the state of the Dock gates, but he thought that the matter of the **shear***

poles *might be remitted to the Plans and Works Committee. The SHOREMASTER said he always understood that vessels masting should get out of the way as soon as possible. He did not see where a better place could be got for the* ***shear poles****. He had no objection to an enquiry being made by the Plans and Works Committee, but he thought that a remit should also be made to the Dockmaster, to see whether or not there was any serious inconvenience caused by the present position of the* ***shear poles****.* ***Mr Duthie*** *said the present site was the most convenient place about the Harbour in the meantime; but he thought the inconvenience Mr Wood complained of might be remedied by an arrangement with the Harbourmaster. Formerly when a vessel was masted she took no longer than a day, and she was immediately thereafter hauled out; but sometimes of late, he had seen and complained of it, ships lying there and being almost wholly rigged-out. The same with steamers getting in engines and boilers; they could get them in in a very short time, and then be removed up the quay to their ordinary berths. It was remitted to Mr Dyce Cay to send in a report as to the Dock Gates, and to the Plans and Works Committee to consider as to the site of the* ***shear poles****."*

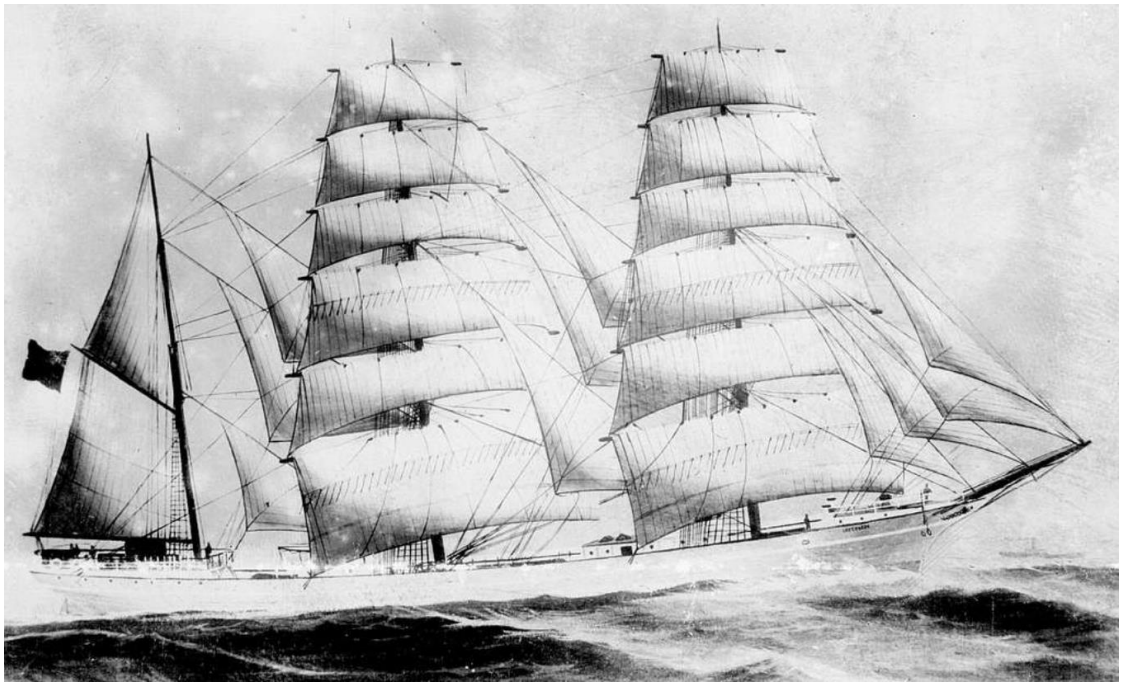
Mr Duthie, I assume was **John Duthie** (1791 to 1880) of **John Duthie, Sons & Co.,** Shipbuilders, Footdee.

1869, 4th August: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"**Shear Poles Dues.***

Nine months ending 30th June 1868 £90 12s 11d. (Approx. £11,000 in 2021).

Nine months ending 30th June 1869 £95 8s 4d." (Approx. £12,000 in 2021).

The total harbour revenue for years 1868 and 1869 was around £20,000pa, (Equivalent to approx. £2.4 million in 2021) therefore the amount of revenue generated from the **Shear Poles** for the Harbour Board was quite small.



*3-masted barque **'Inverness'** (722 tons). (Courtesy of the State Library of Victoria).*

The following press article is added here as one example (of many) of a sailing vessel being launched and immediately towed to the **shear poles** to get her masts installed.

1869, 15th September: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"**LAUNCH OF A COMPOSITE VESSEL.** — About four o'clock on Saturday afternoon, a splendid composite vessel was launched from the shipbuilding yard of **Messrs Hall, Russell, and Co.** On moving off, she was named the **"Inverness,"** and took the water in fine style. The **'Inverness'** is 180 feet in length, 22 feet breadth of beam, 19 feet depth of hold, and is of 775 tons burden. She is intended for the Madras trade, and is classed A1 at Lloyds for seventeen years. The **'Inverness'** is to be commanded by Captain Donkin. She is the third vessel launched from the Aberdeen yards during the past week, and all of very high class. Immediately on being launched she was towed up to the **shear poles**, where the work of masting has commenced."*

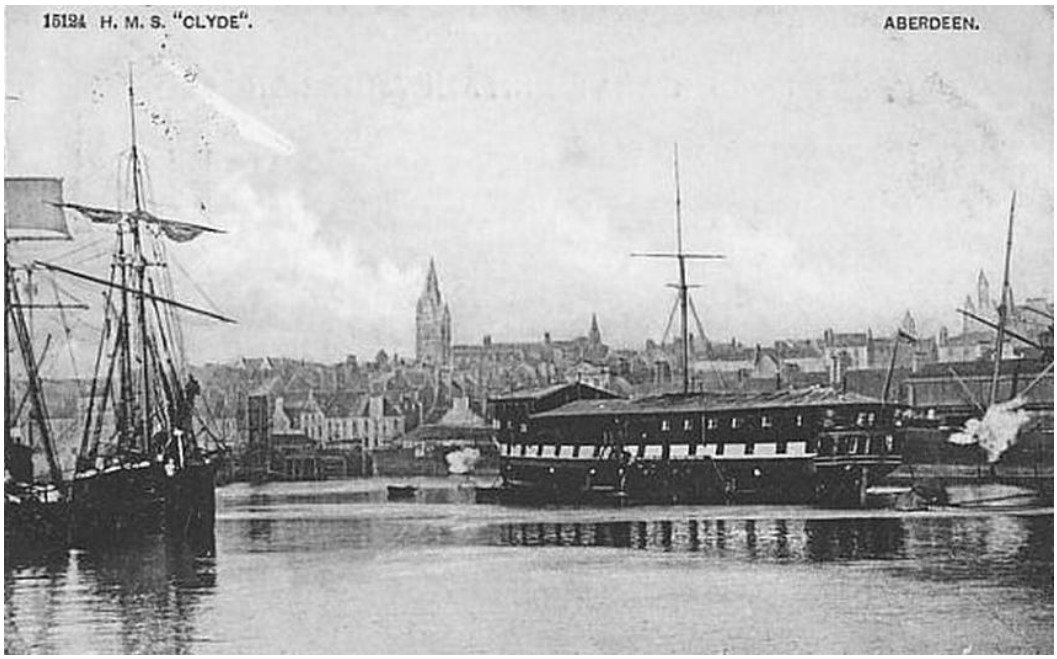
1870, 5th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"Amount of revenues from 1st Oct., 1868, to 30th Sept., 1869.…Dues for use of the **Shear Poles** and Crane - £132 14s. 2d."* (Equivalent to approx. £17,000 in 2021).

1870, 5th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Harbour Commissioners meeting held on 3rd January as follows: *"The SHOREMASTER said he had had a representation from **Messrs Hall, Russell, & Co.**, with regard to the state of the **shear-poles**, and on his recommendation, it was remitted to the Harbour Engineer to carefully examine them, and report upon their state to the Maintenance of Works Committee."*

1870, 9th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"**SHEAR POLES.** As requested, I have had an examination made of the timber of the **Shear Poles**, by a competent person, who has bored holes in different parts of them, and has preserved samples of the borings. From his report, and examination of the samples, I conclude that no evidence of decayed or rotten timber has been found in the **shear poles**. At the same time, owing to the length of time, viz., 14 years, that they have been erected, the timber is a little dry, and is not so tough as newer timber would be. I consider that while they are quite safe for masting vessels, great caution should be observed in using them for lifting boilers or heavy machinery. I have at present under consideration a design and estimate for erecting a 50-ton steam crane, suitable for the purposes to which the **shear poles** have been applied, and more convenient, and I propose to report to you further on this subject."*

1871, 10th May: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Harbour Commissioners meeting held 8th May as follows: *"**HARBOUR REVENUE.** – The SHOREMASTER intimated that during the half year there had been an increase of revenue over the corresponding half-year. There was a slight falling off in several of the items, such as the **shear poles**, etc., but as a whole, there was an increase of £17 7s 4d on the half year. (Applause)."* (Equivalent to approx. £2,250 in 2021).

1871, 18th October: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"NEW GUNS FOR THE CLYDE TRAINING SHIP.*** *– One of the Government steam lighters arrived here some time ago with three guns to be placed on board the training ship* ***'Clyde'*** (1,081 tons) *here. The vessel was hauled down on Thursday to the* ***shear poles****, and has since received the guns on board. One is a new 7-ton rifled gun, capable of throwing a 100 lb. projectile with a charge of 36 lbs. The others are 32-pounders. A patent carriage on a new principle for the 100-pounder has also been provided."*



Postcard showing ***'HMS Clyde'*** *(1,081 tons) berthed in Aberdeen Harbour.*

1872, 4th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: ***"THE SHEAR POLES.*** *A memorial was received from a number of shipbuilders, shipowners, and engineers at Footdee, as to the condition of the* ***shear poles*** *at the Dock gates. They suggested that as the* ***poles*** *were getting unsafe, new* ***shear poles*** *capable of carrying 50 tons, fitted up with steam power should be erected, at a probable cost of £2,500. Upon this matter Mr Cay, the engineer, had prepared a full report which the Shoremaster thought a very satisfactory one, and suggested that the consideration of the question be left to the Maintenance of Works Committee, which was agreed to."* (£2,500 is equivalent to approx. £300,000 in 2021).

1873, 8th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: ***"SHEAR POLES*** *- The Maintenance of Works Committee, after considering the communications formerly reported from shipowners and others as to getting new* ***shear poles****, recommended that before further procedure a deputation of the memorialists, not exceeding five in number, should meet with Sub Committee on the subject."*

1873, 5th March: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Harbour Commissioners meeting held 3rd March as follows: *"In answer to Mr Inglis, Mr ANGUS stated that in all probability a report as to the* ***shear poles*** *would be*

*submitted to next meeting of Commissioners. Mr INGLIS stated that **Messrs Hall & Co.** were very anxious to know what the Commissioners would resolve upon, as they wished to enter into several large contracts."*

The **Alexander Hall & Co.** contracts were probably to build the iron-hulled 3-masted ship **'Avalanche'** (1,210 tons) and the iron-hulled steamer **'Calypso'** (1,061 tons), both launched by **Alexander Hall & Co.** in 1874.

1873, 6th May: The Dundee Courier, reported as follows: ***"ABERDEEN. HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS.*** *The Engineer was ordered to make inquiries regarding the efficiency of the **shear poles** supplied to other places by Messrs Day & Summers & Co., Southampton, from whom the Committee had received a tender for either of two **Patent Tripod Shear Poles**, capable of lifting 35 or 50 tons respectively."*

Messrs Day, Summers, and Co. of Southampton were established in 1834 as Summers, Day, and Baldock in Millbrook. They built large mail steamers in the 1850's up to the 1870's. In 1864 they built **Shear Poles** for Woolwich Arsenal.

1873, 7th May: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"**NEW SHEAR POLES**. - A Sub-Committee, appointed by the Maintenance of Works Committee, in reference to the harbour **shear poles,** had conference with a deputation from the gentlemen who had memorialised the Commissioners on the subject. In that conference the deputation expressed an opinion that new **patent tripod shear poles** worked by steam should be erected, capable of lifting **40 tons**. The deputation further expressed their opinion that the present site of the **shear poles** is the most suitable site on which to erect new **shear poles**, and that, in the event of steam power being adopted, those using the **shears** should, in addition to the statutory rate for the use of the **shear poles**, pay the cost of said power, viz.—the amount of the expenditure for workmen's wages and the coals and other stores used. The Harbour Engineer, however, recommended that the **shear poles** should be capable of lifting **50 tons,** and estimates were got which the Engineer was appointed to enquire into and report on, being also authorised to visit places at which **patent shear poles** are in use, if he considered it necessary to do so. The Lord Provost stated that the Harbour Engineer had visited the Clyde, the Tyne, the Wear, and the Mersey, in reference to these patent **shear poles**, and that a report on the subject would be read in a few days. Approved."*

1873, 28th May: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows:

"HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS.

A Special Meeting of the Harbour Board was held on Wednesday — the Lord Provost presiding. Sederunt Baillies Daniel and Donald; Treasurer Cooper; Shoremaster Mitchell; Messrs Inglis, Abel, James Milne, Hutcheson, Black, Morrison, Eddie, Macdonald, and Ogilvie.

Continued…

NEW PATENT SHEAR POLES.

The Maintenance of Works Committee reported that there was laid before them a report by the Harbour Engineer, made by him after his visit (authorised by the Committee on 14th ult.) to places where ***Patent Shear Poles*** *are in use; which report had been circulated amongst the members of the Committee, and of which the tenor follows, viz.: - As directed, I have made further enquiries in reference to the proposed new* ***"Shears"*** *for this port: I have also visited various ports, and an abstract of the information obtained to* ***"Shears"*** *is contained in an appendix to this report. From this appendix you will see that* ***60 to 80 ton*** *cranes or* ***shears*** *are in use, or are being erected at various places. I was also informed that marine boilers, weighing from* ***40 to 50 tons****, are not uncommon, and that marine engines, weighing* ***55 tons****, have sometimes to be lifted on board vessels in one piece. On the ground that other ports have these powerful cranes and* ***shears****, and find them necessary, I cannot recommend you to put up less powerful* ***shears*** *than those capable of working with* ***50 tons****, to be tested with* ***80 tons****, such as those offered by the patentees. Messrs Day, Summers, & Co., the cost of which, complete with foundations, engine house, etc., will be about £4,700. I have seen* ***shears*** *by them, similar, and of the same power, at work in Sunderland, and they work well and give great satisfaction. Cranes are preferred in general to* ***shears*** *for machinery on account of the advantage given by their sweep;* ***shears*** *are, however, better for masting vessels; a* ***50-ton*** *crane to answer the same purposes, by Messrs J. Taylor & Co., of Birkenhead, would cost, with foundation tower, etc., about £9,000. The cost of a crane is thus nearly double that of a* ***Shears****," and on this ground I prefer to recommend the* ***Patent Shears*** *above referred to. The present* ***Shears*** *should be advertised for sale by private bargain. And the said report and the whole subject having been considered by the committee, they resolved to recommend to the Commissioners to procure an* ***80-ton Patent Shears****, as specified in Messrs Day, Summers, & Company's letter to Mr Cay, the Harbour Engineer, of date 17th March last, and to accept the offer contained in that letter to deliver and erect the same complete in Aberdeen for £4,140, the necessary foundations to be built by the Commissioners. The Lord Provost said that for some time the Commissioners and some of the shipbuilders of the port were of opinion that a lighter* ***shears*** *would be sufficient, but lately some contracts heavier than usual had been entered into, and it was now clear that it would be necessary to erect* ***shear poles*** *capable of lifting 50 tons, and tested to about 80 tons. It was of the utmost importance to encourage shipbuilding, a branch of industry for which Aberdeen was famed. Shoremaster Mitchell, in moving the adoption of the report, said that the question as between erecting a crane or* ***shear poles****, was very carefully considered in committee. They had, however, come to the conclusion that under all the circumstances a* ***shear poles*** *would be the most efficient of the two. Mr Milne seconded, and the report was unanimously adopted. Adjourned."* (£4,700 is equivalent to approx. £544,000 in 2021).

1873, 4th June: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: ***"FINANCE COMMITTEE.*** *This committee, at a meeting held on the 27th May, recommended the Commissioners to borrow a sum not exceeding £25,000, at the rate of four percent, to repay existing loans, and to provide for the expenditure on the New Works, including the erection of new* ***shear poles****."*

(£25,000 is equivalent to approx. £2.9 million in 2021).

1873, 8th October: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"A memorial from shipowners, shipbuilders, and engineers, as to the site of the new* ***shear poles****, was remitted to the committees having these matters presently under consideration."*

1873, 8th October: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"****DOCK GATES AND SHEAR POLES,*** *"……The Committee deferred consideration of the site of the new* ***shear poles****; but authorised payment of the first and second instalments of the price of the* ***shears*** *to Messrs Day, Summers, & Co., Norham Iron Works, Southampton, amounting, together, to £2,760."*

(Equivalent to approx. £332,000 in 2021).

1873, 5th November: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"****THE NEW SHEAR POLES.*** *The committee to whom the subject of the new* ***shear poles*** *was remitted, after deliberately considering the matter, recommended that the new* ***shears*** *should be erected on the site of the old* ***shears****, and that the Harbour Engineer should be authorised to advertise the present* ***shears*** *for sale. Approved."*

1873, 24th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"COLLISION ON THE KINCARDINESHIRE COAST. –*** *About eight o'clock on Saturday morning the schooner* ***'Fantasy',*** *from Tain, ran into the s.s.* ***'Itchen',*** *from Southampton, several miles off Stonehaven. The steamer was proceeding to Aberdeen with the new* ***shear-poles*** *and machine to be erected here. Both vessels reached the harbour on Saturday afternoon in a damaged condition. The schooner had her bowsprit caried away and her bow stove in. The steamer's bulwarks amidships on the starboard side were severely indented by the collision, but the damage is not considered serious."*

1874, 7th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Harbour Commissioners meeting held 5th January, the revenue for the **shear poles** and cranes for the past two years was as follows:

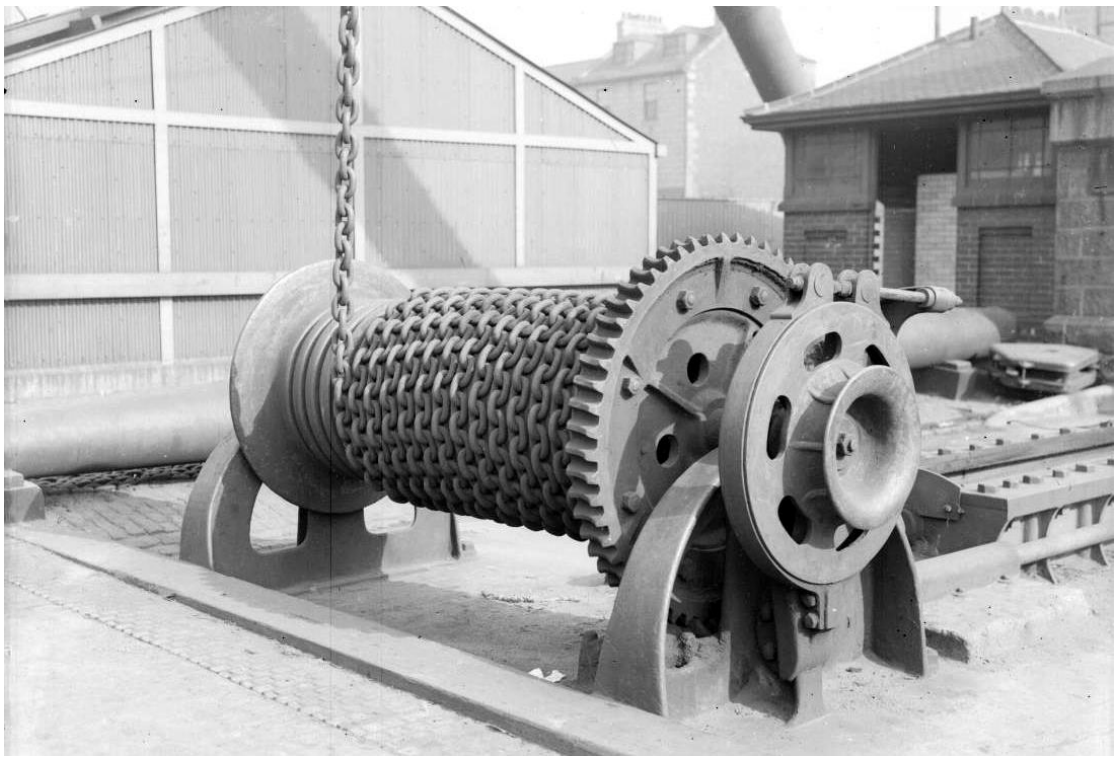
Description	Revenue 1872	Revenue 1873	Increase
Shear Poles & Cranes	£180 3s. 2d	£217 12s. 9d	£37 9s 7d
Approx. equivalent in 2021	£22,000	£26,000	£4,000

1874, 16th January: The Elgin Courant, and Morayshire Advertiser reported as follows: *"New **shear poles** for the masting of vessels, etc., are being erected at the Aberdeen Harbour, at a cost of £5,000."*

*3-masted barque **'Cairnbulg'** (1,599 tons**).** (Photographer unknown).*

1874, 8th April: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"The new iron **shear poles**, at the Dock Gates, were successfully raised on Tuesday last week. The **poles** are warranted to carry **eighty tons**, about **thirty tons** more than the old wooden ones. The winch is wrought by steam power. The cost of the whole will be a little over £5,000. The first ship to be masted by the new **shear poles** will be the **'Cairnbulg'**, a large iron vessel, just launched from the **Messrs Duthie's yard."***

(£5,000 is equivalent to approx. £600,000 in 2021).



*Winch and chain of the **80-ton Shear Poles**. (Photographer unknown, courtesy of University of Aberdeen / Aberdeen Harbour Board).*

1874, 4th May: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: ***"HARBOUR REVENUE. - Shear Pole** dues:*

Half-year ending 31st March 1873	*£137 5s 8d*	*(£16,500 in 2021).*
Half-year ending 31st March 1874	*£66 1s 6d*	*(£8,000 in 2021).*

1875, 3rd March: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board Meeting held 1st March as follows: *"**FINANCE COMMITTEE**. – …The committee, in accordance with previous instructions, had been in communication with shipbuilders in Aberdeen as to the rate for the use of the **new steam tripod shears**, and after full consideration of the whole matter, they recommend that the Commissioners adopt, without alteration, the proposed table of rates.*

***MR CORNELIUS THOMPSON** called attention to the proposed rates for the **steam tripod shears**, as he thought that the rates were excessive in themselves and unequal in their incidence. The Harbour Commissioners had erected very large and expensive **shear poles** – whether they were too large and too expensive for the port he did not say to inquire – which afforded great facilities to shipbuilders, engineers, and others requiring heavy lifts. The Finance Committee were naturally desirous to show as good a return for the money so laid out as possible, and charges were to cover coals, oil, wages, repairs, etc., there would be no ground of complaint, but they were framed with a view to return 6 per cent on the outlay. It was a question whether the Commissioners were entitled to charge anything for the use of the steam power, because he held it to be an integral part of the machine. The rates were fixed by Act of Parliament, and if anybody wished to use the **shears** and objected to pay for steam power, he fancied they would have to supply an apparatus for manual power. He would like to compare the excessive nature of the charges, as proposed, with other ports, such as Leith and Glasgow. The charge for lifting a boiler of 21 tons in Leith is £4 14s 6d; in Glasgow it is the same; in Aberdeen, by the proposed table, it is £10 3s. A boiler of 6 tons in Leith costs 9s, in Glasgow 27s, and in Aberdeen it will be 45s. A boiler of 3 tons in Leith costs 2s 3d, in Glasgow 13s 6d, and in Aberdeen it will be 16s 6d. The same remarks applied to masts, which were not charged according to weight but according to the tonnage of the vessel into which they are put. The lifting of a mast of a sailing vessel of 1,250 tons in Leith costs £2 5s, in Glasgow £2 14s, and in Aberdeen it will cost £5 12s. A more anomalous example was that afforded by a steamer of 950 tons – and here came into play that consideration of which he had spoken, charging by the tonnage of the vessel and not by the weight lifted. Masting a steamer of 950 tons in Leith costs 5s, in Glasgow 18s, and in Aberdeen it will cost £4 12s. Last year his firm had built a vessel of 1,250 tons, and they had put in all the three masts I one day, yet they had been charged £4 12s for the use of steam power, while £1 would amply cover the cost of coal, oil, men's wages, and any other expenses that might be incurred. As to the unequal incidence of the rates, he had to point out that if a boiler of 4½ tons is to be lifted by the **shears,** the charge under schedule E is 14s, and the charge for steam power is 8s, the total being £1 2s. If a mast of the same weight is to be lifted*

for a steamer of 950 tons, the rate is £3 5s under schedule E, and £1 7s for steam power, giving a total of £4 12s for the mast, as against £1 2s for the boiler. He would not wish at present to alter the rates which are proposed, but if, in the course of twelve months from this day, after the full working has been shown, it should be found that ground for complaint still existed, it would be open for them to bring the matter up again. (Applause). He begged to move that the table of rates be approved of, subject to revised after twelve months' trial. (Applause).

Mr JAMES MILNE said the Finance Committee had been very anxious to deal with the shipbuilders in the most liberal way consistent with their duty as Commissioners. This question had been some half-a-dozen times before them, and they had sent it to Mr Dyce Cay, as an independent person, to make such rates as would barely reimburse them. He adopted 6 percent as a fair return for depreciation, repairs, and outlay. When their other customers required erections of that nature 7½ percent, was charged, and although he could not follow ***Mr Thompson*** *into the various rates of other places, not having the information before him, he could give a very sufficient reason for the rates being much larger – not that the erections were too expensive or the machinery too large – but <u>because the friends represented by Mr Thompson gave them so few lifts.</u> They regretted that, but they hoped that at next revisal they would be able to reduce the rates, because the* ***shears*** *would get more to do. He was glad that* ***Mr Thompson*** *was willing to give the rates a year's trial, but he should be sorry if it went out as the opinion of the Commissioners that the rates were unfair and unjust, and were therefore to be remitted back to the committee at the end of the year.*

Lord PROVOST JAMIESON imagined that the Commissioners were committed to nothing. They had adopted a certain class of charges that should be eligible until this time twelve months, and they should then reckon if the sum received had paid the Commissioners, and if they should have the means of reducing charges. As soon as they could reduce or lessen these charges they would do so. (Applause).

Mr THOMPSON *remarked that the shipbuilders were willing to give a fair and reasonable charge, and the way to find out what was a fair charge was to compare the rates charged here with the rates charged in other ports with which Aberdeen came into competition.*

Mr INGLIS said the Commissioners simply charged the statutory rate, and added the cost for the engine, engine-house, stock, and machinery for lifting.

Mr DUTHIE *remarked that the* ***shears*** *were only the* ***shears*** *when they were connected with the rest of the machinery. After some further discussion,* ***Mr Thompson's*** *motion was agreed to."*

Cornelius Thompson (1843 to 1894) was designer and a part-owner of **Walter Hood & Co.** Shipbuilders, York Street, Footdee, a shipowner, and son of **George Thompson Junior** (1804 to 1895) owner of the **Aberdeen Line**.

1875, 5th May: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: **"*HARBOUR REVENUE. - Shear Pole* dues:**

Half-year ending 31st March 1874	*£66 1s 6d*	(£8,000 in 2021).
Half-year ending 31st March 1875	*£66 19s 4d*	(£8,200 in 2021).

1876, 8th September: The Banffshire Reporter reported as follows: ***"ANOTHER BRAVE RESCUE AT THE ABERDEEN HARBOUR.*** *– On Tuesday forenoon, while a child five years of age, named William Anderson, son of a labourer employed in the Aberdeen Gas Works, residing in Clarence Street, was running about with some other children on the quay near the* ***shear-poles*** *at the dock gates of the Aberdeen harbour, he fell into the water, which at that point is from twelve to fourteen feet deep. His companions screamed when they saw the boy disappear over the quay, and their cries were heard by some fishermen who happened to be near at the time. One of these Robert Tarvit, a native of Cellardyke, without divesting himself of any part of his clothing, sprang into the water, and, catching the child by the clothes, swam to the nearest flight of steps, up which the rescuer and rescued were helped. The boy seemed little the worse of the dip beyond the fright. The intrepidity of Tarvit is spoken of in the highest terms, and this is not the first occasion on which this man has been the means of saving life under similar circumstances; and certainly the present act of unselfish heroism is sufficient to distinguish him as a brave and gallant seaman."*

I can relate personally to this story, as my mother, Margaret Bruce (nee Bain) of Duke Street, Fraserburgh in 1948, aged 4-years was pushed into Fraserburgh harbour by a wee boy during an argument over a sweetie. Fortunately, she was saved by James Buchan (70-years) who later was recognised for his bravery by the Royal Lifesaving Society. Albert Maurice (24-years) who dived in from the other side of the harbour when he saw her in the water was also recognised.

1877, 16th July: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"****CARPENTER FALLING INTO THE HARBOUR.*** *– About three o'clock on Friday afternoon, while the masts were about to be put into one of the vessels recently launched, and then lying at the* ***shear-poles****, a carpenter named Alexander Anderson had occasion to do some work on one of the masts, which projected over the quay wall. While thus engaged he lost his footing and fell into the water. He managed to catch the end of a rope which hung from the mast and thus kept himself above water till assisted out, little the worse for his ducking."*

1878, 22nd February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"Yesterday forenoon as the brig* ***'Lady Head',*** *belonging to Aberdeen, was getting her foremast taken out at the* ***shear poles****, the mast broke in the middle and fell across the deck. Although all the crew of the vessel were standing near the place where the mast fell none of them were hurt, with the exception of the captain* (Mr Benzie) *who was slightly wounded about the head. The bulwarks of the vessel were also damaged."*

1878, 23rd February: The Aberdeen People's Journal reported similar to the above and reported that it was a rotten mast, and the captain was Mr Bennzie.

1878, 14th May: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: *"After some conversation, it was agreed to bear one point in the report about which **Mr Duthie** was anxious to make a statement, and leave the discussion of the subject till next meeting. **Mr Duthie** said the point he wished to refer to was the **shear poles**. It would be remembered that some time ago **Mr Thompson** and he asked that the rates for the **shear poles** should be revised, not reduced. He hoped there was no gentleman present who would suppose for one moment that he wished the **shear poles** revenue to be reduced. What he wanted to speak to was to the dues being equally apportioned; and from what he found in the report it was far from that. He found that it was proposed to charge on boilers and machinery and stones, etc., 6s per ton, and for masts the charge was not exactly given; but it amounted from data he had gathered to some 14s to 14s 4d per ton. That was so large a difference of charge that it should require some explanation. As it was mentioned in committee that the new **shearing poles** were put up for the convenience of masting, he wished to bring remembrance of the Commissioners that the old **shear poles** before they were taken down were tested to ascertain what weight they would lift. Mr Cay could correct him if he were in error when he said that they were tested something like **23 tons**. Now, the masts of the largest ships that were ever built in Aberdeen never exceeded ten tons weight. That proved perfectly well that the **shears** were quite sufficient for masting vessels. The new **shears** were got for the purpose of lifting boilers and machinery, and it was **Mr Russell** who agitated for the **shear poles**. The **shear poles** was a good instrument, and the shipbuilders, he had no doubt, would be perfectly satisfied to pay a fair rate for the use of the **shears**; but they did not like to be imposed upon, and it must very evident that to charge them between 14s and 15s a ton on the lifting of masts, and only to charge at the rate of 6s for lifting engines and boilers, the very articles the **shears** were got for, was perfectly ridiculous. He suggested in committee that all goods should be charged by their weight, and he maintained that that was the fairest way to do it. It was urged by some gentlemen in committee; but that they could not tell the weight of the masts; but he supposed the same gentlemen could not tell the weight of the boilers. At the same time, he could testify that the weight of the boilers and the weight of the masts could be obtained in the same way. They had tables by which, if they got the length, breadth, and thickness of any piece of iron, they could tell the weight; and they could tell the weight of masts in the same way. They knew the weight of different kinds of timber per cubic foot, and they had only to measure the masts in order to ascertain the weight; and why should the shipbuilder's returns for the weight of his masts be refused if they were willing to take the weights they got from the engineer for his boilers and machinery? If they were not satisfied to take the weight from the builder or engineer, they could get an instrument for the purpose which would tell the weight when they lifted the masts. Having thus proved that the **shears** were got for the benefit of the engineers, and that the old **shears** were*

sufficient for lifting the masts, he argued that the shipbuilder should be put upon the same footing as the engineer. He rather thought he should be put on a better footing, but he only asked that he should be put on exactly the same footing. He had some data beside him which would prove that the charge per ton varied from 14s to 14s 4-1/2d, but it would only take up their time, and he did not think it necessary to do that. He did not want the revenue of the ***shear poles*** *to be reduced a single farthing, because he held that, as a trustee, it was his duty to see that he got a fair return for money spent. He concluded by moving as an amendment to the report - "That all boilers, machinery, stones, etc., lifted by the* ***shears*** *for export be charged at 6s per ton, less the shore dues on said goods, and that the Harbour Treasurer shall be authorised to make up a statement in order to ascertain the rate per ton necessary to be charged on boilers, machinery, and masts, sufficient to cover a reasonable revenue for said* ***shear poles*** *- say not less than that now received, the minimum charge in any case to be not less than 18s."*

Mr Henderson thought the matter should be remitted to the committee.

Mr Aiken said, if ***Mr Duthie's*** *motion were to be received as a motion, he should be glad to speak to it; but he understood, from the feeling of the meeting, that it was more in the shape of a suggestion to be considered by another meeting. (Hear, hear.) To speak to it as a motion would be out of order in that view.*

Mr Wood wished to make an explanation regarding the reason which induced him to agree to the report on the table. There could be no objection to ***Mr Duthie*** *making this proposal, but it would have been far better had he attended the conference held between the sub-committee and the shipbuilders and engineers and others interested, with the view of enabling the committee to come to an impartial decision. The committee got a letter from six of these firms, suggesting that 5s 6d of a uniform rate should be fixed for all weights, masts, and everything else. The committee went into the figures, and came to the conclusion that they could not afford to go so far as that. Though* ***Mr Duthie*** *had disclaimed any desire to see the revenue from the* ***shear poles*** *reduced, had been a party to that letter which proposed a reduction that would have come to £70 or £80 a year, or about a fourth part of the whole revenue. Only* ***Mr Russell*** *and* ***Mr Hall*** *had attended the meeting.* ***Mr Duthie*** *had said that, being a Commissioner he had felt delicacy in coming; but he had evidently felt no delicacy in coming to the general committee; and it would have been a much less delicate matter to have gone to the conference and got the matter adjusted there than to bring it up now. The disposition of the sub-committee and the general committee had been to consult the parties chiefly interested. When they examined the figures in reference to the masting, they found there was no cause for grievance, and considering the saving in time alone, which the* ***shears*** *are to the builders in the masting of vessels, the charge is an extremely moderate one. These expensive* ***shears*** *were put up at the express solicitation of the shipbuilders, who told the Commissioners they would not object to pay a fair return for the money expended. The Commissioners had not got more than 4½ percent for their*

*money. The masting of large vessels was now done in one-third of the time that had taken the old **shear poles** do and this service was of great importance.*

***Mr Duthie** - You know nothing about it.*

*Mr Wood said one statement was as good as another, and he might say that **Mr Duthie** knew nothing about engineering weights and boilers, the rate for which must be made absurdly high if this sweeping reduction is allowed on the masting. (A laugh.) Mr James Ross thought that if this question was to be considered by the treasurer, they should also endeavour the interim to learn what the practice is in other parts -whether any difference made boilers, and **Mr Duthie**, in answer Mr Wood, said, that partner **John Duthie, Sons, & Company**, he signed the letter, and had been one of the parties employed in drawing it; did not agree to everything in it, and he had said at the meeting that did not agree with the figure named. That figure had been stated by **Mr Russell**. Mr Wood — But we have nothing to do with that. **Mr Duthie** - But I have right to explain It. After some conversation, it was agreed that the subject should be considered at meeting of the Board committee, and report brought up to general meeting of the Trust."*

1878, 11th June: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board Commissioners meeting held 10th June 1878 as follows: *"**REVISION OF THE RATES**…**Mr Duthie** recapitulated the points stated at last meeting in reference to the charges made for the use of the **shear poles**, and moved, in opposition to the suggestions of the report. That all boilers, machinery, stones, etc. lifted for exportation shall be charged at 6s per ton, less the shore dues on said goods, and that other masts, boilers, and machinery shall be charged at a uniform rate per ton, minimum charge in any case to be not less than 18s. Mr Aiken seconded the motion. A uniform charge seemed to him the intelligent and only reasonable one that ought to be adopted. Mr Wood moved the adoption of the report. He never said it was a pity **Mr Duthie** did not come to the committee to support his own interests. What he said was that it was a pity he did not come to give them his views on the question. If he had seen it to be just he would have agreed to the uniform rate, but the effect of it would be a loss of £70 to £80 on boilers, etc., and nearly as much on masting. There was not a single carrying company in the kingdom that had a uniform rate. Just suppose if the **Newcastle and Hull Shipping Company** were to charge a uniform rate for every species of goods – iron and coals, sofas and chairs and tables, etc., where would their dividends be then? (Laughter.). A Voice – Where are they now? (Great laughter.) Mr Wood – Aye, where are they? I don't see them. He concluded by saying that they would risk a loss of three times as much revenue with a uniform rate that they would with the arrangement proposed. **Mr Cornelius Thompson** said that three years ago he called attention to the anomaly of the charges for masting as compared with that for dead weight material. Mr Wood said his steamers would never pay a dividend if they were to charge the same rates for carrying masts as boilers. But the reason of that was simple – viz., that the mast took up so much room and was so cumbrous a thing on deck of a vessel. Another argument was the valuable goods ought to be charged*

more highly than rough cheap goods. Well, as Mr Aiken had shown, a piece of machinery put on board a ship was ten times the value of a mast. Why, then, should the mast be charged more. The mast would weigh under five tons, and the rate it was proposed to charge for lifting it was £4 12s, while a boiler of the same weight would only be charged 24s. This was a gross anomaly, and he opposed it solely on principle. Supposing the masts last year had been charged at the same rate as the boilers, they would have only sustained a loss of £40, and for such a sum as that, he asked, were they to do injustice? What he asked was a fair uniform rate overhead. Mr Milne said that no settlement would be satisfactory except at an overhead weight for weight rate. (Hear, hear.) Mr Wood said that Mr Milne was a member of the committee, and the committee was unanimous. Mr Davidson seconded the adoption of the report. ***Mr Duthie*** *then agreed to put in his amendment 7s 9d as the rate to be charged.*

For the report – Baillies Donald, Ross, Graham, and Smith; the Dean of Guild; Treasurer Walker; Shoremaster Wood; Messrs Findlay, Dr Wight, Paul, Tulloch, Morison, Davidson, Crombie, Eddie, and Inglis – 16.

For the amendment – Messrs Aiken, Mearns, Mackenzie, Adam, ***Duthie****, White, Milne and Henderson -8.* ***Mr Thompson*** *declined to vote. The report was therefore adopted."*

1878, 28th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board annual accounts and the dues raised by the **Shear Poles** were stated as £342. (Equivalent to approx. £43,300 in 2021).

1880, 3rd January: The accounts of the Aberdeen Harbour Board for the period between 1st October 1879 and 30th September 1880 reported in the Aberdeen Evening Express showed a £181 decrease in revenue compared to the previous year for the **shear poles** and cranes. (Equivalent to approx. £23,000 in 2021).

1880, 31st January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"****LAD BURNED WITH NAPHTHA.*** *– About five o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, as Richard Cox, apprentice boilermaker, residing in Chapel Lane, was working in the stokehole of the steamer* ***'Fokien',*** *lying at the* ***shear poles,*** *a naphtha lamp that was suspended above him exploded, burning him severely on the head and left arm. He was attended by Dr Robertson, and taken home in a cab."*

The **'Fokien'** (814 tons) was an iron-hulled steamer built by **Hall, Russell & Co**. for Douglas Lapraik & Co., Hong Kong, and intended for the coastal trade at China. She was launched 19th January 1880.

1881, 16th February: The Aberdeen Evening Express, reported as follows: ***"ACCIDENT AT THE SHEAR POLES.*** *Shortly before three o'clock yesterday afternoon a rather alarming accident happened at the* ***shear poles*** *at the harbour. While a boiler of 30 tons weight was being put into the new steamer* ***'Glen Gelder'*** *(746 tons), which was being launched on Saturday, the pin of the shackle attached to the*

shear poles *broke, causing the boiler to fall. It alighted on the deck, which it injured to a considerable extent, damaging also the railing, bulwarks, part of the bridge, and covering of the boiler. A large iron block fell from the* ***shears*** *and alighted in the hold of the vessel. It is a somewhat singular circumstance that although two men were in the boiler at the time of the accident, neither of them was injured. Several persons happened to be on the vessel, but fortunately they all escaped unhurt."*

Health and safety back then, wasn't like it is today, nowadays two men certainly wouldn't be allowed inside the boiler during lifting.

1881, 16th February: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows: ***"THE ACCIDENT AT THE SHEAR POLES.*** *With reference to this accident, it has been found that it has not in the least injured the boiler or hull proper of the vessel, which have been found all in order after a very careful examination by the owners and Lloyd's surveyors, one of whom was specially telegraphed for from Dundee.* ***Hall, Russell, & Co.'s*** *men were actively employed all night, both on board the ship and in their workshop, repairing the damaged tackle. It is expected that the boiler will be duly placed on board this afternoon. Had it happened to fall on the port side, however, the occurrence would undoubtedly have been of the most serious description to life and property."*

1881, 18th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows*: **"THE ACCIDENT AT THE SHEAR POLES.*** *The damage done by the recent accident at the* ***shear poles*** *has now been repaired so far that the boiler was hoisted into its position in the ship yesterday morning."*

1881, 17th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"THE ACCIDENT AT THE SHEAR POLES. –*** *With reference to this accident it has been found that it has not in the least injured the boiler or hull proper of the vessel, which have been found all in order after a very careful examination by the owners and Lloyd's surveyors, one of whom was specially telegraphed for from Dundee. Had the boiler happened to fall on the port side, the occurrence would undoubtedly have been of the most serious description to life and property.* ***Hall, Russell & Co.'s*** *men were actively employed all night, both on board the ship and in their workshop, repairing the damaged tackle. About six o'clock last night the gear of the* ***shears*** *was again got into working order, and the boiler was then hoisted off the ship to the Quay, where it will remain till the ship has been repaired."*

1881, 19th February: The Weekly Free Press and Aberdeen Herald reported as follows: *"****ALARMING ACCIDENT AT THE ABERDEEN HARBOUR****. – On Tuesday afternoon, about three o'clock, an accident of a rather alarming and unusual character occurred at the Aberdeen Harbour. The steamer* ***'Glen Gelder'****, which was launched on Saturday, as noticed elsewhere, was drawn up into the south lock of the Victoria Dock, under the* ***shear poles****, for the purpose of receiving her engines and boilers, which were being supplied by Messrs* ***Hall, Russell & Co****. A boiler, weighing about 30 tons, was in the act of being hoisted on board the ship by means of the*

*iron **shear poles** and steam gear belonging to the Harbour Commissioners. The **shear poles** rise to a height of 96 feet above the quay, and are served by strong chains which were tested to lift a weight of several hundred tons. At first the rumour was spread that the **shear poles** had given way, but this proved to be an exaggerated report. The accident happened in this wise. The boiler of the ship, weighing, as we have said, about 30-tons, was being hoisted into the ship. It was raised to a height of about nine feet above the bulwark rail amidship, ready to be lowered into its place in the hold, when suddenly the pin of the shackle attaching it to the hoisting chain broke, and the huge vessel (boiler) fell upon the ship with a crash, the sound of which was heard for a great distance around. Inside the boiler were two apprentice lads, who fortunately emerged from it unhurt. It was fortunate that the shackle-pin did not give way a few minutes sooner, otherwise the boiler would have fallen upon between twenty and thirty workmen who were assisting at its shipment on the quay. One man who was standing on the deck had just time to jump from the ship to the ground when the boiler fell, and injured his leg so that he had to be helped home. The boiler in falling grazed the side of the deck-house and fell upon the deck, breaking the iron hand-rails and carrying away part of the bulwarks and deck planks. The chain relieved of the strain ran to the top of the **shears** and brought down the iron block, which fell into the hold of the vessel. The shackle-pin which gave way and caused the accident was about an inch and a quarter thick. Besides the damage done to the ship which can easily be rectified, the boiler has had its outside packing of wood and felt torn off, and will require to be unshipped for repairs. Beyond this, however, no damage is done to the boiler. Some of the plates in the bulwarks of the ship are also bulged out, and will require resetting. The accident caused considerable commotion at the harbour."*

1881, 18th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"The Accident at the **Shear Poles**. The damage done by the recent accident at the **shear poles** has now been repaired so far that the boiler was hoisted into its position in the ship yesterday morning."*

1881, 19th November: The Weekly Free Press and Aberdeen Herald reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board revenue for the **Shear Poles** for the year to 30th September 1881 and compared the 1880 revenue:

1880 £262 11s 1d (Equivalent to approx. £33,750 in 2021).

1881 £358 6s 3d (Equivalent to approx. £46,500 in 2021).

1883, 13th January: The Aberdeen Evening Express, reported as follows:
"ABERDEEN HARBOUR.

Accounts - Revenue from 1st October 1881 to 30th September 1882.

Revenue = £439 12s 1d, increase of £70 16s 2d."

(2021 equivalents are approx. £57,000 and £9,000).

1883, 22nd December: The Aberdeen Harbour Board in their annual accounts for the year ending 30th September 1883, reported the revenue from **shear poles** and cranes as £492 17s 10d. (The revenue for 1882 was reported as £439 12s 1d).

(Equivalent to approx. £64,000 and £56,250 respectively).

1884, 23rd December: The accounts of the Aberdeen Harbour Board for the period between 1st October 1883 and 30th September 1884 reported in the Aberdeen Evening Express showed a decrease in revenue compared to the previous year for the **shear poles** and cranes at £477 5s 8d giving a decrease of £15 12s 2d.

1885, 4th February: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows: *"**THE NAIRN WHALE**. As stated in our yesterday's issue, it was proposed by Mr Davidson, after his failure to land the whale at Point Law, to tow the monster round to the **shear poles**. This was accordingly done about five o'clock yesterday afternoon by the tug **'Granite City',** and the leviathan was successfully placed on the waggons which had been provided for the purpose. Suspended in mid-air, the whale presented a remarkable spectacle, its huge proportions being displayed to full advantage. The task of placing it on the huge waggons by which it was conveyed to its destination proved a very laborious and onerous one, and occupied a large staff of men from four o'clock in the afternoon till midnight. Ultimately, however, the efforts of the men were rewarded by seeing the leviathan stretched upon the waggons, and the horses — numbering about two dozen — being attached, the unusual procession proceeded on its way to the Recreation Grounds. The extraordinary interest manifested by the public in the landing of the monster was well exemplified last night when, it may safely be said without the least exaggeration, thousands visited the vicinity of the dock gates for the purpose of viewing the operations. The quay was literally besieged by a crowd which swelled in proportions as time wore on, and whose enthusiasm the disagreeable odour which proceeded from the whale was wholly unable to quench. The most perfect order, however, was maintained a large staff of constables, and the people were kept in best possible humour by the facetious remarks made by witty individuals on the operations going on before them. Everything went well with the procession until opposite the works of Mr John Fleming, wood merchant, when, owing to the wheels of the waggons sinking in the soft ground, it was found impossible to proceed. However, about four o'clock this afternoon, after many difficulties had been encountered and overcome, the whale reached its destination — the Recreation Grounds — where it now lies. As before stated, a very strong smell is felt in the vicinity of the carcase, and the sanitary inspector — Mr Kenneth Cameron — has brought the matter under the notice of the Public Health Committee."*

1885, 8th January: The Aberdeen Free Press reported on the annual accounts of the Aberdeen Harbour Board

1883 **shear poles** revenue = £492 17s 10d. (Approx. £64,000 in 2021).

1884 **shear poles** revenue = £477 5s 8d. (Approx. £63,000 in 2021).

1885, 5th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"**ABERDEEN – ACCIDENTS TO BOYS. –** Yesterday morning, a young lad, residing in Virginia Street while amusing himself near the **shear poles**, Waterloo Quay, accidentally fell into the dock. He was promptly rescued by a man passing at the time, and appeared to be none the worse for his dip in the water."*

1885, 6th February: Wordie & Co., Carriers, Aberdeen were employed by Thomas Davidson, fishcurer, Aberdeen to transport a 29 feet long bottle-nosed whale, referred to as the 'Nairn Whale' since it was cast ashore east of Nairn, from the River Dee to the Recreation Ground at a point above the Victoria Bridge. The whale was raised from the water using the **Shear Poles** witnessed by thousands of spectators. Once at the Recreation Ground an entrance fee was payable to see the whale, 1s from 9 to 4pm and 6d after 4pm. The Aberdeen Free Press 5th March 1885 published an advertisement regarding the dissection of the whale at the Recreation ground, entrance fee 1 shilling.

1885, 26th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour accounts up to 30th September 1885, and treasurer Mr Riddell reported that the income from the **shear poles** was £214. (Equivalent to approx. £29,250 in 2021).

1887, 9th March: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows: *"**ABERDEEN - NARROW ESCAPE FROM DROWNING**. - A narrow escape from drowning occurred at Aberdeen Harbour last night between five and six o'clock. Two little girls, sisters, were amusing themselves at the east end of Victoria Dock, near the **shear poles**, when the younger missed her footing and fell into the water between the steamer **'Alexander Pirie'** and the quay wall. The cries of the sister on the quay attracted the attention of John Macleod, engineer of the tug **'Heather Bell'**, who at once ran to the place, and, lowering himself over the quay, succeeded in rescuing the girl, who was able shortly afterwards to walk home."*

1887, 17th September: The Aberdeen Evening Express, reported as follows: ***"THE NEW LOCK GATES.** The removal of the cofferdams at the new lock gates is being rapidly proceeded with. The west cofferdam is now removed, and the east barricade is in course being taken down. By the removal of the former, clear passage is given ships that are requiring repairs, etc., at the **shear poles**. In connection with the **shear poles** it may be mentioned that the Harbour Commissioners taking advantage of the close time, when the gates were being erected, had a new boiler put into the engine house at the **shears**."*

1887, 19th December: The accounts of the Aberdeen Harbour Board for the period between 1st October 1886 and 30th September 1887 published in the Aberdeen Evening Express showed an increase in revenue compared to the previous year for the **shear poles** and cranes as £27 7s. (Equivalent to approx. £3,850 in 2021).

1887, 6th July: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows: ***"NEW WORKS AT ABERDEEN HARBOUR.*** *At a meeting of the New Works Committee of the Aberdeen Harbour Board to-day – Shoremaster Sutherland presiding – a report by the harbour engineer was submitted in connection with the application of hydraulic power to the new dockgates and the* ***shear-poles*** *at Victoria dock. It will be remembered that the committee decided some time ago that in connection with the renewal of the dockgates, the pipes for hydraulic power should be put in, and the report submitted by the engineer to-day, came up in consequence of the boiler in connection with the engine for working the* ***shear-poles*** *having been condemned by the inspector. Mr Smith reported that the application of hydraulic power to the* ***shear-poles*** *would cost £300, and to the dockgates £1,000. And that a new boiler for the engine at the* ***shear-poles*** *would cost £70. The committee decided that, in view of the present state of the harbour finances, it would not be judicious in the meantime to incur the heavy expense involved in the application of hydraulic power. It was however agreed that a new boiler should be obtained for the* ***shear-poles****."*

(£70 for a new boiler is equivalent to approx. £10,000 in 2021).

1887, 19th September: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: ***"THE NEW LOCK GATES AT ABERDEEN.*** *The removal of the cofferdams at the new lock gates is being rapidly proceeded with. The west cofferdam is now removed, and the east barricade in course of being taken down. By the removal of the former clear passage is given to ships that are requiring repairs, &c., at the* ***shear poles****. In connection with the* ***shear poles*** *it may be mentioned that the Harbour Commissioners, taking advantage of the close time, when the gates were being erected, had a new boiler put into the engine house at the* ***shears****."*

1887, 5th October: The Evening Gazette (Aberdeen) reported that September saw the completion of work installing two new lock gates, and at the same time new boilers were installed in the engine-house for the steam driven **shear poles**.

1888, 5th January: The Aberdeen Free Press reported that the boiler of the s.s. **'Garrawalt'** was landed at the **shear poles** 3rd January and transported to the Footdee Iron Works, premises of the **Blaikie Brothers** for repair. It also reported that it was in good order except for damaged plates.

The Steamer **'Garrawalt'** (493 tons), of Aberdeen, on passage from Sunderland to Aberdeen with a cargo of coal, foundered 6th March 1887 off Portlethen in dense fog. I can only assume that the removal of the boiler was part of salvage activities after the sale of her wreck.

1887, 15th March: The following advertisement appeared in the Aberdeen Journal: *"**SALE OF WRECK AND SALVED FITTINGS** - The subscriber has received instruction to sell by Public Roup on Monday, the 21st March, within the yard of **Messrs ALEXANDER HALL & Co.,** Footdee, Aberdeen, the entire wreck of S.S. **"Garrawalt",** with machinery and fittings left on board, as she now lies on the rocks, near Portlethen. There will be exposed at same time the following salved goods, viz: -*

Two boats, sails, winch, anchors and chains, warps, copper steam pipes, and other fittings. Sale to commence at 11 o'clock. Terms cash. GEORGE GORDON, Auctioneer."

At the auction Mr A. F. Mortimer, merchant, Hadden Street, Aberdeen bought the wreck of the **'Garrawalt'** (493 tons) for £31. (Equivalent to approx. £4,337 in 2021).

1888, 28th June: The Aberdeen Free Press reported on an Aberdeen Harbour Board meeting where it was agreed to purchase at a cost of £82 a hydrostatic weigher for the **shear poles**, *"…in order that the weight of the lifts be got more easily and accurately…"* (£82 is equivalent to approx. £11,340 in 2021, so it seems to have been quite expensive).

1888, 25th August: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on a meeting of the Harbour Board Works Committee and reported as follows: *"…It was agreed to request the harbour engineer to inspect and report on the condition of the **shear poles**, which, it was reported were in need of repair."*

1888, 6th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the estimated income of Aberdeen Harbour from 1st October 1888 to 30th September 1889:

Shear Poles = £300. (Equivalent to approx. £41,500 in 2021).

1888, 24th December: According to the Aberdeen Press and Journal, Aberdeen Harbour Board reported annual revenue for year ending 29th September 1888 from the **Shear poles** and cranes as £261 4s 11d. (Equivalent to approx. £36,000 in 2021).

1889, 22nd May: The Aberdeen Free Press reported as follows: *"**ABERDEEN – TESTING OF NEW STEAM CRANE.** – Yesterday forenoon a test was applied to the new **10-ton steam crane** which was recently erected at Provost Blaikie's Quay, near the Dock Gates. The crane is set upon a foundation of solid concrete, faced with masonry about seven feet high, and can be worked from any side, being fixed to a strong pivot built into the concrete, and upon which the ponderous machine revolves. The testing of the crane, which was constructed by Mr Pirie, was made with a quantity of iron rails. An additional number of the rails was successively lifted, until the whole available rails of the weight of over ten tons, was easily raised. The machinery also worked very smoothly, and, upon the whole, the crane gave the utmost satisfaction. It will be of great advantage to shipping at the harbour, as lifts for which it is suitable formerly to be raised by means of the **80-ton shear-poles**."*

1889, 23rd December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour annual accounts for year ended 30th September 1889 and stated that the annual **Shear poles** dues were £456. (Dues for 1888 were £312).

1890, 11th March: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board meeting held on the 10th March 1890, discussions were held about moving the **shear poles** *"The harbour engineer had reported that the most suitable site for the **shears** would be opposite a berth to be dredged in the yard of **Messrs***

John Duthie, Sons, & Co. *the proposed length of the berth being 300 feet, and its total width at the surface 80 feet. To carry out the necessary work here and shift the* ***shears*** *would cost £8,000. This sum was exclusive of the cost of the ground. The dredging of the proposed basin he estimated at £900."*

(£8,000 is equivalent to £1.1 million in 2021).

Some of the shipowners wanted hydraulic power on the harbour lock gates, so they could be opened quicker, and they also had grievances with the shipbuilders' berthing vessels at the **Shear Poles,** sometimes for a month at a time and on one occasion a vessel is known to have been berthed at the **Poles** for 2-months.

1890, 12th March: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: ***"ABERDEEN HARBOUR BOARD.*** *A meeting of Aberdeen Harbour Commissioners on Monday — Lord Provost Stewart presiding — it was reported that the Works Committee had accepted the offer of Mr Jamieson, carpenter, Woodside, to erect additional shed accommodation at the cattle landing stage at Pocra Jetty for £375. Discussion took place on a proposal by the Works Committee to apply hydraulic power to the lock gates, at an estimated cost of £1,350. Arrangements had been made whereby the shipbuilders would be allowed the undisturbed use of the berth at the* ***shear poles*** *for a certain period. In moving the adoption of the report, Shoremaster McKenzie argued that the saving of time in opening the gates by hydraulic power compared with the present manual appliances would be half an hour, and to the small coasting steamers that meant a great deal. He calculated that the Board would receive a return of 5 percent, on their expenditure. Mr G. Murray seconded. Mr J. S. Smith moved an amendment deferring consideration of the subject until the Board are prepared to remove the* ***shear poles*** *to another site. He deprecated the idea of assuming, as Mr Murray had done, that the revenue would show a surplus of £2,000 on each quarter of the year, and showed that with the works on hand they had already practically absorbed the estimated surplus of £8,000. Mr Fleming seconded. In the course of the discussion* ***Mr Hall*** *stated that it was not the case that the shipowners and shipbuilders were pleased with the committee's recommendation. On a division the report was carried 17 to 12. The extension of the fish wharf southwards along Market Street was, on a division, agreed to, the question of the width of the roadway at that point being remitted to the committee for further consideration. Mr G. M. Cook, who had a motion on the card anent the introduction of steam haulage on the quays, fell from it on being informed that the question had been under consideration for some time, and that the Docks and Pilotage Committee, along with the Works Committee, would bring up a report. It was agreed to give a subscription of 25 to the Aberdeenshire Volunteer Artillery and Rifle Association, and a donation of £5 5s to the British and Foreign Sailors' Society. A memorial from Torry fishermen asking that a beach be formed near the South Breakwater, and other facilities afforded, was remitted to the Lands and Fishings Committee."*

1890, 21st November: The Elgin Courant, and Morayshire Advertiser reported as follows: ***"ABERDEEN — A SHIPBUILDING MANAGER FOUND DROWNED.*** *The body of* ***Mr James McHardy, manager to Messrs Hall, Russell, & Co.,*** *shipbuilders, Aberdeen, was found in the Aberdeen Docks on Tuesday morning.* ***Mr McHardy*** *had been missing for a few days, and was last seen in the vicinity of the harbour on Wednesday, the consequence being that his relatives were much concerned as to his whereabouts. His body ultimately was found by a search party in the dock opposite the* ***Shearpoles*** *in a somewhat advanced stage of decomposition. Deceased who was forty-three years of age, was a most painstaking and efficient servant of the firm by whom he was employed. He was a native of Glenbucket, Strathdon, and leaves a widow and four of a family."*

1890, 30th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on improvements at Aberdeen Harbour, these included asking the harbour engineer to report on the cost of removing the **Shear Poles** at the lockgates and to suggest a new location for them.

1890, 11th March: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"****HYDRAULIC POWER AT THE LOCKGATES****. By the casting vote of the convener M McKenzie, the Works Committee recommended that hydraulic power be applied to the lockgates and bridges, the estimated cost being £1,350; that on the introduction of hydraulic power the charge to be made by the Board for locking vessels into or out of the dock be fixed at £1 for vessels of a registered tonnage of 150 tons and under, and £2 for vessels over that tonnage; that no alteration be made at present on the position of the* ***shear poles****; that shipbuilders and others using the* ***shears*** *be allowed the use of the lock for the period of one week in the case of vessels of a registered tonnage of 500 tons and under, and two weeks in the case of vessels over that tonnage, and that during such period no vessel be locked through the gates. The amendment against which this motion was carried was that the whole matter be deferred until the Commissioners were in a position to remove the* ***shear poles*** *to another site, especially in view of the small saving in time which would be effected by the introduction of hydraulic power.*

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*motion was carried was that the whole matter be deferred until the Commissioners were in a position to remove the **shear poles** to another site, especially in view of the small saving in time which would be effected by the introduction of hydraulic power. The harbour engineer had reported that the most suitable site for the **shears** would be opposite a berth to be dredged in the yard of **Messrs John Duthie, Sons & Co.,** the proposed length of the berth being 300 feet, and its total width at the surface 80 feet. To carry out the necessary work here and shift the **shears** would cost £3,000. This sum was exclusive of the cost of the ground. The dredging of the proposed basin he estimated at £900. The cost of ten hydraulic engines for working the lock gates would amount to £1,350. In the event of the proposal being postponed the engineer suggested the erection of a single swing bridge to replace the existing bridges, which would require renewal in the course of a few years, and which would cost less in being worked with hydraulic power, and would be available for railway traffic. Shoremaster McKenzie in moving the adoption of the receipt, said that at the conference with the shipbuilders and shipowners, **Mr Wilson** as representing the shipbuilders claimed the undisturbed use of the lock and **shearpoles** for small vessels under 500 tons register for a week, and for other vessels over that tonnage for a fortnight. That was a pretty large demand but the ship owners agreed to it. There was a good deal of difference of opinion with regard to whether the Commissioners should charge shipowners for the use of the lock but ultimately the shipowners agreed that they would be willing to pay a fair sum for the use of hydraulic power. The result was that all parties were agreed upon the terms in his motion. He had put himself to a good deal of trouble in making inquiries as to the time that would be saved by the use of hydraulic power, and he had come to the conclusion that the saving would be about half an hour, which meant a very great deal to casting vessels. It would be of advantage in regard to the condition of the tide, and a very great saving would be effected for the benefit of small steamers, especially those trading with the Firth of Forth. The time required to steam from Aberdeen to the Firth of Forth was 8 or 9 hours and a small vessel could get out by means of the lock when a large vessel could not: that vessel was practically able to save a whole voyage. The cost was estimated at £1,350, and that on the engineer's authority was the very outside. Supposing that next year they locked through no more vessels than last year they would be able to get at least 5 percent of a return for their money. If his motion were adopted he calculated that they would have a revenue of £70. If they locked through 40 vessels next year - 30 above 150 tons at £2 each (that was £60), and 10 at £1 each – that brought up the total to £70, which was fully 5 percent, on the total outlay. This was an old dispute, and now that both shipowners and shipbuilders were satisfied the Commissioners should strike the iron while it was hot, and if they did so they would have no more trouble with this for many years to come. The question of removal of the **shear poles** could not be looked at at present the cost being far too great, and they must take the other alternative and do the best they could to suit their customers. Mr George Murray seconded. He pointed out that this recommendation was the proposal of shipowners and shipbuilders themselves. He thought some injury should*

have been made before fixing the charges. Nowhere on the east of Scotland did he know of more than 10s being charged for locking out a vessel, and in the majority of ports this was true. Even making no charge the facility given to coasting steamers would effect an increase in cargoes brought into port. They had been considering this subject for three years, and yet Baillie Rust asked for another month's delay. That did not coincide with the judicial functions of the bench. (Laughter). It was always thrown in the Board's teeth that their money was done. Mr Riddel had kindly supplied him with figures which showed that on last year's transactions there was an estimated surplus of £8,140. Since then there had been an increase on the first quarter of £2,059; the Board had resolved to postpone for a considerable time the repaving of Waterloo Quay, which was set down at £1,800. Here there was a total of £10,999. On the other side, the Board had sanctioned expenditure of £4,481, and they would, he was certain, in a few minutes, resolve to expend £1,600 in extending the fish wharf for the line fishermen – in all £6,081, leaving a balance that they could still expend on useful and profitable work of £4,918. When they saw Mr Riddel looking calm, peaceful, and happy – (great laughter) – while he (Mr Murray) was urging this expenditure, they might keep their minds perfectly easy. He thought that in view of other trade interests that had recently been attended to at the harbour, the Board's customers, who conducted their coasting trade inside the dock, deserved this consideration at the Board's hands. Mr Smith thought he would be able to show the Board sufficient reason why this project should not be gone on with. In the first place they had the engineer's report against it. Mr Smith, harbour engineer, in his report said – "I have conferred with the harbourmaster and the shipbuilders as to the use of the lock in the existing position of the ***shears****, and understand that the systematic use of the hydraulic power would cause much greater loss to shipbuilders and shipowners using the* ***shears*** *than any possible gain through the increased use of the lock." The committee, not satisfied with that, asked a meeting with the shipbuilders and shipowners. Of course the shipbuilders did not go back on what they originally stated, but the shipowners, with one or two exceptions, were of opinion that so long as the* ***shear poles*** *were in their present position the use of hydraulic power at the lock would be of no use to the general shipping. That also was his (Mr Smith's) opinion. There had been some talk about the time that it took a vessel to go through the lock gates. He had seen the* ***'Spray'*** *locked out one day, and it was done in half-an-hour. The real difference in time between locking out ships by hydraulic power and by hand was just the difference between opening and shutting the gates, the water rushing in always requiring the same time. Then he would point out that the cost of the project three years ago was to be £300 less than at the present time, and he thought if they were to wait a year or two they would be able to save this £300. Shoremaster McKenzie had said that if they got £2 for large steamers and £1 for small steamers they would get interest for their money, but he was bound to say a big steamer would never lock out for £2. He did not know where Mr Murray got his financial education, but he did not think it was fair to build hopes on a surplus of £2,000 every quarter. The estimated surplus was about £3,000. They had already spent £4,481, and if they spent this £1,350 and*

the £1,600 required for the fish wharf they would practically have disbursed the whole estimated surplus for the financial year. Now, as businessmen, they ought not to spend money they had not earned, and they had no right to spend their estimated surplus before they had gone half through the year. It would be both wise and prudent to retain this money until they saw how things were to shape. (Hear, hear). He moved as an amendment that the matter be deferred until the Commissioners are in a position to remove the ***shearpoles*** *to another site, especially in view of the small saving in time which would be effected by the introduction of hydraulic power. Mr Fleming said he seconded the amendment in committee, and he must do so there. He did not object to the motion so much on the score of expense as Mr Smith has done. If it was a matter that would have benefitted the general body of the ratepayers that would have altered the case, but it was an expenditure that only benefited a limited number and promised to do injury to a larger proportion. Then the £1,350 was not the entire expense, for at the meeting it was suggested that there should be additional sluices, which would cost £120, and make together £1,500. Then they would have the additional expense of attendants, and, in his opinion, altogether they would be sinking money and not getting interest. Mr McKenzie said that the shipowners and shipbuilders were well pleased with the arrangements. He denied that. The shipbuilders to a man were against the arrangement, and the shipowners, with the exception of Mr Crombie, were lukewarm, so that he could not agree with Mr McKenzie. He did not think the saving in time in locking the vessels was worth the money.*

Mr Mearns said that as an individual he had taken some interest in the matter, and when the question came to the building of new gates in the north lock he took some interest in having pipes put in, so that in the event of their requiring hydraulic power the pipes and water should be there. Therefore, he supposed it would be considered that, as an individual who voted for the money being spent in putting in the pipes, he was committed to the motion which had been carried in committee, but such was not the case. He had looked into the case in all its aspects, and he found they were only putting in the thin end of the wedge. He had not the slightest objection to hydraulic power being applied to the north lock, but they were only grappling with a portion of the question, and it was only the beginning of the end of removing the ***shear poles****. One vessel was lying in the dock, and an east wind came and shifted her from her moorings, and the* ***shear poles*** *were turned nearly upside down, and a considerable sum had been spent to put them right. He was quite satisfied that if they were to agree to the proposal without studying the question of the removal of the* ***shear poles****, they were doing what would prove a very great injury to the harbour of Aberdeen. He was not against it, but he could not do it in the piecemeal fashion in which it was proposed to be done at the present moment.*

Mr Copland supported the motion on grounds altogether different from what had been stated. If it were to resolve itself into a question of removing the ***shear poles,*** *he could not support the motion. There was no necessity for the removal of the* ***shear poles*** *at all. It would involve a very serious question, and he hoped it would*

*be voted on entirely apart from any such matter as the removal of the **shear poles.** Mr Mearns took credit or discredit he did not know which, for the hydraulic power – (Mr Mearns – Just as you have) – when the dockgates were renewed. He supposed, as a member of the Board, he had as much to do with the matter as Mr Mearns. He did not know what he meant by singling out that pace of work. (Laughter.) He did not know what was intended by it. There had been a great deal of pushing outside and inside.*

Mr Mearns – Just what Mr Copland has taken credit for.

*Mr Copland said that the Board was in honour committed to applying hydraulic power to the lock gates. As to the conference, he gathered from it that both parties were willing to be reasonable, and if an arrangement could be made whereby both parties could be accommodated, a great deal of good might result to both. If facilities were given for opening and shutting the gates by providing other sluices, it would be a great advantage to the port, but he repeated that they were bound in honour to carry the work through. As to the accident Mr Mearns referred to, be presumed it referred to the **'Empress of India'**. That was an exceptional vessel. He had been at the harbour for about 28 years, and no such accident ever occurred before, and he supposed he might be as long as 28 years again – (laughter) – without any such accident occurring.*

*Baillie Rust, in supporting the amendment, said he was in favour of hydraulic machinery for the lock gates. – (applause) – and was in favour of it still if he thought it would be of any benefit to the shipowners and builders, and only one gentleman was really in favour of the proposal. All the rest were lukewarm. Some shipowners were against it, and others did not care whether they got it or not. The only compromise that the shipbuilders would agree to was that they would require a week for small vessels and a fortnight for large vessels to lie at the **shear poles**. **Mr Wilson** stated that there were launched nine vessels a year, and if they had nine vessels for a fortnight each, that meant four months that the lockgates would be shut up, and vessels could not get out or in, and seeing that they were only to get the small sum of £1 to 30s for large and small vessels, he feared that if they spent £2,000 on the hydraulic machinery they would not get an adequate return. Mr Smith had told him in reply to a question that vessels would not get out much sooner unless they got the water in quicker than at present, and if they wished to get the water quicker in they would require new sluices, which meant an extra £200. Then there other items to be met, and he pointed out that they would require to have men at the lockgates to work the machinery, etc. Even with 30 or 40 vessels going out, he did not think they would get a penny of return for their money. If the Commissioners once got the hydraulic power she believed the shipowners would compel them to remove the **shear poles** after all – (applause) – and until they were ready to shift the **shear poles** it would be a mistake to put in hydraulic machinery.*

*In reply to Dean of Guild Macdonald, the Lord Provost said the cost of shifting the **shear poles** would be £3,900. **Mr Hall** said it was not the case that the shipowners and shipbuilders were pleased. It was only if nothing better could be arranged that*

they would consent to what Mr McKenzie suggested. This was not a question of providing a means of opening the gates because the present apparatus was not at all bad. It was merely a question of a difference in time. By using hydraulic power, however, only about a quarter of an hour would be saved, and it was not worth while spending the money for that. Before the lock was altered there was risk to vessels because of a dangerous cill. If a vessel stuck in the lock then there was a danger of her breaking her back. This cill had been removed and now though a vessel were to stick in the lock no harm would be done.

Mr Berry thought the Commissioners should seriously consider the statement of ***Mr Hall****, that the shipowners and shipbuilders were not at one on the matter. He was most assuredly in favour of the introduction of hydraulic power, but they should consider well the parties he had mentioned before interfering in the way proposed.*

The Lord Provost did not like going in the face of the engineer's report to the great extent that they would be doing if they followed Mr McKenzie. He was in favour of the money being spent in order to have the lockgates opened by hydraulic power, seeing that the pipes were there, but he could not help thinking that in the meantime the matter should be postponed or taken back for further consideration, and he proceeded to state what his reasons were. In the first place he agreed with Mr Smith that they had no right to count upon every quarter in this year producing an increase of £2,000. At the same time if it were a satisfactory job he would vote for the hydraulic power, but he considered it a most unsatisfactory job unless they finished it. The shipbuilding trade needed all the facilities that could be given them, and they should not be tied down to having their vessels only a certain number of days in the lock. He knew where there were a great many gentlemen who said the shipbuilders wasted time there; but after all it was better that the Commissioners should be in a position to allow them to waste time than to cut things so fine at the harbour that vessels could not be in the lock beyond a certain time. In cutting things so fine they would hamper the trade. He would not vote for the motion unless the Shoremaster pledged himself to go on with shifting the ***shear poles*** *next year.*

The Shoremaster, in replying on the discussion, said that no doubt as soon as they had the money to spare for the purpose they would shift the ***shear poles****, which had been a source of annoyance since ever they were there. ("No, no.") He was sure it was the wish of the Commissioners that the* ***shear poles*** *should be shifted as soon as the finances would admit of that being done; but if they could not get a whole loaf he thought they had better take a half. Attention had been directed to the statement of the engineer that the systematic use of the lock by hydraulic power would cause much greater loss to shipbuilders and shipowners using the* ***shears*** *than any possible gain through the increased use of the lock. Well, two years ago his opinion was expressed in a report as follows: - "I beg respectfully to recommend the application of hydraulic power for the purpose of opening the lock-gates and bridges, which was postponed on the 12th July last year. Owing to the extra cost and delay due to working the gates and bridges by hand the lock entrance is not so available for the access of shipping to the docks as it may be made." (Applause.) He was*

*present at the conference as well as Mr Smith and **Mr Hall,** and he asserted that, with the exception of Mr Adam, there was not one shipowner who said that hydraulic power would not be a facility. It was quite true that Mr Adam was one of the largest shipowners in Aberdeen, but Mr Adam's ships did not come to Aberdeen. He had only one small vessel trading to Aberdeen – the **'Hayle'** – and for it going through the lockgates he said he would be willing to pay £2. Mr Smith said he had only seen one vessel going through the lock. Well, he was astonished to find a man of Mr Smith's good sense expressing an opinion upon the matter in view of the fact that he had only seen one vessel passing through the lock. Many things cropped up in connection with different vessels. Sometimes the water came in faster than at other times. That depended upon whether the tide was old or new; but Mr Smith, having only seen it once, would not know much about the matter. (Laughter.) No very large vessel could use the lockgates, but that was no reason why other vessels should be prevented from using them. Vessels up to 400 tons register could be locked through. He did not admit that additional assistance would be required at the lockgates holding that they had sufficient men already to work the dock and lockgates. Next, as to what had been said about a period being specified for the use of the lock, he said **Mr Wilson** had stated that the shipbuilders would be content with a week for vessels of 500 tons, and with a fortnight for larger vessels. After remarking that there would be less use for hydraulic power if the **shear poles** were removed, Mr McKenzie said that, while it was true shipbuilders needed all the facilities they could get, there were other customers of the Commissioners – the shipowners – who had a very great grievance in the way in which the shipbuilders treated them with regard to the **shear poles** by keeping their vessels there for a month sometimes – he knew of one case where a vessel was kept for two months – and making workshops of them. The shipbuilders should not get all the good terms, and the shipowners had a right to be considered.*

On a division there voted for the report (17) – Baillies Crombie, Lyon, Byres, Duff, Brown, Messrs Morgan, McKenzie, Anderson, Nicol, Pratt, Pringle, Simpson, Baxter, Keith, Brown, Copland, and Murray.

*For the amendment (12) – Lord Provost, Baillie Rust, Dean of Guild Macdonald, Messrs Collie, Maconnachie, Mearns, Merrylees, Shepherd, Cook, Fleming, **Hall,** and Smith. Mr Berry declined to vote. The report was therefore adopted."*

1891, 6th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"THE HARBOUR ACCOUNTS. Shear Poles** and Cranes increase in revenue of £30."*

(Equivalent to approx. £3,900 in 2020).

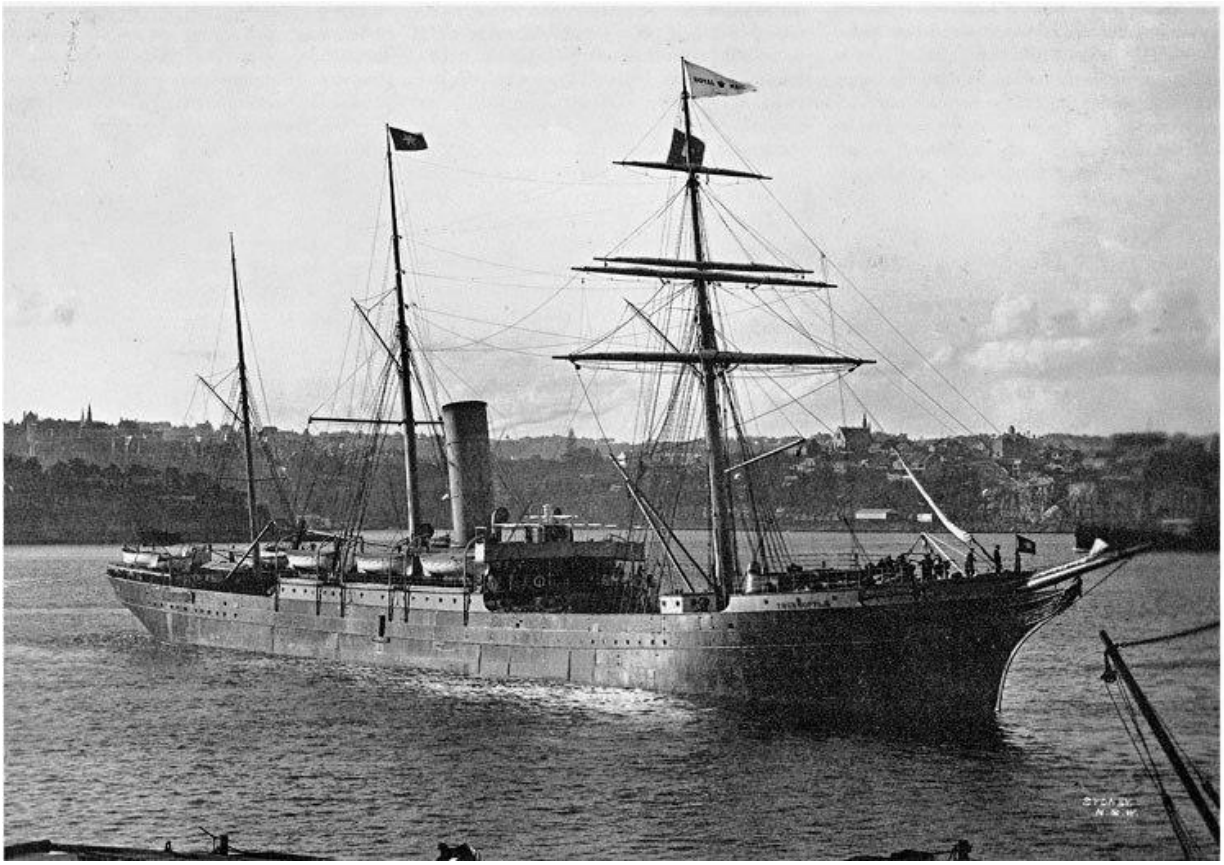
1891, 18th August: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"STRENGTHENING THE SHEAR POLES.** It was resolved, on a report by the harbour engineer, to increase the strength of the **shear poles** from **80 to 90 tons**, in view of the heavy machinery that will have to be lifted onboard the s.s. **Thermopylae** (3,711 tons), the large steamer about to be launched from the yard of **Messrs Hall, Russell,***

& Co. *The cost of the new chain, shaft, furnace boiler, and pump that will be required is £215."* (Equivalent to approx. £29,000 in 2021).

1891, 20th August: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows: *"Mr Smith, harbour engineer, and* ***Mr Hunter (****of* ***Hall, Russell, & Co.),*** *visited Glasgow for information in connection with the scheme for strengthening the* ***shear poles*** *at the dock gates."*

1891, 15th September: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"RETESTING OF THE SHEAR POLES.*** *In connection with the retesting of the* ***shear poles****, the Works Committee, on the suggestion of the harbour engineer, authorised certain alterations to be made on the* ***shears*** *and a new chain to be provided; the estimated expense being—new chain, £110; alterations, £35; shaft, £40; furnaces, £20; donkey pump, £10 — total, £215. The committee remitted to the engineer and Baillie Nicol to have the work carried out. — Agreed."*

1891, 18th September: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows: **THE S.S. THERMOPYLAE. DESCRIPTION OF THE VESSEL.** *"……When launched, the* ***'Thermopylae'*** *will be towed to the* ***shear poles****, where her boilers, engines, and masts will be fitted in, the* ***shear poles*** *having been specially strengthened for this work…."*



Steamship ***'Thermopylae'*** *(3,711 tons) at Sydney, NSW, Australia. (Photographer unknown).*

1891, 24th September: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"****STRENGTHENING ABERDEEN SHEAR POLES.*** *– Yesterday at noon the* ***shear poles*** *at*

Aberdeen Harbour were put to a severe test in view of the heavy work that will be required of them in connection with the fitting up of the s.s. ***'Thermopylae'.*** *It may be mentioned that the boiler of the steamer – which will be lifted aboard to-day – weighs 63 tons, while other parts of the engines are also of a great weight. The* ***shears*** *were originally registered to lift 80 tons, but in order to ensure that no hitch would occur they were recently strengthened to lift 90 tons, and it was with this weight that the test was made yesterday. A large company assembled to witness the operations, amongst those present being Baillie Nicol and Mr W. Smith, harbour engineer, to whom it was remitted to see the work carried out; Councillors Reid, Mearns, and Findlay,* ***Mr A. H. Wilson, of Hall, Russell, & Co.; Mr James Hunter, do****.; Mr Charles Shepherd,* ***Mr William Hall, shipbuilder****;* ***Mr Farquhar, do.****, Mr Nicol, assistant harbour engineer; Mr James Pirie, superintendent of harbour works, etc. The* ***shears*** *were strengthened by adding two pulleys to the block and two new falls of chain. A new chain, of very superior scrap iron, was specially made for the* ***shears*** *by Messrs Glegg & Thomson. The alterations were carried out by* ***Messrs Hall, Russell, & Co.****, and the test was superintended by* ***Mr Wm. Hall and Mr Farquhar****. A huge box, made of pieces of thick logs, and weighing in itself 11½ tons, was filled with pig iron, the total weight being 90 tons. This enormous mass was lifted eight feet high, and then swung out till it was above the centre of the lock. Not a hitch occurred, and the* ***shear poles*** *thus did successfully much more than the utmost that will be required of them at present. The weight was allowed to hang for some time, and before it was lowered a photograph of the* ***shear poles*** *and the gentlemen present was taken by Messrs G. W. Wilson & Co."*

Mr William Hall, Mr A. H. Wilson, and **Mr James Hunter** were all directors of **Hall, Russell & Co.,** shipbuilders, York Place, Footdee.

1891, Friday 25th September: The Aberdeen Free Press reported as follows: ***"ABERDEEN — THE s.s. 'THERMOPYLAE'. —*** *Yesterday, one of the large boilers of the* ***s.s. Thermopylae****, weighing 63 tons, was placed in position by means of the* ***shear poles****. Great difficulty was experienced in conveying the boiler from the yard, the extreme weight of the boiler making progress very slow. Two traction engines were employed in pulling the boiler, which was placed on a bogie, to the* ***shear poles****. The part of the street over which it passed was pretty much cut up. To-day, the other two boilers will be put on board."*

1891, 21st December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reporting on Aberdeen Harbour Board accounts reported that the **Shear Poles** annual dues showed a revenue of £189 which was a decrease of £284 on 1890, while the crane revenue increased by £66.

The expenditure on the **Shear Poles** and cranes was £900.

1891, 23rd December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows:

Shear Poles dues:

1890 £471. (Approx. £64,400 in 2021).

1891 £189. (Approx. £25,500 in 2021).

1892, 5th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that £460 (Approx. £62,000 in 2021) had been spent on the **shear poles** and cranes during the year.

1892, 1st February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"ABERDEEN HARBOUR.*** *TENDERS are Wanted by the Commissioners for LAYING GRANITE CAUSEWAY and CONCRETE DRAINS, at the* ***Shear Poles****, Waterloo Quay. Plans may be seen and Specifications obtained at the Office of WILLLIAM SMITH. Harbour Engineer, 15 Regent Quay, with whom Docqueted Tenders are be lodged on or before SATURDAY, 6th February. The Lowest or any Tender may not be accepted. Aberdeen. 28th January, 1892."*

1892, 4th February: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported on the monthly meeting of the Harbour Commissioners as follows: *"Lord Provost Stewart and Shoremaster Kemp are doing all they can quietly to meet the exigencies of the unemployed. I understand that part of the work – that of taking out the base of the road for the new approach to the* ***shear-poles*** *– is now begun by a number of those in the ranks of the temporary idle. Eighteen additional men have been taken on by the Harbour Engineer on the works already in hand…"* The use of unskilled labour was considered unsatisfactory by some present.

1892, 9th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal, reported as follows: ***"THE ROAD TO THE SHEAR POLES.*** *On the recommendation of the Works Committee that the engineer be authorised to have a granite causeway laid from York Place to the* ***shear poles****, as an approach for heavy boilers, at an estimated cost of £150."*

(£150 is equivalent to approx. £20,000 in 2021).

1892, 9th February: The Aberdeen Free Press reported on the Harbour Board Works Committee meeting as follows: *"At a meeting of the Works Committee yesterday, Shoremaster Kemp presiding, the offer of Messrs Scott and Sellar was accepted for the formation of the new road from York Place to the* ***Shear Poles****, at 6s 5d per square yard for causewaying, etc., and 2s 8d per lineal yard for the concrete drains."*

1892, 9th February: The Aberdeen Free Press reported on the Harbour Board meeting as follows: *"****ENGAGEMENT OF THE UNEMPLOYED AT HARBOUR WORKS.*** *– Mr Copland wished to draw attention to the employment of inefficient men at the* ***shear poles****. The superintendent of the work there came to him and said he had got some of the unemployed. He asked the superintendent how he was satisfied with them, and he said that some of them were inefficient."*

1892, 26th February: The Aberdeen Free Press reported as follows: *"****ABERDEEN – THE NEW ROADWAY TO THE SHEAR POLES****. – The new roadway to the* ***shearpoles****,*

upon which a number of the unemployed have been engaged for some weeks, is now nearing completion. The portion of the work undertaken by the Harbour Commissioners is almost finished, and all that remains to be done is the causeway of that portion of the quay that was not previously macadamised, which is being undertaken by contract. The portion of the improvement nearest York Street has been executed with all possible speed, in order to allow the heavy machinery which is about to be placed on board s.s. ***'Aberdeen'*** *to be taken to the steamer's side with greater facility."*

1892, 31st March: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Harbour Board Works Committee meeting as follows: *"…A discussion took place as to the practice of "scaling" vessels in the lock below the* ***shear poles****, and instructions were issued for the immediate stoppage of this practice, which is regarded as injurious to the machinery of the dockgates."*

Scaling – I presume they means scraping the hull to remove barnacles etc.

1892, 4th August: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported on the finances of Aberdeen Harbour and reported that for the past nine-months the revenue from the **shear poles** was £290 and for the cranes £363.

(Equivalent to approx. £39,200 and £49,000 respectively in 2021).

1892, 28th December: The Aberdeen Free Press reported that £19 11s 4d was spent on repairs to the engines at the **Shear Poles.** (Approx. £2,600 in 2021).

1892, 28th December: The Aberdeen Free Press reported as follows: *"****Causewaying Approach to Shear Poles.*** *– The new approach to the* ***shear poles*** *from York Place was commenced on the 8th February, 1892, the excavation being done by the "unemployed" labourers and the causeway executed by the contactors, Messrs Scott & Sellar. The foundation was found to be soft clay, which rendered it necessary to lay the bottom with old timber sleepers. The roadway causewayed is 180 feet long by 25 wide, and with relaying 1,140 square yards of causeway on Waterloo Quay in order to adjust the levels, cost £313 7s 7d."*

1893, 10th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that the rates from the **Shear Poles** showed an increase of £150, which was mainly due to the fitting up of the s.s. **'Thermopylae'** (3,711 tons) and renewing the boilers on the s.s. **'Aberdeen'.**

1895, 9th April: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reporting on proposed new lock and bridges reported that George Murray said *"…The present lock…was antiquated and wholly unsatisfactory, and there was 4 feet less water at it than at the south entrance, while the way was generally blocked by new vessels at the* ***shear poles****."*

1895, 23rd December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows:

"ABERDEEN HARBOUR BOARD. REVIEW OF YEAR'S ACCOUNTS.

Shear pole *rates £216, a decrease of £80."*

(Equivalent in 2021 to approx. £30,220, and a decrease of £11,200).

This is said to be due to a reduced usage by the shipbuilders, due to less new-building activity ongoing.

1895. 23rd December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that the expenditure on cranes and **Shear Poles** for the year was £859. (Equivalent in 2021 to approx. £120,000). It was also reported that the revenue from the **Shear Poles** was £216, which was £80 less than for 1894. Ship-repair activities had been busier than 1894 but *"shipbuilding had not been so brisk".*

1896, 2nd December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"So keen was the frost experienced in Aberdeen on Monday night that a part of the water in the harbour, near the* ***shear-poles*** *was frozen over."*

1896, 10th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the annual accounts of the Aberdeen Harbour Board which were prepared by harbour treasurer Mr James A. Ross as follows:

Annual revenue of **Shear Poles** = £290, with an annual expenditure of £120.

(Equivalent to approx. £41,000 and £17,000 respectively in 2021).

About to erect a mast on s.s. ***'Salamis'*** *(4,508 tons) in 1899 using the* ***80-ton Shear Poles****. (Photographer unknown, courtesy of University of Aberdeen / Aberdeen Harbour Board).*

1899, 18th August: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows on the Harbour Commissioners annual inspection: *"On their way along Waterloo Quay, the commissioners will have the opportunity of seeing the **shear poles**…At present Mr Nicol, harbour engineer, is engaged on an examination of the **poles**, with a view to presenting a report to the board on the subject. Shipowners and shipbuilders may expect that something of a practical character will be suggested to meet their wishes."*

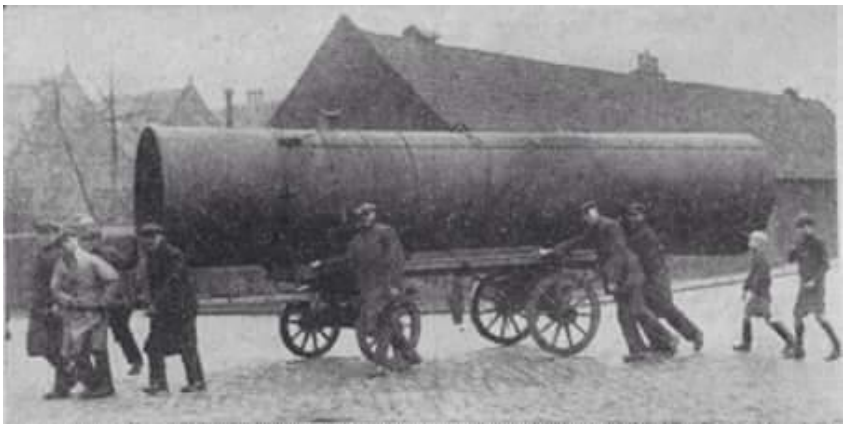
1899, 20th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that the annual rates from the **Shear Poles** showed an increase of £113. (Approx. £15,500 in 2021).

1902, 8th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows:
"ABERDEEN HARBOUR FINANCES. PROSPECTIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE.
Estimates For 1903.
Aberdeen Harbour Board Finance Committee.

***Shear Poles** Revenue*	*£600.*	(Approx. £78,500 in 2021).
***Shear Poles** Expenditure*	*£120."*	(Approx. £15,700 in 2021).

1903, 13th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"…The **shear pole** rates have increased by £230, and show a free revenue of £501. These considerable increases on the revenue from the graving dock, pontoon, and **shear poles** clearly indicate that the year has been a busy and no doubt profitable one for the shipbuilding and engineering firms."*

(Equivalent to approx. £30,000 and £65,000 respectively in 2021).



*Seven men manually transporting a funnel for a steamer to the **Shear Poles** for erection. (Photographer unknown).*

80-ton Shear Poles, *lifting boiler onboard a vessel, pre-1910. Possibly a Rennie liner. (Photographer unknown, courtesy of University of Aberdeen / Aberdeen Harbour Board).*

1904, 23rd August: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reporting on the Aberdeen Harbour Commissioners inspection held on 22nd August reported that amongst many other improvements intended for the harbour was the *"acquisition of new **shear-poles**…"* The newspaper went on to report: *""…the **shear poles** to which the local shipbuilders had recently called their attention. The existing **shearpoles** were now 30 years old, and had done good service, but from deterioration, to which all such iron structures were liable, the lifting power had had to be reduced, and with the increase in size of ships' the height was becoming insufficient. If the large class of ocean steamers which had been turned out largely from local yards during the last few years were to be built in Aberdeen it would be necessary to afford the*

*needful facilities to their shipbuilders by erecting new **shearpoles** of modern design and capacity..."*

1904, 27th October: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reporting on the Aberdeen elections and the St Clements Ward meeting held on 26th October and amongst a list of suggestions was the erection of new **shear poles.**

1904, 19th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board annual revenue and showed the **Shear Poles** rates as £136 2s 11d.

1905, 10th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board annual revenue for the **Shear Poles** and showed earnings of £566, with the very small expenditure of £66.

1906, 14th August: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows on the Aberdeen Harbour Board monthly meeting presided by Lord Provost Lyon: ***"SHEAR-POLE RATES.*** *A letter was read from Messrs Clyne, Mitchell, and Company, requesting a reduction of the rates charged for the use of the **shear-poles**. Ex-Lord Provost Mearns supported the application, which was remitted to the Finance Committee for consideration."*

1906, 7th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported the following estimates for 1907.

Aberdeen Harbour Board Finance Committee.

Shear Poles Revenue	£900.	(Approx. £115,000 in 2021).
Shear Poles Expenditure	£170.	(Approx. £21,750 in 2021).

1907, 15th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board annual revenue and showed an increase of £393 for the **Shear Poles.**

1907, 12th November: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that an Aberdeen Harbour Board meeting was held on the 11th in the Kennaway's Rooms in Bridge Street. *"George Riddell said he thought they ought to get larger **shear poles** for the fitting of larger vessels. Mr Archibald McKenzie said he would look into the matter."*

1908, 11th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows:
Aberdeen Harbour Board Finance Committee.

Shear Poles Revenue	£700.	(Approx. £89,600 in 2021).
Shear Poles Expenditure	£120.	(Approx. £1,360 in 2021).

1908, 21st December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on accounts for the year ended 30 September issued by Mr James A. Ross, harbour treasurer:

Shear poles revenue = £782 11s 6d – a decrease of £202 19s 3d.

1909, 11th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported:

Shear poles revenue surplus = £720 9s 11d, representing a return of 14 percent.

1909, 12th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board annual revenue and showed a decrease of £202 for the **Shear Poles.**

1910, 11th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reporting on the annual accounts of the Harbour Board reported that the **shear pole** rates were down by £187, however a profit of £516 was still made.

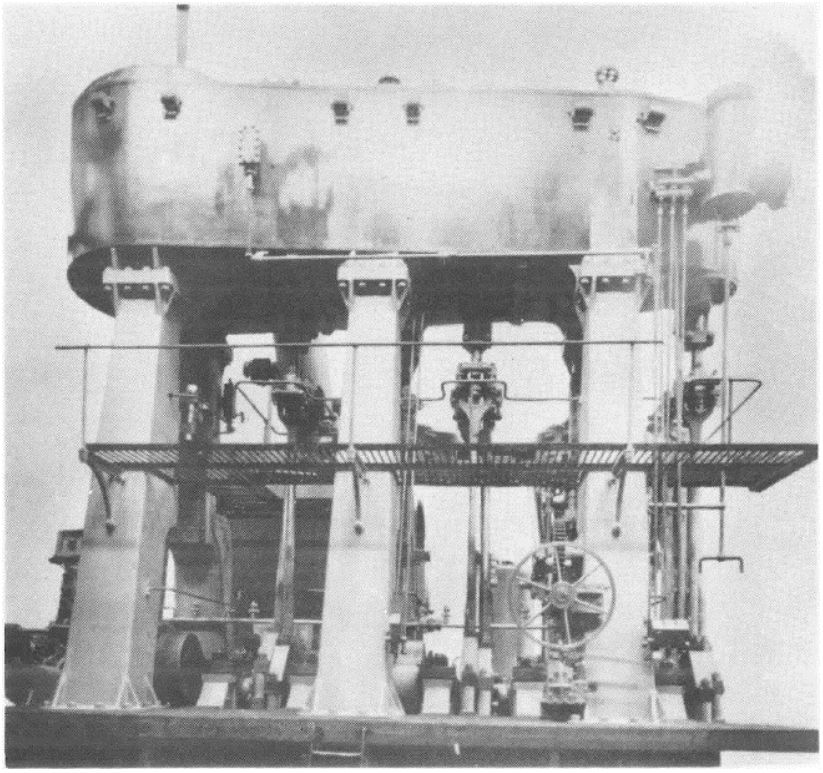
1910, 11th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"**CAPACITY OF THE SHEAR POLES.** – Treasurer Meff drew attention to the sum of £110 allowed in the estimates for the **shear-poles**, and said that, in view of the large steamer that was to be built at Aberdeen, he would like to have a guarantee from the harbour engineer that he was thoroughly satisfied the **shear-poles** were quite capable of lifting the boilers and machinery which would have to go on board that vessel. The engineer (Mr Gordon Nicol) said this was a matter that would come before a committee of the board shortly, having regard to the new ship that was being built."*

1910, 19th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board revenue from the **shear poles** = £872 19s 9d – an increase of £278 2s **on the previous year.**

*Assembly and erection of the **100-ton Shear Poles**, 1910. (Photographer unknown, courtesy of University of Aberdeen / Aberdeen Harbour Board).*

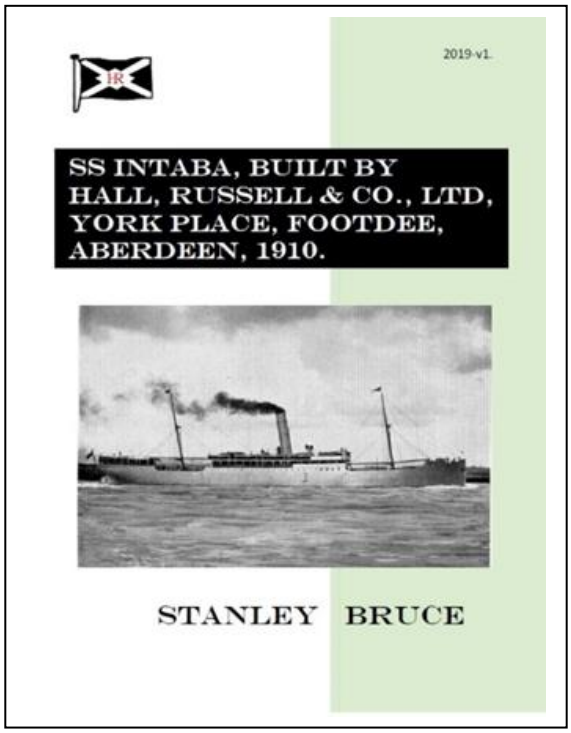
The legs were basically constructed from plates rolled to form cans that were riveted together to form the legs.

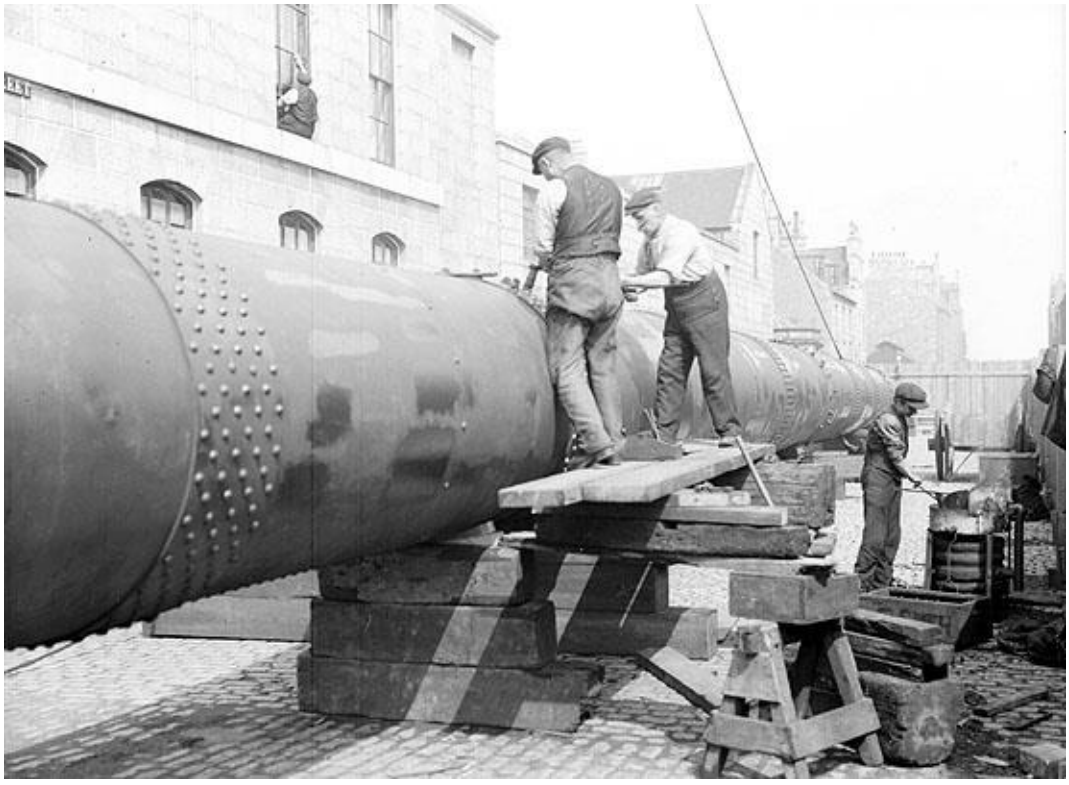
1910, 13th September: The newly erected **100-ton shear poles** built and installed by J. J. Holmes and Co. of Newcastle were successfully load tested. Which was just as well because the s.s. **'Intaba'** (4,832 tons) the largest vessel built at Aberdeen up to this date had been launched a week earlier and the larger lifting capacity shear poles were needed to install her heavy machinery.



*One of the triple-expansion steam engines for s.s**. 'Intaba'**. (**Hall Russell & Co., Ltd.).***

*For more information on the SS **'Intaba',** please have a look at my book, which is based on a huge article published in the Aberdeen Free Press on her launch.*

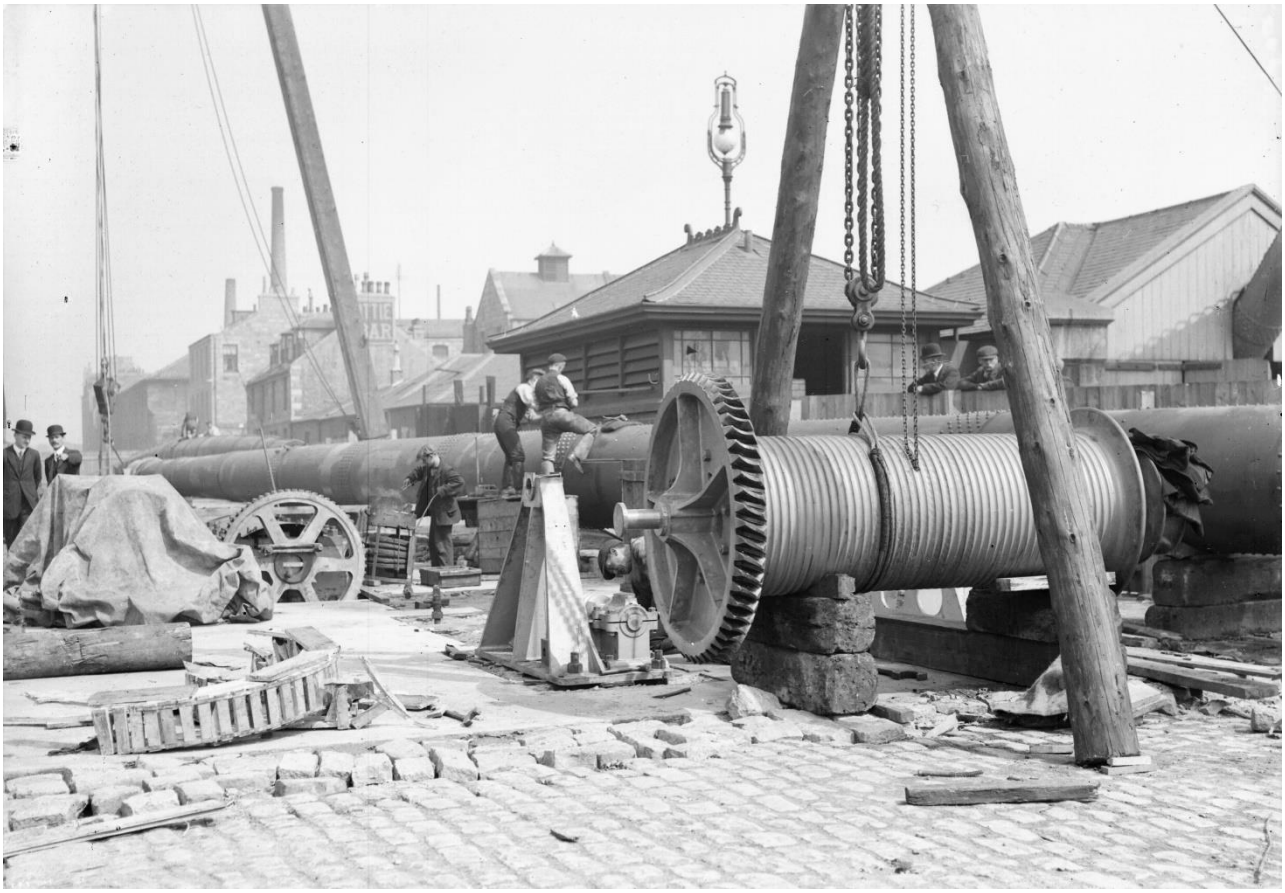




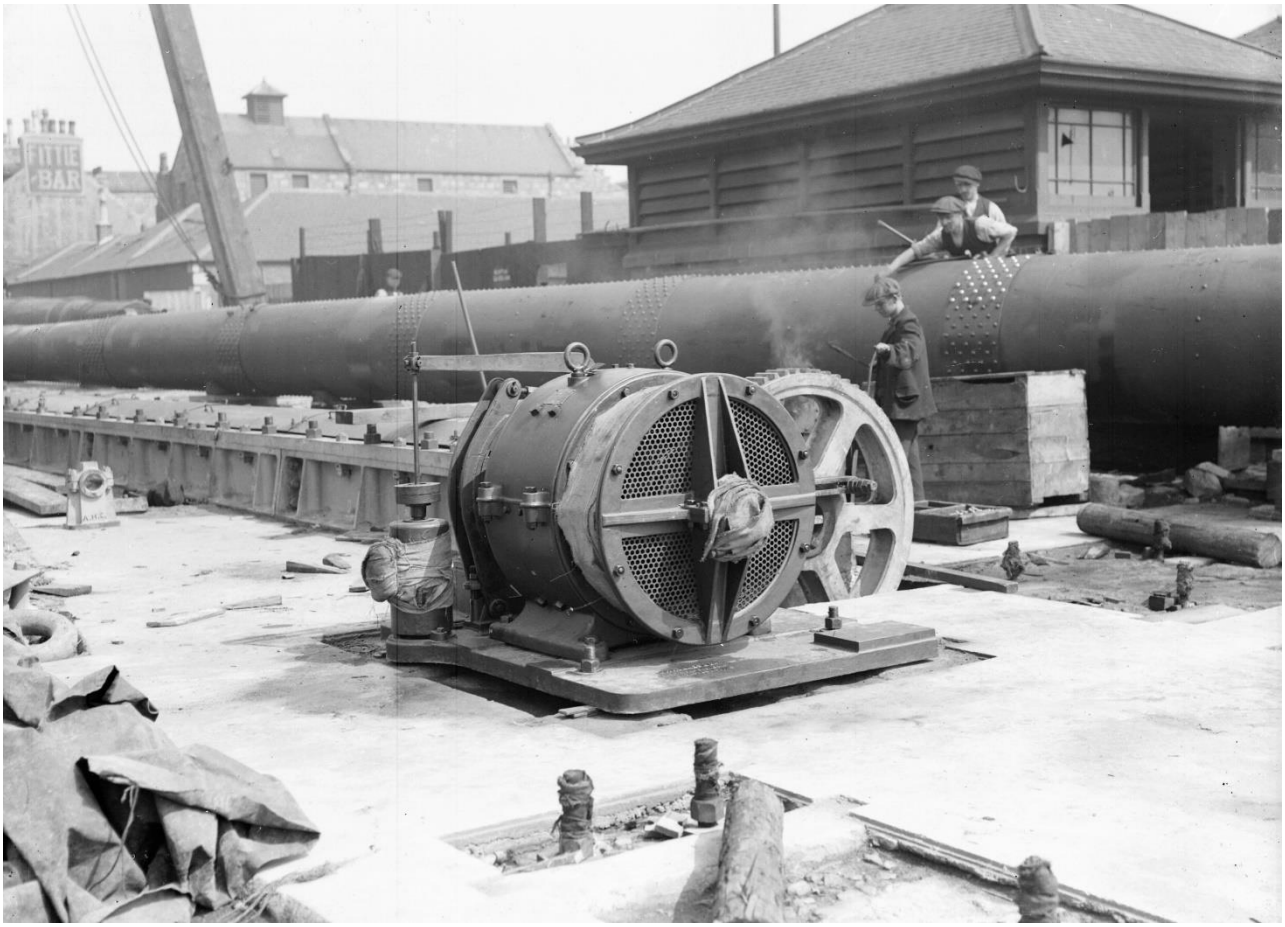
*100-ton **Shear Pole** legs assembly, riveting the cans together.*
(Photographer unknown).

This is a great photograph, as it shows the young man heating the rivets (Far right), and two men fitting them, of course there would have been a fourth man (The hudder-on) who would be inside the can getting deafened.

*Erection of the **100-ton Shear Poles** in 1910, using temporary wooden **shear poles.***
***80-ton Shear Poles** winch-house and chimney in the foreground left.*
(Photographer unknown).



100-ton Shear Poles *Wire winch drum. (Photographer unknown, courtesy of University of Aberdeen / Aberdeen Harbour Board).*



100-ton Shear Poles *worm screw mechanism. (Photographer unknown, courtesy of University of Aberdeen / Aberdeen Harbour Board).*

*Seven sheaves Crown Block of the **100-ton Shear Poles**.*
(Courtesy of University of Aberdeen / Aberdeen Harbour Board).

*The two sets of **shear legs,** and a steamer >1910. (Photographer unknown).*

In the above photograph I can't see any rigging on the **80-ton Shear Poles**, however the 100-ton **Shear Poles** have two travelling blocks, which looks like one rigged for large lifts and one for smaller lifts. Reason being the smaller block would travel up and down much quicker than the larger one.

1911, 11th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board accounts and reported on the estimated revenue from the **Shear Poles** = £1,000. (Equivalent to approx. £125,000 in 2021).

1912, 8th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour Board annual income from the **Shear Poles** and gave it as £986 5s, which left a surplus of £8,127 1s 1d, an increase of £40 6s. To repay the cost of the new poles in 25 years an annual payment of £415 was required.

1915, 14th June: The Aberdeen Pres and Journal reported on the Aberdeen Harbour valuations and the following information was shown for the **Shear Poles:**

Original cost	£12,170.	(Approx. £1.33 million in 2021).
Valuation	£6,754.	(Approx. £739,000 in 2021).

From the report below, the number of vessels that used the **Shear Poles** year ending 30th September 1915 was 125 vessels.

1916, 13th March: The Aberdeen Evening Express reporting on the Aberdeen Harbour Board accounts for the year ending 30th September 1915, reported that the number of vessels using the **shear poles** was 106, a decrease of 19 on the previous

year. The revenue from cranes was £2,260 13s, yielding a surplus of £983 11s 1d, and increase on the previous year of £554 12s 6d. There was no individual amount stated for the **shear poles.**

1916, 25th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows:
"TRADE AT HARBOUR IN 1916. *The Finance Committee of the Aberdeen Harbour Board, in their report, just issued, state that for the year ending September 30….* ***Shear Pole*** *rates decreased by £156."* (Equivalent to approx. £11,500 in 2021).

VALUATION OF HARBOUR.

Shear Poles *£6,397* (Equivalent to approx. £592,000 in 2021).

1917, 28th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows:
ABERDEEN HARBOUR WAR REVENUE

For the year ended 30th September 1917.

Increase in revenue from the ***shear poles*** *= £246.*

(Equivalent to Approx. £18,000 in 2021).

1918, 14th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"****Shear Poles*** *had a surplus of £1104 (£892), and at 40 years' repayment the annual payment required was £354."*

1919, 13th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows:

Harbour Treasurer reported - for year ended 30th July 1918.

Surplus on revenue generated from the **shear poles** = £1,043 9s.

1919, 26th June: The following notice appeared in the Aberdeen Press and Journal:

NOTICE.

ABERDEEN HARBOUR.

RATES FOR USE OF CRANES, ETC.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, by Resolution of the Aberdeen Harbour Commissioners, the Rates for the use of the Harbour Cranes and Service of Meters as from 1st JULY NEXT will be as follows:—

(1) STEAM and ELECTRIC CRANES—6s per Hour, with a Minimum Charge of 15s;
(2) EXTRA TIME or NIGHT WORK (from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m., and After Twelve Noon on Saturdays)—1s per Hour;
(3) HAND CRANES—Present Rates to be Increased by 25%;
(4) SHEAR POLES—Present Rates to be Increased by 25%;
(5) METAGE—1s 8d per Ordinary Working Hour.

W. GORDON,
Clerk to the Commissioners.

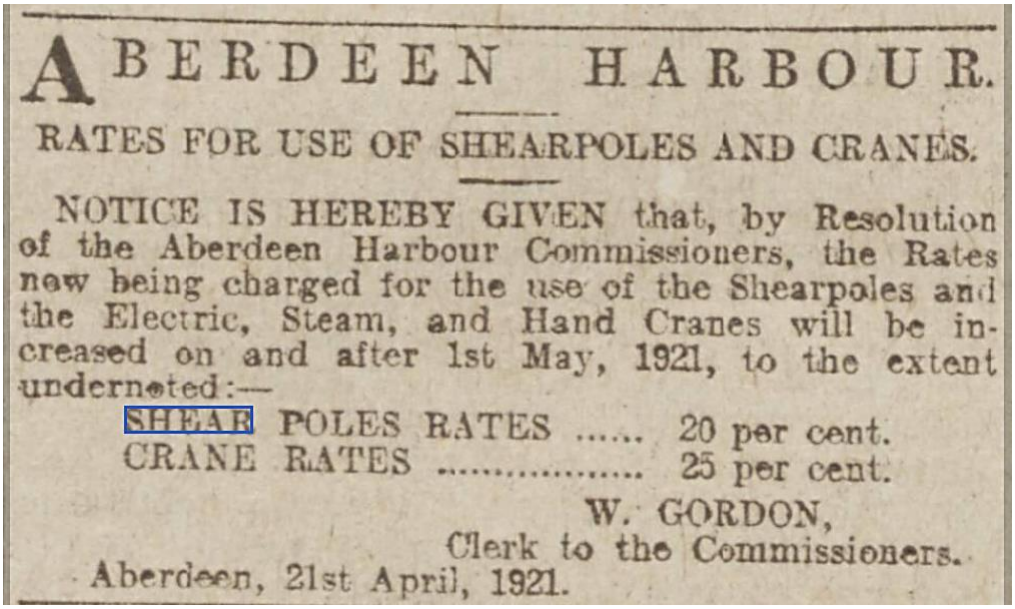
Aberdeen, 25th June, 1919.

1920, 9th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported on an abnormally high tide at Aberdeen Harbour on the 8th January. It was reported that the water rose to a depth of 24 feet 5 inches, four feet above the average, and when the tide was at its highest, the water was only six inches below the top of the quay at the **Shear Poles**, and the lock gates were completely under the water.

1920, 27th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that the **Shear Pole** rates were reduced on the previous year by £455.

1921, 11th April: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"ABERDEEN HARBOUR RATES. INCREASES RECOMMENDED.*** *A subcommittee of the Finance Committee of the Aberdeen Harbour Board have had under consideration the subject of the harbour finances. Having regard to the fact that the volume of trade at the port is still suffering from the effect of the recent war, the sub-committee consider that it necessary to increase the rates temporarily, and recommend that the Commissioners should make application to the Ministry of Transport for the necessary powers. They accordingly make the following recommendations, viz.: That application be made by the Commissioners to the Minister of Transport for an Order to empower and authorise the Commissioners charge the following increased rates,……..Cranes and* ***Shear Poles****. — After 1st May next, use cranes increased by the addition of 25 per cent, of the present charges; and for* ***shear poles****, an addition of 20 per cent, of the present charges."*

1921, 21st April: The following notice was published in the Aberdeen Press and Journal:



ABERDEEN HARBOUR.

RATES FOR USE OF SHEARPOLES AND CRANES.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, by Resolution of the Aberdeen Harbour Commissioners, the Rates now being charged for the use of the Shearpoles and the Electric, Steam, and Hand Cranes will be increased on and after 1st May, 1921, to the extent undernoted:—

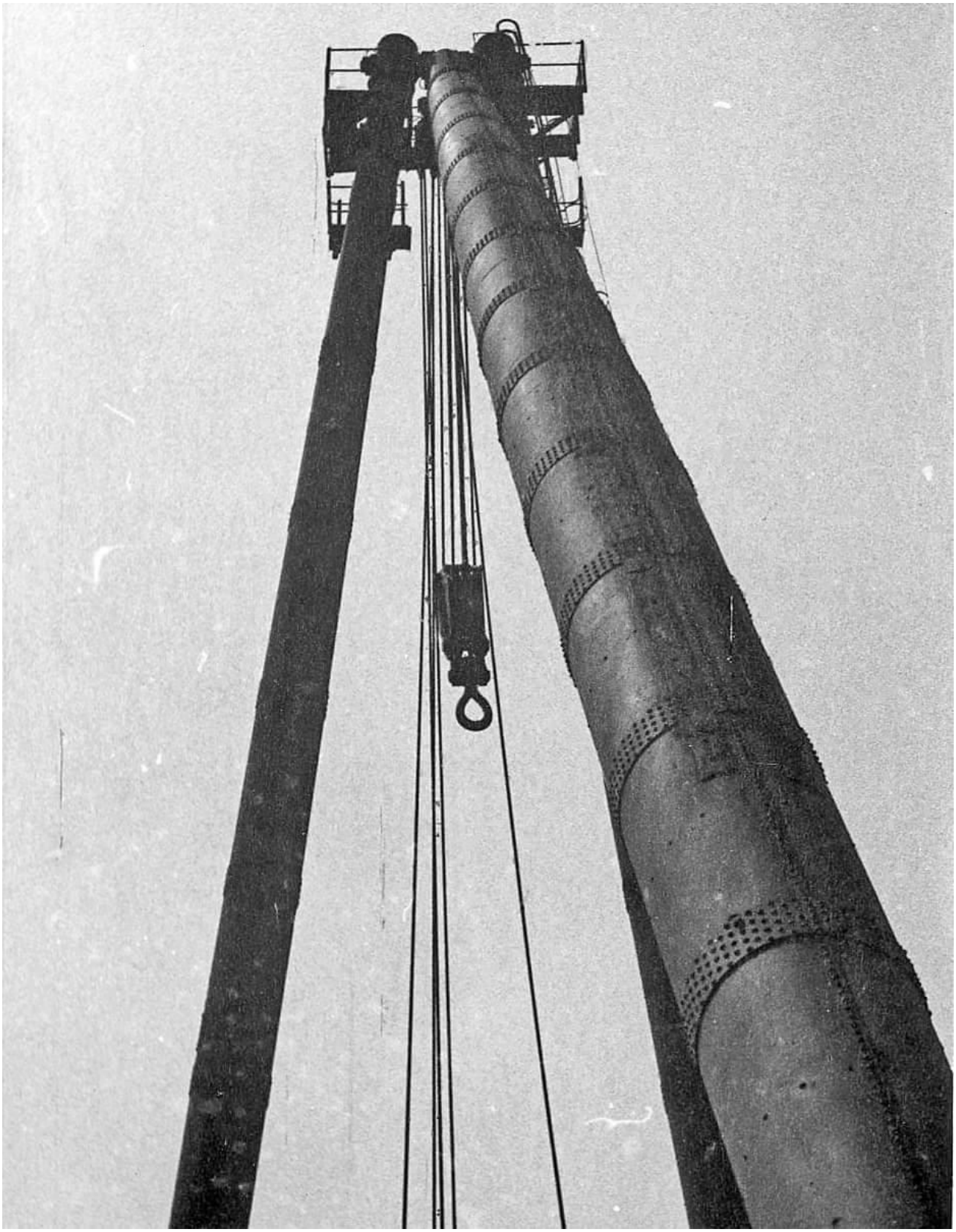
SHEAR POLES RATES ..... 20 per cent.
CRANE RATES ..... 25 per cent.

W. GORDON,
Clerk to the Commissioners.

Aberdeen, 21st April, 1921.

1921, 24th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that the decrease in annual rates from the **Shear Poles** was £466.

1922, 6th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported the annual revenue from the **Shear Poles** as £851, giving a surplus of £447. (Compared with a revenue of £1,137 and a surplus of £926 the preceding year).



100-ton Shear Poles *platforms and travelling block. (Photographer unknown).*

1922, 10th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported the surplus annual revenue from the **Shear Poles** was down by £466, reflected less traffic at the harbour.

1924, 14th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported the annual revenue from the **Shear Poles** as £530, gross surplus £405 (last year £18); deficiency, £4. It

also reported that 23 vessels had used the **Shear Poles** compared to 18 the previous year.

1925, 12th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported the annual revenue from the **Shear Poles** as £1,034, gross surplus £858 (last year £405). It also reported that 45 vessels had used the **Shear Poles** an increase of 22 on the previous year.

1926, 11th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported the annual revenue from the **Shear Poles** as £849, gross surplus £646 (£858 previous year) and a net surplus of £237. It also reported that 45 vessels had used the **Shear Poles** exactly the same amount as the previous year.

1927, 11th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported the annual revenue from the **Shear Poles** was down by £279 on the previous year. (Reference was made to the coal strike during May to July).

27th April 1928: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"HARBOUR WORKS.*** *….The harbour engineer reported the breakdown of part of the 100-ton* ***shear poles****, necessitating the* ***shear poles*** *being out use from 3rd to 14th April. Repair was effected 14th April."*

1929, 28th August: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"BOON TO ABERDEEN SHIPPERS. – Lower Harbour Rates. – TO TAKE EFFECT IN A MONTH'S TIME****….It is also recommended that the rate for the* ***shear poles*** *be reduced to 33-1/3 percent, above scheduled rates…"*

1931, 12th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that the annual revenue from the **Shear Poles** had increased by £300.

1932, 11th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that the annual revenue from the **Shear Poles** had decreased by £312.

1933, 9th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that the annual revenue from the **Shear Poles** had decreased by £222 9s 7d.

1933, 21st January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported that the annual revenue from the **Shear Poles** was £431.

1934, 2nd July: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"YACHT OWNER FALLS INTO HARBOUR. – Swims Fully Clad Across Aberdeen Dock to Safety.*** *There was a thrill at Aberdeen Harbour on Saturday when Mr W. D. M. Bell of Corriemoillie, Garve, fell into the Victoria Dock from his sailing yacht* ***'Trenchemer',*** *which was launched at Aberdeen on Wednesday, and is meantime being fitted-up alongside the* ***shear poles*** *at the dock gates. Mr Bell, who is a member of the Royal Clyde Yacht Club, made light of the mishap, and when he fell overboard, fully clothed, he unconcernedly swam to the wharf at the dock gates north lock. The incident occurred in the early forenoon when workmen were busy on the vessel. In*

pulling on a rope Mr Bell overbalanced, falling over the side of his yacht into the dock. The workmen hastened to try to haul Mr Bell on board. The side of the hull offered nothing to grip by, and so Mr Bell with a cheery "Don't worry boys," pushed off from the side of his craft. Hampered though he was with the weight of his wet clothing, he swam quickly and with ease to the north lock and scrambled to safety."

1935, 15th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"The revenue from services, which included pontoon docks, sheds, rails, ballast,* ***shear poles*** *and cranes, was down £765, while the expenditure was up £3,196 caused by £3,234 having been spent in overhauling pontoon dock No. 3, and in dredging the site."*

1936, 14th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"…Sir John went on to refer to one disappointing branch of the harbour's activities – the services such as pontoon docks, rails,* ***shear poles*** *and cranes. After taking into account the depreciation and interest charges, these services were still being provided at a considerable loss. They were glad to note, however, some small increases in the revenue from certain of these services, and they knew it only required better trade at the harbour further to improve the position."*

1936, 3rd August: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"BRAVE RESCUE OF LITTLE GIRL. One-Armed Aberdeen Man's Dive Into Harbour.*** *The pluck of a one-armed Aberdeen man who dived into Aberdeen harbour last night saved the life of a girl. While playing in Waterloo Quay near the* ***shear poles****, Elizabeth Burke, the nine-year- old daughter of Mr William Burke, fisherman, 50 St Clement Street, Aberdeen, fell into the dock. The cries of her companions attracted the attention of Mr John Christie (42), stevedore, 10 Deemount Gardens. As he ran along he saw the girl struggling in the water. Coming to the spot, however, he found she had disappeared, but, stripping off his coat and jacket, he jumped into the water. When he rose to the surface he saw the drowning girl a few feet below him.*

Swam With Limp Body

Catching her, Mr Christie placed her limp body across his chest, and swam on his back round the end of the floating dock nearby. A boat-hook was lowered to him, but because of mooring ropes and chains in the vicinity he was unable to use it. Then a lifebuoy was thrown to him, and with its aid he got the girl to steps at the quayside where willing hands assisted both rescuer and rescued out of the water. Mr Christie is a popular and well-known figure at the harbour. He told a "Press and Journal" representative last night that he was at the quay with some fellow-workers making arrangements about discharging a vessel to-day.

Girl Not Harmed

Despite his physical handicap he is a keen swimmer. "Just before I heard the cries," he said, "I had remarked to my companions that this was the first day for a long time that I had not been in the sea. "And then this happened," he added with a

laugh. After changing his clothes Mr Christie went to the girl's home where he found her in bed, little the worse of her experience."

1939, 7th October: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows: *"It is also recommended that the sanction of the Board of Trade be obtained to a similar increase on rates for lights, flags and signals, rates for pontoons and rates for rails, and that the rates for **shear poles** and cranes be similarly increased."*

1939, 15th November: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows: *"**Harbour Rates Increased.** Aberdeen Harbour Commissioners decided at a meeting to-day to increase the rates levied for vessels and goods at Aberdeen Harbour by 20 per cent. on and after January 1. The decision was unanimous. It was also agreed that the alteration in the rates for the use of pontoons, **shear poles**, rails and cranes agreed to some time ago should also take effect on January 1."*

1939, 18th November: The Aberdeen People's Journal reported as follows: ***"HIGHER HARBOUR RATES. -** "At a special meeting on Wednesday Aberdeen Harbour Commissioners resolved to increase the rates levied for vessels and goods by 20 per cent, as from January 1. The rates affecting pontoons, **shear poles**, rails, and cranes will also be altered on the same date."*

1940, 8th June: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows:

*"**OLD SHEAR POLES MAY BE SCRAPPED.** In view of the Government's need for old iron, Councillor J. P. Thom will move at Monday's meeting of Aberdeen Harbour Board that it be remitted to the Finance Committee to take immediate steps for the removal of the old **shear poles** at the harbour. A letter will be submitted from Mr J. W. Coultas, Greenock, accepting the post of assistant harbour master."*

1940, 10th June: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows: *"**Old Shear Poles to Go.** Aberdeen Harbour Board this afternoon unanimously agreed to have the old **shear poles** at the harbour removed. Their removal was suggested by Councillor Thom. He had tabled a motion that in view of the need for old iron it should be remitted to the Works Committee to take immediate steps for the removal of the **poles**."*

1940, 11th June: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"**Harbour Shear Poles as Scrap Iron.** The old **shear poles** at Aberdeen Harbour will play their part in helping to win the war. The Harbour Board unanimously agreed yesterday that, in view of the Government's need for old iron, it be remitted to the Works Committee to take immediate steps for the removal of the poles. A motion to this effect was put forward by Councillor Thom. A letter was received from Mr J. W. Coultas, Greenock, accepting the post of assistant harbourmaster, to which he was appointed at the last meeting of the board. He will take up his new duties on July 1."*

1940, 21st June: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"**Removal of Shear Poles Deferred.** Should the old **shear poles** at Aberdeen harbour be removed*

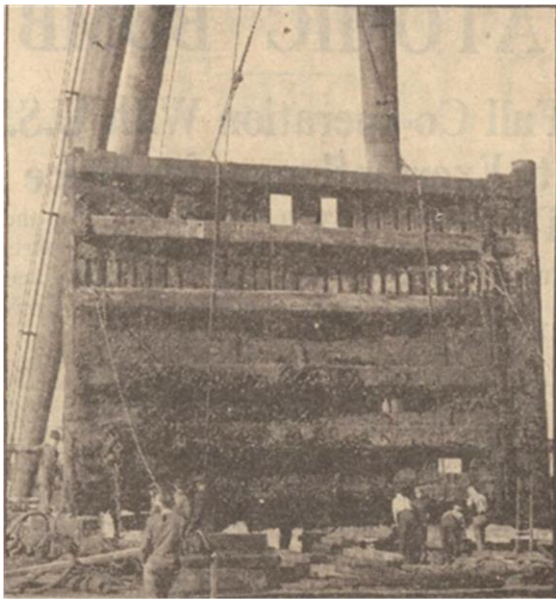
and used to help in the national drive for metal? The Harbour Board, who recently considered proposal to this effect, remitted the matter to their Works Committee, who discussed it yesterday. As result, although the poles may eventually be used for scrap, any definite action will probably be deferred. The committee had before them a report on the subject by Mr Hugh S. Barr, harbour engineer. After considering it they decided to recommend to the Harbour Board that removal of the poles be deferred meantime."

1941, 18th December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal printed the following letter to the editor: *"**A Piece of Scrap.** – Sir, - My morning walk is sometimes round Aberdeen harbour and it surprises me that nothing has been done to convert into much needed scrap one of the two **shear-poles** – which is quite obsolete and useless. It should have been dealt with in the last war. My railings are removed, and it is high time that this blot on the harbour was dealt with. Dismantling may perhaps be difficult, but so are the times, and those in authority have shown neither energy nor patriotism. A. Walker."*

c1942: Around this date the **80-ton shear poles** were taken down by Messrs Allison.

1944, 15th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"**HARBOUR PAY AND RATES UP.** INCREASES in rates at Aberdeen Harbour were approved, subject to the consent of the Minister of War Transport, at yesterday's meeting of the Board. It was agreed that the rates levied on vessels and goods and for lights. flags and signals be increased to 100 percent, above the schedule rates, in place of the 60 per cent, increase at present levied, and that the rates for pontoon docks, **shear poles**, cranes and rails be increased to 50 percent, above pre-war rates, in place of the 20 per cent, increase at present."*

1944, 29th March: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows*: "…the Minister of War Transport has also approved of the rates for Pontoon Docks, **Shear Poles**, and Rails being increased to 50 percent above pre-war rates, in place of the 20 percent increase present levied. The foregoing increases will take effect as from 1st APRIL proximo."*



*Dock gate being lifted by the **100-ton Shear Poles** in 1945. (Aberdeen Journals).*

1945, 13th August: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows*: "THE last of the old dock gates at Aberdeen Harbour. "The Press and Journal" picture shows how one half of the gates, after being moved out of position, is being hoisted by the **shear poles** out of the water on to a pontoon to be broken up. For the **shear***

poles *it was a lift of fifty-five tons of timber and metal. When lifted the lower half of the gates showed signs of age – they have been in position for sixty years – and were covered with barnacles. Until the new steel dock gates, which are expected to be delivered from the makers in Barrow in a few weeks, are in position, a floating caisson will be used."*

1950, 10th January: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported in connection with the refurbishment of the Palace Hotel: *"…Messrs Allison, who carried out the job of demolishing the old* ***shear-poles*** *at Aberdeen harbour in the early years of the war, have brought a number of specialist workmen from Glasgow."*

1950, 11th March: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"****95 ft. Shear Poles May Come Down Engineer Recommends £2,250 Repairs.*** *THE 95ft.-high* ***shear poles*** *at Aberdeen Harbour, well-known landmark to thousands of workers, seamen and visitors, may be seen from a new angle in the near future. The monster tripod will be dismantled and brought to ground level for repairs if the Harbour Commissioners, at their meeting on Monday, approve a report by their engineer, Mr John Anderson. Mr Anderson points out that the electrically - operated poles were originally designed to handle loads up to* ***100-tons*** *for the fitting-out of new vessels with boilers, machinery and high masts. The original rating had been reduced on two occasions, and now stood at* ***50-tons****, with occasional lifts of* ***60-tons****.*

Corrosion

In 1944 inspection platforms were erected at the head of the ***shear poles****, and it was found that some local corrosion had taken place immediately beneath the cast-iron capping pieces. This had been treated, but it was now suspected that corrosion continued an unknown extent beneath the caps. The operation would involve running the rear pole across Waterloo Quay with the foot partly into Wellington Street. Waterloo Quay would be blocked for about twelve weeks. The total cost of dismantling, re-erecting, repairing and painting the* ***shear poles*** *is estimated £2,250."* (Equivalent to approx. £106,000 in 2021).

1950, 18th September: The Scotsman reported as follows: *"****ABERDEEN ACCIDENT.*** *Man Killed When Harbour* ***Shear Poles*** *Crash. Two men were injured, one fatally, a power-house was demolished, and other buildings were damaged when the three* ***48-ton shear poles*** *at Aberdeen harbour crashed to the ground in the early hours of yesterday morning. Several other workmen had a miraculous escape. The dead man was Peter Halley (63), watchman, 21 Prince Regent Street, Aberdeen, who was in the watchman's hut. He received severe injuries to his legs from the tackle block of one of the derricks, and died in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary seven hours later. Alfred Caird (38), rigger 107 Commerce Street, Aberdeen, was also taken to the Infirmary suffering from cuts on the right side of his neck. He was allowed home after treatment. The* ***three poles*** *which were 95 feet high, and were one of Aberdeen's landmarks, were being lowered to the ground for repairs when the accident happened about 1.30 in the morning. One of the* ***poles*** *crashed on the roof of the power-house completely destroying it; the longest one fell into Wellington*

Street, grazing a building, and the third bent at an angle of 45 degrees and crashed to the ground, narrowly missing the watchman's hut."

***100-ton Shear Poles** crashed to the ground in 1950. (Photographer unknown).*

1950, 22nd December: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"**Work on Sheer Poles Completed** – THE work of raising the **sheer poles** at Aberdeen harbour has been completed and the engineers who have been engaged on the job were testing yesterday. The seven engineers from the Newcastle firm who have carried out the work, with the aid of a local firm, leave for home to-day. Despite the accident when the **poles** were blown down by a gale and a man lost his life, the work has been completed only a fortnight later than the original contract date. Messrs **Hall, Russell and Co., Ltd**., Aberdeen provided the cast iron sections and mild steel plates required to carry out the extra repairs."*

3-months after their collapse the **Shear Poles** had been repaired, load tested and were back in working order. It is good to read the **Hall, Russell & Co., Ltd.** played a part in their repair.

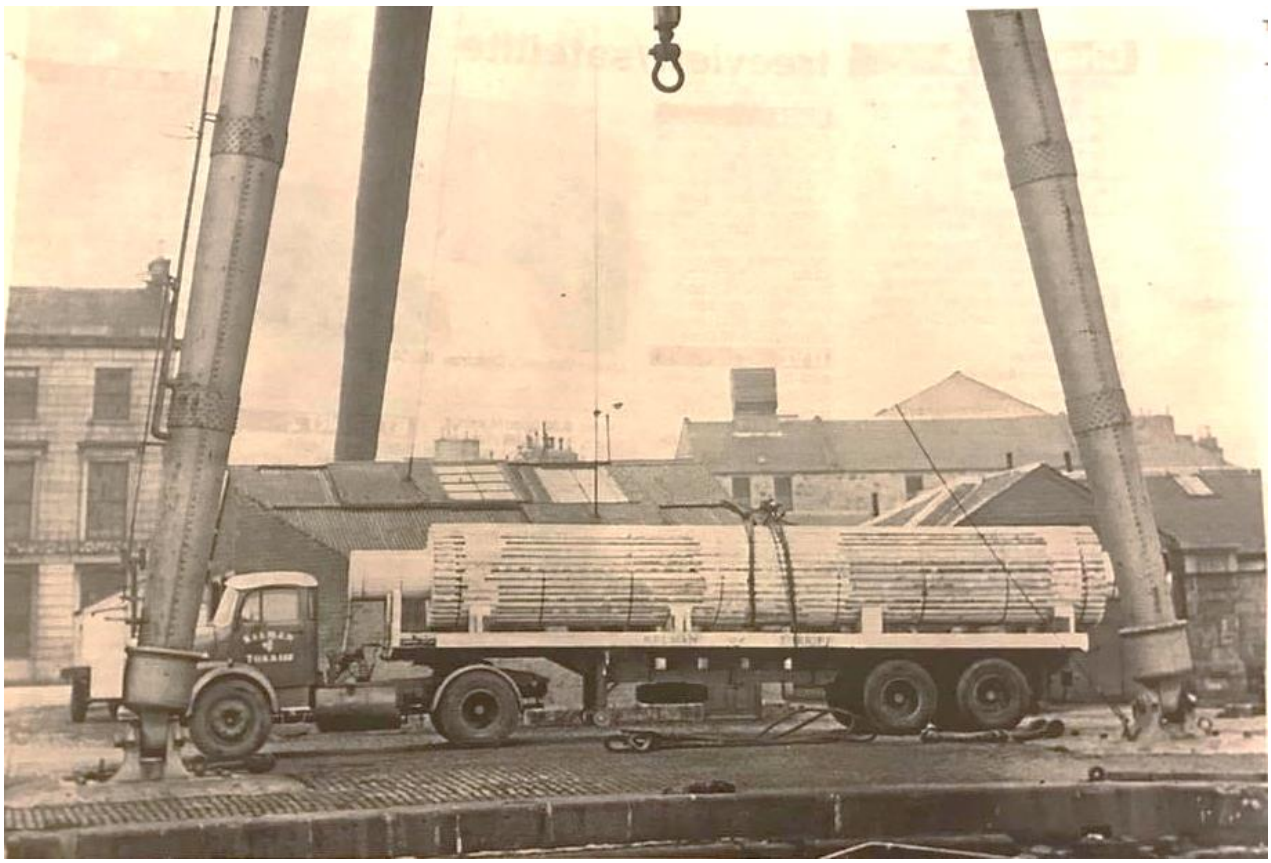
1952, 14th January: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported that the annual cost of the **shear poles** was £6,292, which was an increase of £5,654, owing to special repairs.

(Equivalent to approx. £193,000 and £173,000 respectively in 2021).

Seems the **Shear Poles** were quite expensive to maintain.

*The collier **'Stephen Brown'** (1,464 tons) built by **Hall, Russell & Co., Ltd.** berthed at the **100-ton Shear Poles** in 1954 to get her machinery installed. (Photographer unknown).*

Note the two wires coming out of the roof of the winch house. Two wires indicate that there were two travelling blocks in use, one for heavy lifts and one that could travel up and down much faster for lifting lighter items.



***100-ton Shear Poles** prepares for a heavy lift in 1966. (Aberdeen Journals).*

*Interesting view of the **Shear Poles** and three cranes at **Hall Russell & Co. Ltd.** c1970. (Aberdeen Journals).*

100-ton Shear Poles**, the vessel in the background berthed at **Hall Russell's** Outfitting Quay is the **'Thameshaven'** (8,992 tons), she was the biggest vessel ever launched in Aberdeen. Looks like the **Shear Poles** are soon to lift a relatively small offshore structure onboard offshore supply vessel **'SMIT LLOYD 3'.
(Douglas Winton, 1971).

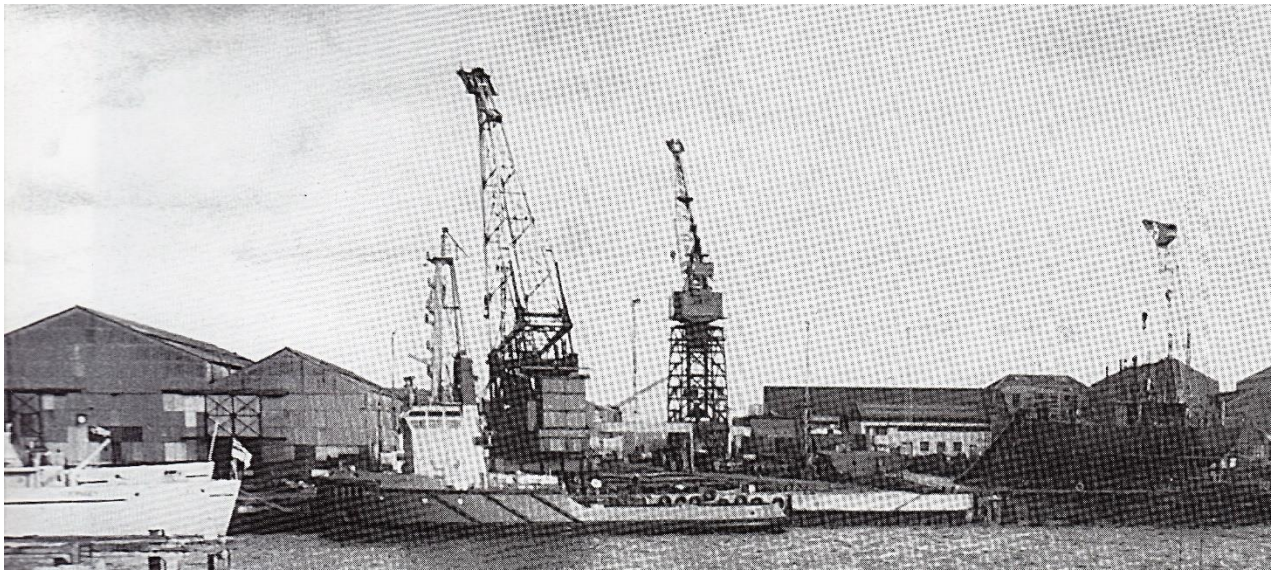
100-ton Shear Poles *and the swing bridge. (Douglas Winton).*

100-ton Shear Poles *and the* ***'Makaria'*** *(2,686 tons) launched 16th Nov. 1971, berthed at* ***Hall, Russell & Co. Ltd.*** *Outfitting Quay, 1972. (Douglas Winton).*

1974, 2nd September: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"… Carry on walking to Pacific Wharf, where the installation of a heavy-lift crane is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. It is designed to handle an increasing volume of bulky oil-exploration hardware being shipped through the port. The crane will replace the obsolete boiler lifting **shear poles** at Waterloo Quay."*

1975, 26th June: The Aberdeen Evening Express reported as follows: *"**Lady on her last legs**… A piece of history bit the dust at Aberdeen Harbour today, writes Arthur Middleton. There was some sadness among the early morning few, including some harbour officials, who saw the old lady of the docks – the giant **shear pole** crane – linger a second or two in her last throes, lurch forward, and crash gracefully on to a 150-ton cushion of aggregate and timber. The veteran tripod crane towered over the dock scene at Waterloo Quay, at the junction Wellington Street, during her 64-years of service. She was dispatched with masterful precision to make way for development at the harbour. A huge shower of dust flew into the air when the crane landed across the lock with her top section resting on the centre island at the dock entrance. Her three legs — two 130 ft. long the other 170 ft. buckled slightly with the impact. Builders' drawings estimated the crane could lift 100 tons. Although she was never called upon to exert her energy to this capacity, her Herculean powers were invaluable during two world wars. The crane was still use until the arrival of the port's new heavy lift crane at Pacific Wharf earlier this year - Demolition expert in charge of the operations, Mr David Nicol, managing director of a Dysart company, said it took two days to complete preparations for the demolition of the crane and calculations by Mr Robert Page, consultant engineer, were spot on to a degree. The crane's legs were set at an angle and the 170 ft. centrepiece kept secured to a quayside installation. Steel - cutting torches handled by a four-man team severed the base in 40 minutes, and over went the crane. The men were delighted with their efforts. Mr Nicol said that the crane's winch block and pulley would be used to try to lift 135,000 tons of seven World War 1 German battleships and the British battleship **'Vanguard',** which blew up at anchor, from the depths of Scapa Flow. The ship will be worth £15,000,000 as scrap if successfully recovered. The **sheer pole** legs will be cut and dragged back to the Waterloo Quayside and made ready for transportation south. The crane has one black spot in her history. She claimed the life of a workman when she was lowered for examination and repairs during a gale in 1950. The crane's value as scrap metal is doubtful, the massive, mild steel tubes are too old. Mr Nicol said that, by tonight, there will very little left of the crane to remind an era gone by."*

The demise of the **100-ton Shear Poles** was also partly due to **Hall, Russell & Co., Ltd.** purchasing their own 65-ton heavy lift crane which was erected at their Outfitting Quay aside the Outfitting Managers Office Block. (Exact date it was erected I don't know).



Hall, Russell & Co. Ltd., *the 65-ton crane is the large one on the left, the centre crane ran on rails, and the crane on the far right was a wheeled mobile crane. (Aberdeen Journals c1978).*

I personally remember this crane and recall a builder's plate on it, but I can't recall what it said, I wish I had a digital camera back then.

In the building hall of **Hall Russell Ltd.**, which was erected in 1982, second-hand from the Clyde, there were two overhead cranes, both capable of lifting 40-tons. In tandem they could lift 80-tons, not that I remember them ever needing that capacity.

The 65-ton crane in the shipyard of **Hall Russell Ltd,** met its fate when the yard closed in 1992, I believe it was scrapped, however the two 40-ton overhead cranes in the building hall were sold along with the building hall to the late Charlie Ritchie, and were re-erected to form part of the main premises of his company Score which was initially established in the former premises of the Glenugie Distillery, Invernettie, Peterhead.

Hall Russell Ltd, Building Hall and 65-ton crane, 1990. (S. Bruce).

100-ton Shear Poles *16th August 1974 (J. R. Hume).*

Note the platforms at top, which were fitted in 1944.

1974, 2nd September: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"Carry on walking ... to Pacific Wharf, where the installation of a heavy-lift crane is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year. It is designed to handle the increasing volume of bulky oil-exploration hard-ware being shipped through the port. The crane will re-place the obsolete boiler-lifting* ***shear poles*** *at Waterloo Quay."*

1975, 28th February: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: ***"****Crane trials ABERDEEN harbour's new giant heavy lift crane carried out trials at her Pacific Wharf location yesterday. The crane can lift a maximum of 50 tons."*

1975, 27th June: The Aberdeen Press and Journal reported as follows: *"EARLY morning at Aberdeen Harbour and a demolition worker sets to work with an acetylene cutter on one of the legs of the tripod* ***sheer poles*** *which have towered over Waterloo Quay for more than 60 years. As the cutters do their work the* ***poles*** *begin to lean towards the special "cushion" provided on the wharf."*

FOR MORE than 60 years the tripod ***shear poles*** *towering over Waterloo Quay have impressed and fascinated visitors to Aberdeen Harbour. But that leggy landmark exists no more. It was "amputated" yesterday in the latest piece of surgery to be performed on the swiftly-changing face of the harbour.*

The operation was carried out in the early morning before harbour traffic was astir – but a "Press and Journal" cameraman was on the spot to record the final plunge for

posterity. It was an impressive sample of precision demolition, completed without a hitch.

A special "cushion" of timber and aggregate had been prepared to absorb the shock as the three tubular steel poles – two 130ft long and the third 170ft - crashed down, sending up a cloud of dust. The legs buckled slightly under the impact were then cut into manageable sections to be carted away for scrap.

The aggregate was reported as being 150-ton in weight.

*The **shear poles** had been in service since the early part of the century to provide the harbour with heavy-lift gear to handle bulky machinery and ships boilers. But their importance declining with the eclipse of steamships and finally became redundant with the ports acquisition of a modern heavy-lift crane – now installed at Pacific Wharf.*

*The installation is being cleared to make way for further oil-service development at Waterloo Quay East. But although the **shear poles** are no more, part of the plant will still have work to do.*

Mr David Nicol, managing director of the Dysart company who undertook the demolition, said the winch block and pulley would be used to salvage remnants of the German Grand Fleet scuttled in Scapa Flow.

*The **shear poles** have only one "black spot" in their long service. A workman was killed when the legs were being lowered for inspection during a gale in 1950."*

*Demolition of the **100-ton Shear Poles** in 1975. (Aberdeen Journals).*

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Various newspaper articles as stated in the text.

Acknowledgements.

Thanks to Barney Crocket, Lord Provost, himself a Footdee lad, for writing the preface.

Thanks to Gordon Stephen, Donny Anderson, Bill Deans, and Eddie Aitken all members of the 'Aberdeen history and photos from the past' Facebook group for answering my question I posted on the **shear poles.**

Thanks to Douglas Winton for photographs of the **100-ton Shear Poles**.

Photos from the Aberdeen Harbour Board Collection / Aberdeen University.

Websites.

www.electricscotland.com	The Shipbuilders of Aberdeen.
www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk	>46 million newspaper pages in UK and Ireland dating from the 1700's.

Shear Poles

The three legs stood michty an' prood,
A landmark o' steel pinted reid,
Bit noo, they're gone, aye fer good,
Tumbled doon, like a giant weed.

Bit fa'n ye think o' a' the ships they've masted,
A' e' engines an' boilers lifted onboard,
Ye'd be absolutely flabbergasted,
Dumbstruck, ye'd be floored.

Stanley Bruce.

Other Titles.

A total of 1,480 pages of Aberdeen shipbuilding history available online to date:

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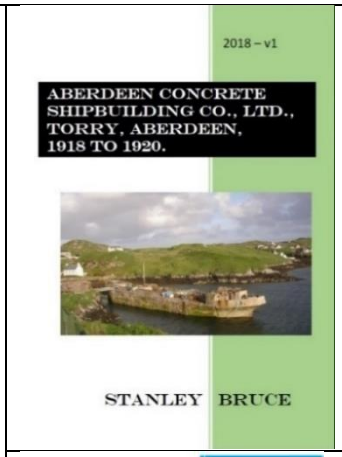

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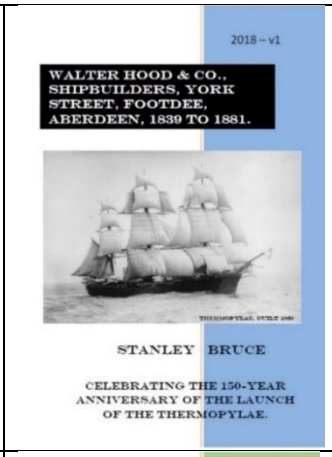
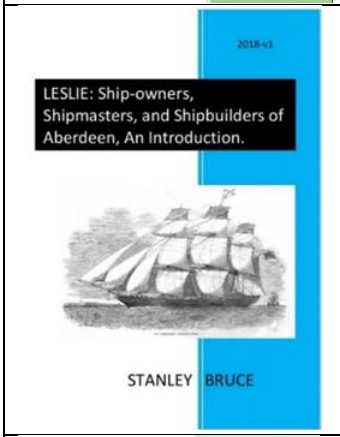


LESLIE: Ship-owners, Shipmasters, & Shipbuilders of Aberdeen (An Introduction) (2018), 150 pages, no ISBN.



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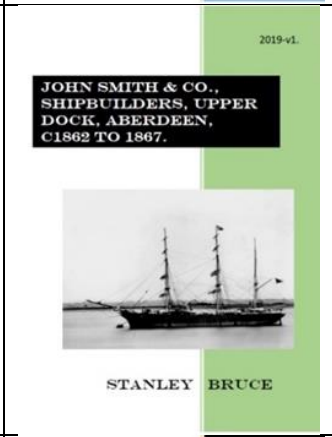

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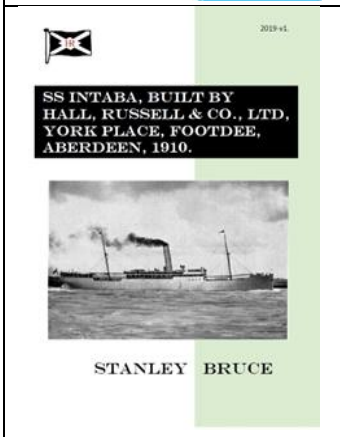

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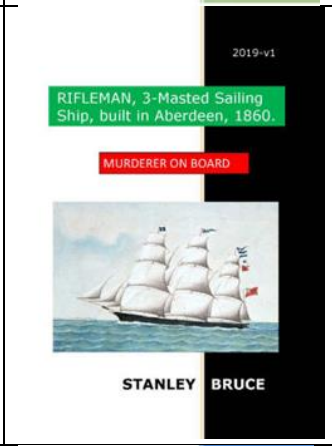

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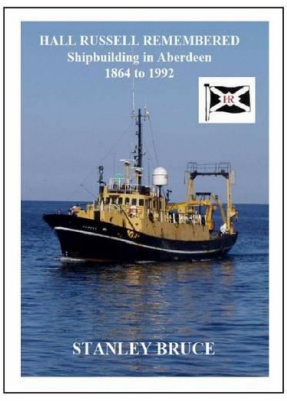

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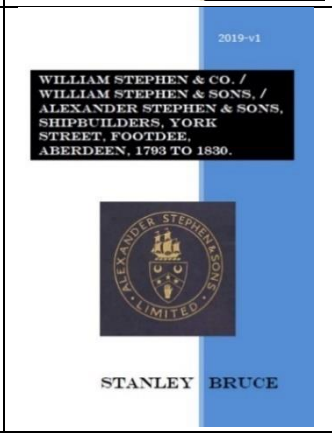

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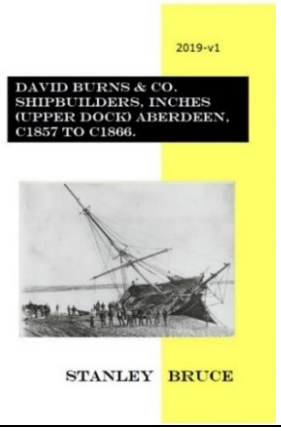
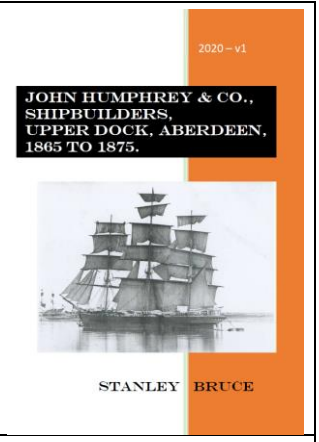
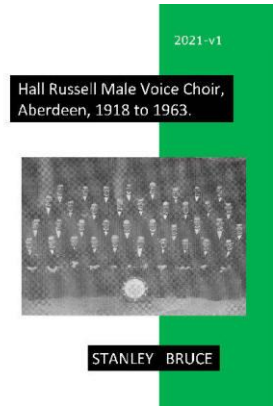
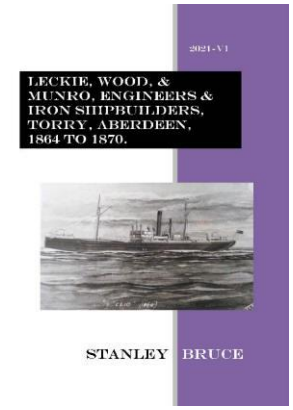
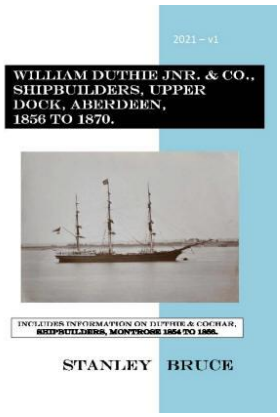
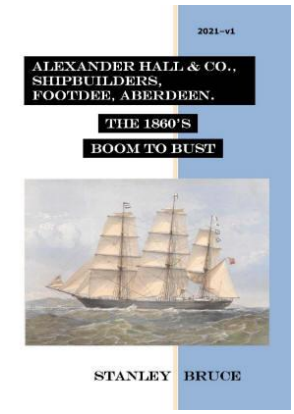
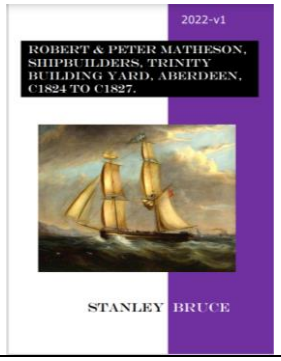
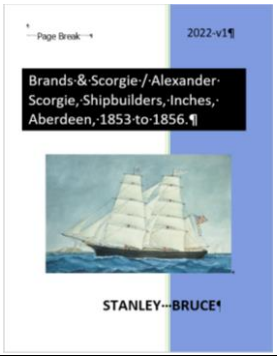
David Burns & Co., Shipbuilders, Inches (Upper Dock), Aberdeen, c1857 to c1866. (2019). 47 pages, no ISBN. John Humphrey & Co., Shipbuilders, Upper Dock, Aberdeen, 1865 to 1875. (2020). 92 pages, no ISBN.		
Hall, Russell Male Voice Choir, Aberdeen, 1918 to 1963. (2021). 244 pages, no ISBN. Leckie, Wood and Munro, Engineers & Iron Shipbuilders, Torry, Aberdeen, 1864 to 1870. (2021). 40 pages, no ISBN.		
William Duthie Jnr. & Co., Shipbuilders, Upper Dock, Aberdeen, 1856 to 1870. (2021). 94 pages, no ISBN. Alexander Hall & Co., Shipbuilders, Footdee, Aberdeen, The 1860's, Boom to Bust. (2021). 184 pages, no ISBN.		
Robert and Peter Matheson, Shipbuilders, Trinity Building Yard, Aberdeen, c1824 to c1827 (2022). 26 pages, no ISBN. Brands & Scorgie / Alexander Scorgie, Shipbuilders, Inches, Aberdeen, 1853 to 1856 (2022). 14 pages, no ISBN.		

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~~~~~~ **THE END** ~~~~~~
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