

Fowey Harbour History

Chapter 2

The post war period

After the war there was a period of little work and income had been reduced. It was decided in 1949 to build a hopper partly to employ the men who had returned after the war and also to replace aging plant. She was launched from No 2 slipway on 20th March 1951 and had accommodation for crew needed when working away from Fowey with Tregeagle. She was worked until March 1955 when she was sold to the Falmouth Docks company for £8000. She left the harbour on the 8th towed by the Falmouth steam tug Portwey (now preserved on the Thames)



Mrs Graham wife of the Chairman launching the hopper Mixton

LAUNCHING OF THE FIRST STEEL SHIP BUILT AT FOWEY
HARBOUR COMMISSION ENTERPRISE

Fowey Harbour Commissioners, instead of standing off workmen when there was little work, decided in 1949 to build a ship—the fore-runner, it may be, of others from the same yard—and on Tuesday there was launched, in Fowey harbour, the first steel ship of its size to be built in the port. The ship is a Dumb Hopper barge.

Mr. Walter Graham, chairman of the Fowey Harbour Commissioners, who welcomed the guests, said he believed that ceremony was a "unique occasion in the history of Fowey."

"This little town, with its deep water harbour, has, as everyone knows, been connected with the maritime history of the country for many centuries, but today we are going to launch the first steel ship of anything like this size and type to be built in port," he said. "Many good wooden ships have been built at Fowey and Polman and have sailed the seven seas, and though the vessel we are to launch today is not an ocean greyhound or a china clipper, she is of the humbler, useful kind, and a maid of all work."

"I referred to a deep water port, but unfortunately, deep water ports have a habit of filling up and becoming not so deep. To avoid this here, and largely through the enterprise and foresight of Capt. Collins, the Fowey Harbour Commissioners bought a dredger and some barges with which to keep the channel at its advertised depth of twenty feet at low water, and so allow the large vessels which you see going in and out with their valuable cargoes of china clay, now of special importance in earning dollars."

Developments

"Having got our dredging plant, we acquired these buildings and put in some machinery to enable us to keep the plant repaired and in running order. Then in 1927 the Ministry of Transport gave us powers to build the outer slipway and the sea wall, and to repair not only our own plant but also other ships in need of attention," said Mr. Graham. "During the War the Admiralty and Ministry of Transport made good use of the slipway and repair shops and helped us build the second slip where we are now."

"Our facilities for repairing ships have proved of great advantage to the owners of snips trading to this harbour. Many are the jobs that we have done at short notice, such as putting new bows on to a ship that had been in collision, straightening shafts and all kinds of repairs to engines and machinery of ships while they are loading here, instead of their having to lay-off and to go to one of the bigger yards."

"Unfortunately there is not a steady stream of repair work to keep our men employed full time, so in 1949, rather than stand men off when there was little work, we decided to build this Dumb Hopper barge as a stock job."

Harbour-Master's Design

"So the keel was laid on November 18, 1949, to the design and drawings of our harbour-master, Captain Mitchell. She is 107 feet long, 22 feet beam, 8 feet in depth and has a deadweight capacity of 200 tons. Approximately 70 tons of steel were used in her construction and she has a specially designed bow to accommodate a heavy roller for handling heavy moorings and small salvage jobs. There are four water tanks inside for supplying boiler water to the dredger."

"If any of you care to go on board presently, you will see that accommodation has been provided for four men, in 280 square feet of floor space, better quarters than found in some sea-going ships," said Mr. Graham.

"I must pay tribute to Captain Mitchell, who designed her; to Captain Dennis, that wizard who can turn drawings on paper into steel frames, plates and angles, all fitted to go in their proper place to make a ship; to our foreman, Wally Stephens, another wizard, who can explain to the men how to handle the stuff and put it in place where Capt. Dennis wants it; to George Gale, who makes the machine tools and the fiddly bits that no-one else can make; and to all the men under them, who have worked as a grand team and have taken a tremendous interest in building this ship and worked hard for it for the love of the game."

"Mr. Graham specially welcomed Mr. Richards, Ministry of Transport surveyor, and the members of the Harbour Commission and their ladies. Welcoming his wife, Mr. Graham asked her to launch the ship."

Mrs. Graham, who was presented by Miss Helen Mitchell, harbour-master's daughter, with a bouquet of carnations, then launched the vessel.

Afterwards the company celebrated the occasion in time-honoured custom.



The dredging plant was deployed to Newlyn and further afield to Rosslare in Ireland There was work at Brazen Island including the motor yacht Braemar in 1952 and MGB's and RAF launches. After Rosslare the Tregeagle and plant went to Wexford.



motor yacht Braemar

In August 1952 the Harbour Master, Captain Mitchell, put forward a plan to buy two diesel colliers to be converted into self dumping hoppers. The m.v. Moreton Corbet later renamed Lerryn was bought on 1st December 1952 followed by the m.v. Roselyne named Lantyan on the 7th of January 1953. They were both converted on Brazen Island having finished periods of charter as cargo vessels. Within months they were hard at work supporting the dredger Tregeagle.



Moreton Corbet became "Lerryn"



Roselyne became "Lantyan"

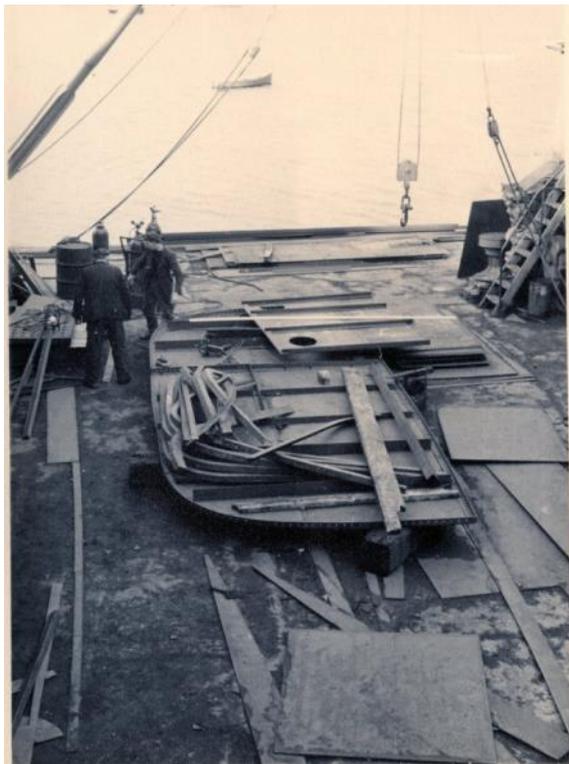
The estuary had always been a good place for shell fish and in January 1954 Mrs J. Oakley was given permission to lay oysters in Wisemans Reach. The commissioners then leased North St Yard to the Shell fish company for cleaning and processing in August 1955.

In February 1954 Trinity House agreed to a replacement beacon to be erected on Cannis Rock. In November that year severe weather caused damage to Whitehouse lower slipway and to Inches Quay landing. The construction of the pole didn't however take place until May 1956 when one 9ft above the rock showing 6ft above high water was erected.

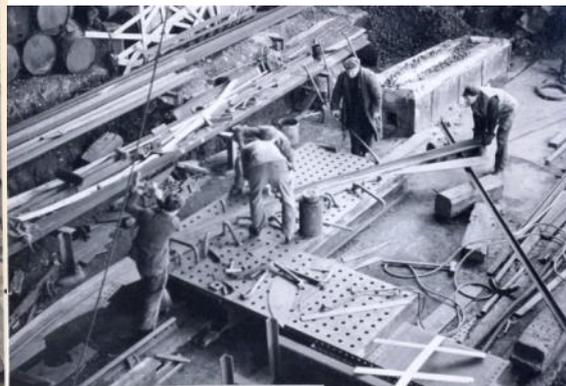
Discussions took place in January 1956 with Westminster Dredging for the sale of all the dredging plant. These fell through

In 1956 following the slipping of their vessel m.v. Clinchy the shipping company Lockett and Wilson enquired about to possible lease of Brazen Island for them to use as ship building. Two more of their vessels followed on the slip before a leasing agreement was drawn up on 1st April 1957.

Shortly after the Tregeagle, Lerryn and Lantyan were sold together with other dredging plant for a major contract in Milford Haven. Plans had been drawn up by Capt Mitchell for a new self-propelled dredger to be built at Brazen Island. Work commenced in July 1957.



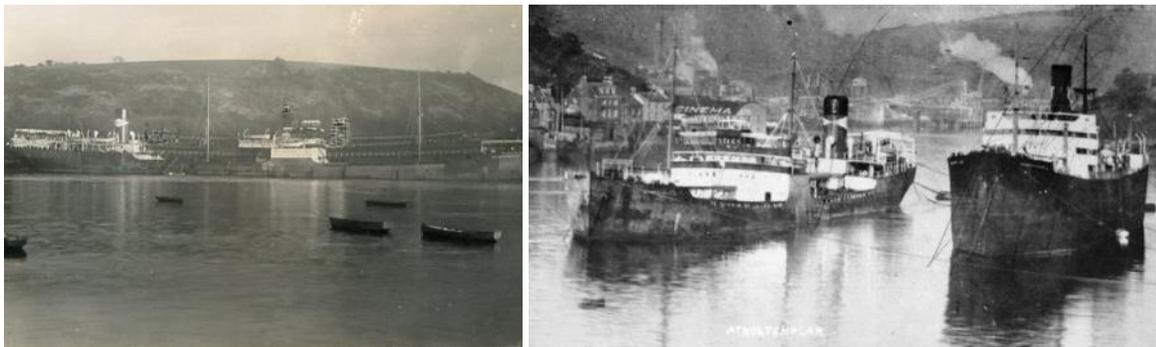
Known as FHC 9 during building she was named as Lantic Bay. Her hull was completed in March 1958 and she was named and launched on 14th July 1958 having been moved to No 2 Slip by Mrs Graham wife of the Chairman of the commissioners.





Having completed trials she commenced working on 23rd October 1958 off Whitehouse Quay.

During 1958 various vessels were laid up in the harbour including the m.v. Merchant Duke, m.v. Athel duke and m.v. Athel Beach. More Athel ships followed in 1959 Having previously refused permission to dredge the swing ground during and after the war the Dept. of transport finally agreed to paying for and gave permission for the swing ground to be dredged late in that year. Water was supplied in the wing tanks of the dredger Lantic Bay to these laid up vessels.



The Athel Templar moored under hills ebb tide berth.

In October 1959 having operated the Fowey Tug Company for nearly 14 years Mr Toyne advised the board of the harbour Commissioners that they would be giving up the towage work in Fowey Harbour. The towage committee met in March the following year to discuss proposals to take over the towage operation. There followed meetings with GWR and the china Clay companies. It was agreed that the tugs were essential for the port operation and the export of china clay and therefore the prosperity of the area. Hiring tugs from Plymouth or Falmouth was ruled out as being too expensive and there would be delays to berthing shifting or sailing. It was finally agreed that as others were not interested in operating the tugs that the Harbour Commissioners would. The Tolbenny and Penleath could be purchased as part of the tug company but the harbour commissioners started looking for a tug to replace them. The Harbour Commissioners took over the towage on 2nd January 1961 having paid for the tugs by selling Government securities held by them. The tug company had operated at a loss so towage charges were increased to ensure a surplus and to recover the cost of purchase of the two tugs. The tug Penleath was sold shortly afterwards for scrapping.

The first tug the Harbour commissioners purchased was the steam tug "Othnia" formerly the St. Knud a tug from Denmark and she arrived in Fowey on 17th October 1960 and the name St. Canute was chosen.

In October 1961 the crane situated on Albert quay for loading stores was transferred to the end of Brazen Island wall where it was used to unload stores now loaded at Caffa Mill or the jetties.

On 25th July 1962 the Queen visited Fowey and a temporary landing was built at Town Quay to get the Royal Barge alongside. The Royal Yacht Britannia had moored outside the harbour remaining there for the evening.



The Royal Barge taking the queen to
"Britannia"

The 18th March 1963 saw Captain John Wilson take up post and that same month the commissioners agreed to give a parcel of foreshore at Lerryn to the parish council to make a carpark for the village.

The Brazen Island shipyard had run out of work and in August 1963 notice was given to the commissioners to that the yard would close. It was agreed that the rent would be paid until the following March. On 30th September the commissioners took over the yard again buying all the stores. Later that year Trinity House discussed the positioning of a buoy to mark the Cannis Rocks. New bye-laws were also passed.

Diesel tugs were becoming more available and it was agreed to charter the tug Sedgecock so that diesel power could be evaluated. As part of this a towing match was organised in January 1964 between the Sedgecock and St. Canute. The Sedgecock was smaller with less horse power but she succeeded in towing the St. Canute down the harbour. From this it was agreed diesel was the way forward but it was decided not to purchase this tug as she was considered too small. After further enquires for a suitable tug the Commissioners purchased the Rochester based tug "Enticette" on 6th July 1964 becoming the first diesel tug to operate in Fowey.

The tug "Enticette" renamed
"Cannis" on arrival in Fowey



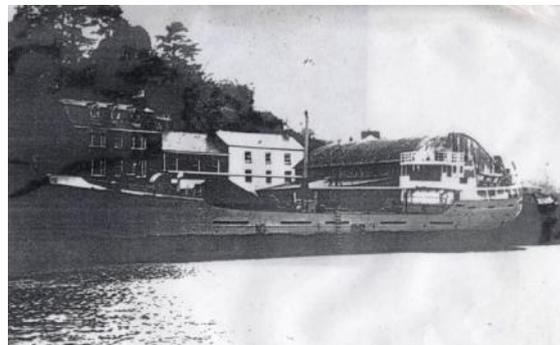
Enticette. [Andrew Wiltshire]

She started to work with the St.Canute and proved far more economical to operate saving £40 per tow and Cannis could be ready in less than 30 minutes without all the hassle of bunkering coal and water."Tolbenny was then sold to Reynolds of Torpoint who had bought a number of Fowey tugs over the years.

During 1964 discussions had taken place over plans to fill in Caffa Mill to make it into a car Park. The infill operation commenced on 19th August 1964.The stream was channelled down a pipe to the low water mark. A small parcel of Foreshore owned by the Commissioners was sold to the borough council in November 1965 as the work progressed. Work in infilling took some time but by May 1971 preparations were made to build a slipway. Plans to build a landing quay that could be used by fishermen were started but never really completed.In 1975 it was decided to build a slipway for the Bodinnick ferry with a separate road access. The remainder of the filled in area would be car parking and boat storage.

Up until May 1965 there hadn't been a light at St. Catherines castle shining up the harbour. The pilots had requested it to make leaving the harbour safer. An electric cable had to be laid to the castle. This new light was orange and used a 30 watt bulb. Another navigational aid was added a year later with a beacon being erected on Lamp Rock. At about this time the Lantic Bay was used to place sand on the foreshore around the harbour obtained either from just north of Wisemans or the small bar outside the harbour.

Under new ports regulations the Harbour Commissioners were given the task of licensing stevedoring companies and in November 1966 they licensed the Railway Company and Berrills Yard Coal Company as ships still berthed there bringing coal in for domestic use.



Berrills yard with the coal store and later cinema and one of the last ships to discharge coal

Oil booms and other equipment was hastily constructed with the help of ECLP china clay in April 1967 following the grounding of the Torrey Canyon on Pollard's Rock on Seven Stones reef between the Cornish mainland and the Isles of Scilly on 18 March 1967.In the event no oil entered the harbour. A second telephone cable was laid on 16th May that year from Polruan Castle to just under Fowey Hotel to cope with increased telephone use.This was to be brokrn by the m.v.Alfred Everard in August 1973 after she dragged an anchor through it on breaking down sailing from the harbour. Discussions about the lease on the office at Albert quay took place as did a new proposed development for the docks and the removal of Fowey Rock off Caffa Mill. A 20 % of total expenditure grant was given by the Department of Transport for the development together with a major dredging project also to be covered with a grant. Application for the 20% dredging cost was to be

The estimated amount to be dredged was 180000 cu yds and consent was given by the Minister of Transport for £55000 to be borrowed towards the cost of dredging apportioned between ECLP and the Harbour Commissioners. The volume of dredged material to be taken out required additional plant and the Commissioners contracted with Falmouth Docks Co for their bucket dredger Briton II and 3 dump barges to be used. These were towed to sea by the Fowey tugs. The contract was signed on 21st May Demex were awarded the contract to blow up Fowey Rock and Lantic Bay would remove the material with a special grab. She was also used to take coal and water to the "Briton"

Interrupted J's op! Thought
FOWEY PEOPLE
it was Concorde! Moved
PROTEST AT
both docks & Mr O'Reilly's
T.N.T. BLASTS
chew in the OP THEATRE !!
EXPLOSIONS at Fowey on Thursday and yesterday violently shook the Passage Street area of Fowey and frightened residents, several of whom were elderly.
 The explosions came from charges containing T.N.T. used by contractors under 20ft. of water in the River Fowey opposite the Riverside Hotel, to move rocks and so give more seaway for ships and tugs.
 Capt. Norman C. Harris, of the Captain's Cabin, 14, Passage Street, said on Thursday, local people were not notified, and many of them were terrified by the explosion.
WHOLE AREA SHAKEN
 Capt. Harris said the whole area shook, and all the glassware came off a sideboard in a second-storey room of a Passage Street house.
 "This time we were notified," said Capt. Harris yesterday. "The shock was equally as bad as before, but at least we were waiting for it. I am not letting the matter rest, and properties will have to be surveyed to find out if the explosions damaged them."
 Mr. Bertram Featherstone, of the Riverside Hotel, said: "We have a house full of visitors, but a good many of them were out. The explosions seemed to lift up the floors of the hotel, and the staff were very frightened."

Lantic Bay moored midstream off Caffa Mill removing Rock. The buoy marking the Rock on her port bow. "Briton" is moored on No 1 jetty.



Falmouth Docks Co Dredger "Briton" on no 1 jetty



The Demex barge used for blowing up Fowey Rock, Rock off Bodinnick and Mixtow



blasting on Fowey Rock was completed in August 1969 but the work to remove all the rock continued for some time. The Briton was laid up for the winter as the main dredging work on no 5/6 was completed. 104000 cu yds had been removed. Rock was also removed at the northern end of no. 8 jetty. The overdraft at Barclays was increased from £20000 to £50000 to pay for the dredging costs of the development. Quite a few of the Harbour staff left to work on the project and extra men had to be taken on especially for the dredging operation.



The St. Canute was having numerous engine break downs and costing more and more to operate so the commissioners decided to obtain a 2nd diesel tug. Gribbin Head was purchased for £30k in May 1968. It was also known that the tugs would be busy taking dredged material to sea for dumping. In September 1968 ISCA maritime museum in Exeter offered for the purchase of the St. Canute was accepted and she left Fowey on the 9th November.

Cannis Buoy light on 22nd October 1969 may 73 cannis beacon missing but re-established in the July. It went again in December 1973 in a severe gale and was never re established despite some discussions to do so in 1990.

Early in 1970 the Borough surveyor produced plans for another town quay extension these were however shelved by the end of the year.

With further dredging required at the jetties alternatives to the use of the "Briton" were looked at and hoppers were sought. It was agreed building new at Brazen Island was too costly .Porthleven shipyard were asked to tender but in the end 3 hoppers were located for sale in Sliedrecht, Holland.

A pontoon and dredging crane were also sought and one which had been a grain storage barge found at Gravesend on the Thames. By the end of January 1971 the barges having been bought were on their way to Fowey arriving on the 3rd of February. The pontoon measuring 60' x30' x 11'6" arrived a bit later and had a second hand priestman crane fitted after modifications and strengthening had taken place at Brazen Island and in May that year the pontoon commenced dredging at the site for the new No 5/6 jetties.



Pontoon working off new jetty construction



Loading a barge working next to the embankment

The draft new Fowey Harbour Order was approved the board in April that year outlining the new format for the appointment of commissioners and went out for consultations. The RYA and Borough Council place objections requesting places on the board and shipbrokers suggested owners of vessels with over 100GRT should be the ones to get a place.

Sept 1971 Mr Oliver of Yeate Farm asked permission for slipway at Mixtow.

The pontoon was used to remove the old wooden jetty at No.7 berth The wooden piles were 58 ft long and sunk some 26 ft into the mud and all had been removed by the end of November 1971 although some stumps remained for a while longer.



By February 1972 the capital dredging programme at the new jetty development had been completed. There were electricity cuts and this affected the navigation lights. Toms Yard in Polruan made an offer to purchase New Quay Dock which they rented adjacent to Brazen Island. Agreement was reached after independent valuation and the sale completed in the June. A slipway license was granted in June 1976



The harbour commissioners set up a committee to look at the establishing of a Marina in the harbour and Mixtow pill was considered.

In November that year a crane working on piles to extend No 8 jetty collapsed falling into the river. The pontoon was used to recover the pile driver and assist in the recovery and parts of Passage lane had to be widened to get another bigger crane into the docks for the recovery.



The aerial photo showing No 5/6 construction. No 1 and 2 jetties still in place but no 1 being demolished. No 7 jetty already gone



30th November 1976 - KIRK L7 NICK ANDERSON CRANE.



30th November 1976 - KIRK L7 NICK ANDERSON CRANE.

By 1974 it was agreed that the wooden jetties at No1 and 2 berths were no longer needed for ship loading and plans to remove them drawn up.



Ken Stewart crane driver and boatman on pontoon. Jimmy Nicholson skipper, David Stevens, Ray Taylor and Julien Spencer Bernard on pontoon and Barge at No 2 jetty.

The pontoon was used again for this task and whilst removing No 2 jetty the first to be dismantled in October 1976 the standing penant on the priestman crane parted and the crane came down damaging two sections which had to be replaced. No 2 had gone by July 1977 and then work commenced on No 1 jetty. The later was completed by March 1978.

Up until 1976 harbour dues for commercial vessels had been charged on the Net registered tonnage (NRT) then charging on the Gross Registered (GRT) tonnage was introduced. In 1977 the towage element of charges changed to a fee per ton of cargo loaded or GRT if no cargo. Early in 1981 a years notice was given to change the commercial dues to tons of cargo loaded.

A part of the Silver jubilee celebrations the commissioners agreed to recover the Victoria and Albert monument from the harbour and relocate it at Caffa Mill. The swing buoy was painted silver also and became known as the "Silver Buoy"



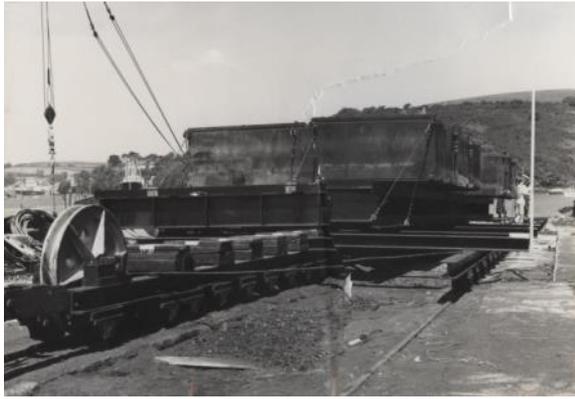
The local team who, with the invaluable assistance of Richard Larn and Captain John Wilson, salvaged part of the Victoria & Albert monument from the harbour bed in 1977. Originally sited at Albert Quay where it was erected to mark their Royal visit in 1846, it now stands at Caffa Mill and commemorates also the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.
 (L-R) Crane driver, George Dennis, Nigel Crowle, Wally Dawson & helper, Greg Hoddinott, William Hoddinott, Frank Perry, Jim Matthews.

Also a bridge was built between Toms yard New quay to Brazen Island. At 132ft it had six trestles as support. It was named the Jubilee Bridge on completion in the August that year.



That year the Commissioners agreed with the Treffry Estate to purchase the freehold of the Harbour Office at Albert Quay. The harbour commissioners also had the cliff behind Brazen Island surveyed and investigated the electrification of Brazen Island. New Bye laws were also confirmed and published. A further harbour revision order was drafted largely to deal with leisure craft moorings and charges. There was a period of consultation and after representations from St. Sampsons Parish council it was agreed to write in a limit of 700 leisure moorings in the upper harbour. The minister signed the 1980 Revision order in October that year.

New storm gates were required at Polperro and the harbour commissioners won the tender and these were constructed at Brazen Island in January 1978. On completion they were towed to Polperro by Gribbin Head on a barge in June that year. Another construction completed that year was the first ramp at North Street Yard. Rusty Eplett Commodore at the Fowey Gallants SC and a Harbour Commissioner had persuaded his colleagues on the board to use the yard to store sailing dinghies as the Gallants had a growing band of sailors. Old railway lines and sleepers were the first construction.



HMS Avenger became the adopted ship for Restormel and made her first visit to the harbour on 20th July 1979. Another visit followed shortly after in July 1980.

1980 saw Fowey lower town badly flooded in both January on 20th and 21st in severe weather and again in February on 18th 1980

The first power boat race took place in May 1981 another of the Rusty Eplett initiatives and the first skip in the harbour for visitors rubbish was moored at the entrance to Pont Pill. ECC Ports agreed to lift it in and out and Restormel BC took it to landfill.

After many years as separate entities the shipping agencies/ brokers of Hannan and Samuel Ltd and Toyne Carter Co Ltd amalgamated as South Coast UK based at Albert Quay in October 1981 the same month that the Missions to Seamen opened in Fowey.

January 1982 saw the offer of a small green light just inshore of lamp rock .Battery operated and mounted on the corner of Mrs Hill's garden it was paid for by Wing Commander P.N.Farlow in memory of his son with a plaque naming it as Simons light and established in the August. It shone inwards and could be used by vessel leaving the harbour to give guidance as to the width of the harbour on dark nights.



A new Brede class lifeboat Nos 3303 Leonore Chilcott replaced the Watson type lifeboat 866 Charles Henry Ashley on 16th October 1982. It wasn't until 26th April 1984 that the new boat was officially named.

1983 and Capt Mike Sutherland joined the harbour commissioners as Assistant Harbour master. An H.M. Customs pontoon was established under the no 5 jetty and a replacement engine was sought and fitted to the Lantic Bay. The bad weather of the winter had damaged the Brazen Island finger wall and it was repaired by Polruan builders. In the September the first computer system to be installed in the harbour office became operational and the leisure mooring arrangements were recorded.

A sail maker came to the harbour in 1984 with Andy Mitchell leasing the North Street store as a sail loft. At about the same time H.M. Coastguards announced that the storm signal displayed at Polruan would along with others around the coast cease to be displayed. In August the Harbour Commissioners wishing for the signals to continue leased the signal mast and two of the staff living in Polruan took on the duties of raising and lowering cones or switching the lights. The first set of visitor pontoons were purchased and moored on the inside of the floodtide underhills berth just north of Penleath Point. Three more were obtained the following year and moored at the mouth of Pont Pill. Plans were also drawn up for a landing pontoon off Albert Quay. Both the Treffry estate and Restormel BC approved the proposal. The pontoons were ordered in the November and once planning approval had been obtained the piles were driven in February 1986. The landing was formed in a "T" shape being 90 ft in both directions with an access bridge of 73 ft. This was in place for the May bank holiday and the total cost of the installation being £35200.

In October 1984 the board discussed a proposal to dredge Pont Pill which dried at LWST. This would give additional yacht and leisure craft mooring. The proposal was to lay fore and aft moorings maximising the berthing. The Board approved the plan and dredging commenced in October 1984 using the pontoon and 3 barges. The dredging of Pont was completed late summer 1986 and the pontoon was moved to Mixtow to start the job of dredging the pill for moorings. The mud was heavily compacted and removal quite slow. As with all the pontoon operations she was moored with anchors laid to wire on winches so that her position could be altered. Work boats or the tugs would manoeuvre the barge alongside the pontoon and the priestman grab crane was used to dig and load the barge. Once loaded it was manoeuvred for the tug to take it in tow sometimes alongside until it was out to sea where she would be towed astern of the tug.





Up until mid 1985 the hydrographic surveys had been done with hand lead lines and either sextants using a subtense board or wire lines marked off with distances from the shore point. The lead line was replaced early that year by a high resolution sounder with paper recorder and later the horizontal measurement. Severe flooding in the town was experienced in the April and records showed it to be nearly as bad as February 1974.

The biggest ship to load at the jetties, the *Astria*, loaded 12049 tons for America on No 8 jetty in August 1985. At 538ft in length it was not possible to load in No 1 hold. The ship had an accommodation fire just before departure and the two tugs struggled to tow her albeit dead ship out of the harbour. As a result of this the Board agreed to the upgrading of the tugs and the tug "Forth" was inspected at Grangemouth and then purchased in May 1986. She was named *Tregeagle* and served the port for 27 years. Later in November 1987 the *Gribbin Head* suffered a major engine failure and as a result was disposed of and the *Dunelm* was purchased from Sunderland. She was renamed *Pendennick*.

Captain Sutherland succeeded Captain Wilson as harbour Master in June 1986. The pilots were still based in Polruan and the commissioners leased the Lookout at the top of St. Saviours from the Polruan Town Trust as a watch station and communications hub. Pilotage was under review nationally and the pilotage act of 1987 started its way through parliament in November 1986, it received Royal Assent in May 1987. ECC ports did not wish to be the pilotage authority for Par under the new arrangements where ports would take over the authority from Trinity House. They made application to the Fowey Harbour Commissioners to become the Competent Harbour Authority (CHA) for Par. This was agreed and the Minister approved along with a similar arrangement for Charlestown.

The commissioners had been looking at the costs of dredging and looked at purchasing a second self propelled dredger removing the need for the operation of tugs, three barges and a pontoon which was becoming costly. It was agreed to dispose of the Pontoon and the barges on completion of the Mixtow project and as their operation, now that capital dredging projects were nearing completion, was limited. The first barge was sold in April 1987 to Sutton Harbour and the first port guide was published for the summer.

The commissioners needing more office space to cope with the new duties and increased leisure purchased part of No 1 Albert Quay vacated by South Coast UK the latter having moved to the Docks and been bought by the China Clay company. The latter began installing a new loading system at No 4 jetty. The sale of the pontoon paid for the purchase of the Albert Quay property.

On completion of the dredging in Mixtow it was agreed to moor pontoons there for local and visiting craft and this was done for the 1988 season. The remaining barges and the Pontoon were sold

On the 1st October 1988 pilotage was transferred and the pilot cutter Gore Point together with the three lines/boarding boats Veronica, Esther and Rowena had been transferred to the Commissioners together with the Par Pilot boat. There were four pilots in Fowey with eight boatmen and in Par two more pilots and four boatmen. Whilst remaining self employed the pilot amalgamated. The Fowey boatmen formed a partnership later to be joined by the Par men when the lines service in that port was transferred to the Commissioners.

The end of 1988 saw one of the busiest ship tug moves with 529 towage acts to 168 ships.

During the following year the programme of laying leisure craft moorings in trots in Pont Pill and off Albert quay northwards continued. Lantic Bay brought the redundant Torpoint ferry chain to Fowey and old large ships anchors recovered when dredging Pont were used to moor the ground chains. Ferry chain was also used as the bottoms of the risers. An electricity cable linking Fowey and Polruan was proposed to be laid near Polruan Castle in May 1989. This was carried out the following year. The Shell bunker barge "Commerce" was located in the mouth of Pont in June 1989. She was later renamed the Fowey Refueller.

October 1989 and the cargo vessel m.v. Bonita went aground near Coombe having left the harbour. The Pendennick assisted refloating her on the high tide. Once a dive survey had been completed Tregagle escorted her to Falmouth for repairs. Severe gales were experienced causing the Mixtow pontoon to break its mooring. In the 75 mph winds 48 boats had to be attended to in the Pill. More severe weather occurred in the January and Punches cross was broken off. The spare held at Brazen Island was soon in place however. The same storm caused severe damage to the Nos 2 and 3 slipways at Brazen Island. The winds recorded topped 80 mph and large swells entered the harbour. Following this the board agreed to a much improved weather station being installed.





Following a survey of the Brazen island damage it was decided to do away with Nos 2 and 3 slipways and build up the wall to form a greater storage and working area. It also gave an area to carry out maintenance to the leisure and commercial moorings and the Nissan hut on the old no.3 slip became the centre for this operation. As part of this work the gridirons on the adjacent Carne beach which had become a danger were blown up and the rubble used in the infill. Much of the infill was dredged by Lantic Bay from just outside the harbour mouth. The works were completed in January 1991

July 1990 saw a visit by the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher in some rough weather. She still went for a trip on the Fowey Lifeboat.

Up until August 1990 slurry cargoes of china clay produced in Par and brought to Fowey by road tanker along the Haul road were loaded at the dedicated berth at No 3 jetty. With the improvements to the berth in Par the ships used for this trade namely the "Eldor, Condor and Pandor" were able to berth in Par and their company accepted that they could dry out. As a result this operation was lost to Fowey causing a considerable downturn in trade.



Condor, Eldor and Pandor waiting to load on No 3 berth and Eldor by herself

In 1991 a project took place at Golant to give boat owners access to dinghy and tender moorings attached to the Railway embankment. The Harbour Commissioners leased the embankment and were allowed to construct a concrete walkway to the north of the quay and an open galvanised one to the south where it was not possible to get concrete to. A fence was erected along the length of the constructions in an effort to prevent people going onto the railway line especially when trains were moving.



Reinforced mesh walkways being built



The concrete walkway to the north of the slipway



The china clay trains had to keep running so concrete was pumped over them.

Another project possibly the first of its kind was for a VHF relay station to be set up between Polruan and Brixham coastguards. Behind the scenes pressure was applied to ministers and permission was given for a dedicated telephone line to equipment the harbour commissioners installed in the pilots lookout. The VHF could be remotely operated at Brixham and gave coverage for the harbour and parts of St. Austell Bay and clos coastal zones which had been dead for craft and in particular the lifeboat. The equipment was installed for the winter that year.

1992 began with the tarmacking of North street yard and the installation of a new ramp on the foreshore now on a renewed lease from the Treffry Estate. The RAF started using the harbour as their base for air sea rescue training using helicopters from Chivenor and launches from Plymouth.

Following the mooring failure at Mixtow it was agreed to moor the pontoons to pylons and Lantic Bay began this task in the early spring. It had already been agreed to extend the outer part of Albert Quay



Berrills yard which had been sold to developers to build seven houses on the waterside and four across the road came back on the market when they went into liquidation. The harbour commissioners submitted a sealed bid and were successful in purchasing the site on 29th May 1992. It was their intention to keep it as an open site and provide more access to the water front. The following month the first water taxi service started in the harbour operated by Nick Bancroft.

Two ships were laid up in the harbour in Mixtow Reach during the summer. The m.v. Carmen and m.v. Paquita and the year ended with the Polruan ferry changing ownership to Messrs J.A. Toms and A. Couch, directors of Toms yard.

Plans had been drawn up towards the end of 1992 for South West Water to widen the road access to the sewage works at Shirehall Moor Lostwithiel. Discussions involving the council, NRA and environment agency took place and it was agreed that the bank on the opposite side of the river be moved back as any narrowing of the river at this point would increase the flooding risk to the town.



A new gabion retaining wall was built out into the river and diggers dug back the opposite bank. The work had to be done in the period the fish migration was at its least and then the new bank on the moors side was planted with seeds previously collected. The work commenced in the August and the wall was completed early in 1994 with the rest of the work taking until the spring of 1995.



The embankment being built up and the sprayed with gunnite concrete and a protection barrier.

May 93 and South West Water submitted an application for consent to build a proposed sewage works for Fowey, Polruan and Bodinnick. Having been granted work commenced in November 1993 and was to last over two and a bit winters with no summertime working allowed. In brief the scheme required all the sewage outfalls into the harbour to be connected to a collector main this would feed holding tanks and pumping stations at Readymoney, Town Quay, and Riverside in Fowey together with one in Polruan and a treatment works at Penvantille . The much awaited and long talked about Sewage works had started in November 1993 and carried on through the winter until the May when the main work was suspended. Some work connecting Brazen island to the scheme as well as a fresh water supply and at long last three phase electrical power went on as did the laying of the pipe line across the harbour from Polruan Castle to near the Whitehouse. The pipe came from Denmark and was floated into position then sunk in a predredged trench backfilled by divers. This took place on 7th July 1994



The polruan site in December 1993 with temporary landing and cofferdam at Readymoney



The cross river pipe being unloaded at the docks and towed to the crossing point supported by barrels

It had also been agreed to construct a pilots landing pontoon just to the south of the old No.1 jetty site and the contractors working for SW Water were engaged to carry out the piling work.



The pilots pontoon was completed in September 1994 in time to land passengers from the Crystal Harmony anchored just outside the harbour.

The main construction work on the sewage project resumed in earnest in the October and the Pontoons for Berrills yard having been built at Brazen Island were in position for 10th November. Once constructed this allowed permission to be given to the RNLI to site a berth off the pontoon to the north for the new Trent Class lifeboat. There would also be a launching davit in Berrills yard for the inshore boat. The RNLI agreed to purchase the site opposite Berrills yard (the old Hellyars yard) in the October 1995 to build a new boat house having had to vacate the premises next to the Galleon This was completed in the July the following year and the launching davit installed.

February 1995 and an application to lay mussels and oysters in Pont Pill was made By D. Hancock and D.Vivian and approved. This was to be the start of a new industry using the natural environment of the estuary. By June 1999 the mussel operation was also established in Wisemans Reach. Also in 1995 it was agreed to give Toms Yard in Polruan permission to put in piles for pontoons off the yard. SW Water built a temporary landing at Albert quay as the ferry could not land at Whitehouse or Town Quay. Work was also going on at Riverside the bad weather landing site. This was removed on 18th April. In May it was decided to put a pontoon landing at Polruan following an application by Polruan Town Trust. The following month a swimming raft was re-established at Readymoney and

two commercial moorings at Lew Roads flood tide (Opposite Maurice Hunkins boatyard) and the northern mooring in Mixtow were mothballed on the bottom as there was now less demand for ships waiting.

In July the Board of the commissioners agreed to the replacement of the Jubilee bridge connecting Brazen Island to Polruan by building a retaining wall and infilling. Work commenced on the wall in June 1996. This coincided with the purchase of a hydraulic winch to replace the belt driven one at the Brazen Island slipway. The bridge walkway was removed on 12th September after 20 years in service and the infill was completed and the surface concreted for boat storage.



The Fowey sewage scheme was finally completed in the October 1995 and became operational on 16th January the following year.

1996 saw a new set of byelaws coming into force on 1st August and the Harbour commissioners agreeing to purchase the site at the top of St. Saviours Hill, Polruan where the storm signal mast was and the associated lane.

May 1997 and the National Coastwatch agreed with the harbour commissioners to take over the Pilots lookout at St. Saviours, Polruan subject to agreement of the Polruan Town Trust. The lease was re assigned in August 1998. The telephone cable between Readymoney cove Fowey and Girls Cove Polruan was removed being redundant. This allowed dredging to take place in the harbour mouth increasing the window large ships could enter or leave.

A leader Two project using European funding was given the go ahead to provide a landing at Lerryn and then the Pontoon landing at Polruan in September 1997.



Work commenced in May 1998 after a lease was agreed for the land and completed at the end of July.

Picture shows before and after



The new pilot boat Treffry went into service on 12th October 1998 formerly the RNLI 5001 Rotary Service Thames class lifeboat she was renamed by Mr Johnathan Treffry, Lord of the manor



Various port legislation was appearing at this time including the Trust Ports review and the the Port Marine safety Code.Regulations with regard to pollution control were also brought in and 200 metres of booms were ordered so as to comply.

February 1999 saw the introduction by the Harbour Commissioners of a Voluntary Marine Coastal Conservation are (VMCCA) for the estuary above Golant, for the upper Pont Pill and the Polruan woods. A major refurbishment of the harbour office reception area and account on the ground floor was commenced with old windows being replaced and the establishing of an open office layout.

By October 1999 the cruise liner business seemed to be an area that the Commissioners could attract more trade to the port. As part of a Leader II project a Cruise Co-ordinator was appointed to promote the business. The same month after 24 years a Chairman Mr Peter Voelcker stood down as chairman succeeded by Mr Gerry Williams. The Trust Port Guide to Good Governance was published in the January of 2000 and the Board had to look at the restructuring process reducing from 17 to 9 Commissioners now no longer to representatives but by appointment according to experience and qualification. A Harbour Revision Order was approved on the 18th June coming into effect on 1st September 2000.

More visitor pontoons were established and the Lantic Bay was used to carry out the piling both in Lew Roads and for the extension of Albert Quay and replacement of piles there by larger diameter ones. Solar power was introduced at St Catherine's Light house and the castle light as the National Trust had wanted the overhead power cable through the wood be removed. Later a backup wind generator was also added at St. Catherine's.

In November 2000 the Harbour Commissioners were successful negotiating the purchase of what was to be renamed Penmarlam from Mr and Mrs Oliver at Yeate farm in Mixtow. This was completed on the 9th April 2001. At the same time the sale of the plot in Meadow Close was agreed. A new electricity supply for Penmarlam was quickly installed and an access road constructed via the land to the east of the farm. Work then progressed in developing the site for storage and extending and improving the caravan site. Having been developed it was decided to sell the campsite as it was not a core part of the business and this was completed in May 2003 and the funds being used in the build of the new boat for par harbour.

In 2002, with the increased costs of maintenance and after a successful trial dredge by Westminster Dredging the Commissioners decided to dispose of Lantic Bay. Major works were needed to get her through the next survey. She was sold in the October 2002 finally departing for Plymouth in January 2003.



Farewell to the Lantic Bay leaving with her escorts and passing her namesake Bay

The tugs were moved to a berth in Mixtow Reach providing sheltered mooring and safer access for crews. A redundant barge was purchased from Serco Marine in Devonport to become the base for the tugs. And it arrived on the 19th April 2002 having been towed to Fowey by the Pendennick.



Getting ready for the tow to Fowey .



At Brazen Island being modified for use in Fowey.

She was then slipped at Brazen island and had the three stainless steel tanks removed, hatch coamings removed and decked across and the interior converted in workshops in the for'd end and a storage area for all the port anti-pollution equipment which modifications had been made for deployment.

2002 was the year when plans were put forward for the regeneration of CaffaMill area and the possible widening of the road from Four Turnings. As part of it the Commissioners took over the management of the overspill carpark owned by Imerys Minerals. The site at St Catherines Lighthouse was also purchased from the Rashleigh Estate.

A replacement was needed for the Par pilot boat by the start of 2003 .Her duties included towage in the port and to comply with MCA regulations it was agreed to build a new multipurpose vessel capable of working in Par and Fowey. Toms Yard having won the tender to build commenced construction of the new vessel in March 2003.



Frames in place and the launch of Polmear.

2005 saw the Consultative committee being set up with Sir Robert Owen as Chairman. Its members were from the many stakeholder groups around the estuary. The pilots pontoon was upgraded with a lighter aluminium gangway and a new slipway was built for North street yard

2006 arrived and departed with severe weather. Panches Cross was washed away in February and Brazen island suffered damage late in the year. The decision to dispose of the Pilot cutter Gore Point was taken and a replacement sourced. She was sold to Plymouth owners in March . Once she had gone Treffry was to be disposed of and Polmear would return to work from Fowey as Par Harbour was closed in August. Exports to Port Hawkesbury Nova Scotia in North America were coming to an end which potentially would reduce the need for two tugs.

May that year and the Pilot cutter Humber Gem was acquired from the Humber .she made passage to Fowey arriving on 12th May and was given an extensive overhaul before entering service. The name “Gribbin” was chosen. She was named by Mrs Williams, wife of the Chairman on 30th November.



Arrival in Fowey escorted by Treffry and Polmear.



Refurbished engine room



Mrs Williams naming “Gribbin”



Mr and Mrs Williams watching “Gribbin” depart

With the downturn in trade through the port and the closure of Par Harbour three staff were made redundant and the pilots and pilot boatmen reduced their numbers. In order to fund future plans the cottage purchased as part of the Penmarlam project was put up for sale as was the land owned at St. Saviours Polruan. This was later withdrawn due to a clawback clause in the purchase agreement.

With both ageing tugs requiring more and more maintenance and a decision to find alternative income high on the list of priorities upgrading at least one tug had come to the top of the harbour commissioners plans. The "Polmear" whilst suitable for some work in Fowey was unsuitable for large ship movements mainly due to her shallow draft suitable for the work she did in Par. She was sold to Jenkins marine in Poole sailing on 12th August 2008. Coming the other way was a catamaran hulled steel fishing boat soon to be converted into a mooring maintenance craft with a hyab crane and winch.



The Voyager as a fishing boat



Converted for mooring maintenance

The search for a tug with more power and classification status enabling work to be done in other ports led to the Purchase of the Cardiff tug "Holmgarth" and she was purchased on 17th September 2008. On arrival shortly after she was named "Morgawr" the Cornish for sea giant and after a short period of familiarisation and training the harbour staff were soon busy working her in Devonport, Cattewater and Falmouth.



"Morgawr"'s arrival escorted by sister tugs



Mrs Tessa Williams naming her on 25th September

At about the same time the Commissioners accepted an offer for the Pendennick and she was sold in November 2008 but didn't leave Fowey until 21st January 2009 when she left for Belfast and then Scotland and onwards to the East Coast.



The port operated with the two tugs Morgawr and Tregeagle but by 2011 the Board recognising the need to replace the aging Tregeagle and also have a second tug similar in capability to the Morgawr capable of providing the out of port service and single tows of large ships agreed to acquire another tug. Several were considered and after an inspection in March 2011 it was agreed to buy the “Coatham Cross” from Teesport. This was completed on 12th April 2011 and she then was dry-docked in Middleborough and arrived in Fowey on 18th May 2011



Formally renamed “Cormilan” after another Cornish giant by Mrs Mary Pemberton the chairman’s wife on 26th May 2011

Farewell to Fowey 5th June 2014