

The North Pier

In 1837 the Marquis arranged for a new pier to be constructed at the end of Stafford Street. This was a more central location and close to the recently opened Caledonian Hotel. The pier was enlarged and extended again in 1847 when a large American ship the B.C. Bailey, foundered off Lismore at Kilcheran. After her cargo had been removed, she was towed to Oban and laid alongside the current pier. After filling the hold with stones and securing the wreck to the seabed, the remains of the ship were built upon and used to extend the pier. The Marquis of Breadalbane further improved the facilities by providing a slipway and in July 1848 the town magistrates regulated the portage to ensure that "only respectable persons could convey luggage at a fixed and moderate rate".

Following the death of the Marquis of Breadalbane in 1862, his trustees lodged a proposal with the Sheriff Clerk at Inveraray and at the Admiralty Office to enlarge Oban's pier as the present one was considered inadequate for the volume of traffic using it. The estimated cost was £1,340 and sanction was given for work to proceed under the Oban Harbour Order 1862. In 1863 the quay was enlarged at a cost of £1,500 paid for by the Breadalbane estates to allow larger steamers to dock thus enabling more tourists to visit Oban.

However the trustees of the Breadalabane estates wished to receive a return from the pier. In 1864 they gained an order from the Board of Trade for a Bill to be presented at Parliament, to permit the estates to levy a rate on all goods and passengers arriving or departing from either the quay or the esplanade at Oban. It was proposed that all passengers would pay 2d when disembarking from the steamers and any passenger visiting the town would have to pay another 2d to re-join the ship. In addition, all visitors hiring a boat would be subject to an additional charge of 4d to launch the boat from the shore and a levy of 4d would be imposed on their return.

Oban town councillors were against the proposal. Many of them owned shops and licensed premises so had a vested interest in the tourist trade. Around half of the revenue taken by Oban's shops was estimated to be from passengers coming ashore to visit while the steamers unloaded and reloaded cargo. In response, the town councillors sent a deputation to London to oppose the Bill. They argued that such a charge would have a huge impact on the town traders who already had a relatively short season and were reliant on the revenue obtained from the steamer passengers. Following the visit of the group from Oban, the Committee of the House of Commons ruled that the Trustees of the Breadalbane estates would not be allowed to impose levies on passengers arriving or departing from Oban.

The pier was originally to be the terminus for the new railway which was to enter Oban from the north. A tramway was to be constructed along George Street which would transport passengers and goods to the town centre. However due to extensive

Area 7

objections by shop owners, many of whom were councillors this plan was abandoned.

The red roofed building on the pier was built in 1927 as the office for David MacBrayne. It is a near-symmetrical single storey U-plan harbour office building, distinguished by central 2-storey square tower.

The Columba Hotel

Built by local tradesmen for John Stuart McCaig the hotel opened in June 1887. The hotel was managed by Mr MacMillan who had previously managed the Craigard Hotel (site of girl's hostel) which burned down in October 1886. There were some complaints from local people that the hotel broke up the line of the esplanade and planning permission should not have been granted. In a letter to the Oban Times in 1895 a local resident suggested the building be demolished and the stone used to construct the proposed Municipal Chambers

In 1901 plans were submitted for a large extension to be built onto the Columba Hotel. The new building consisted of a ground floor and three stories comprising several spacious shops and public offices, a billiard room, buffet and over twenty bedrooms with lavatories.

The hotel is category B Listed