

Silloth Docks

The construction of the Marshall Dock, so called after Mr William Marshall, MP for East Cumberland, designed by Mr J E Hartley of Liverpool, under the direction of Mr Abernethy of Parliament Street, London, as Engineer-in-Chief, was started on 18th August 1857; the foundation stone being laid by Sir James Graham. It was opened on 3rd August 1859 by the same gentleman who laid the foundation stone, with Sir James and other dignatories sailing into the dock from the Pier on the steamer 'Silloth', followed by the 'Wasp' and the 'Cumbria'. The dock, in which vessels were always afloat was 600 feet by 300 feet, and the entrance gates were 60 feet wide and worked by hydraulic pressure. The cost of the dock was upwards of £70,000.

The prosperity of the dock increased eventually - during the years 1876, 1877 and 1878, about 160 vessels discharged grain and other foreign produce and their registered tonnage was nearly 70,000; whereas for the whole of the previous nine years no more than 154 vessels with a tonnage of 52,000 used the docks. In 1878 the grain alone imported was nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ million cwts, and in the same year about 7000 loads of timber. The total tonnage of vessels entering inwards and outwards in the coasting alone amounted to over 230,000 tons.

Unfortunately this prosperity was interrupted on 6th April 1879, when, without warning, the Dock entrance collapsed 'entombing' over 20 vessels (trapping would be a more appropriate word). This, linked with the significant increase in trade through the port, led to the development of the New Dock, which was begun in May 1882. The New Dock was designed by Messrs Meik & Sons of Edinburgh and the contract for building was given to Messrs Walter Scott and Co of Newcastle for carrying out the work at a cost of £79,000; added to that cost the expense of sheds and machinery, bringing up the total to about £90,000. This dock was larger than the first - its length north to south on the west side being 660 feet, on the east 630 feet, and width 400 feet. The difference in length of the east and west sides being that the Railway Company thinking of the future, anticipated further development and erected a greenheart timber and puddle coffer dam so as to be available as an entrance to a third dock.

In 1883, during excavation of the New Dock some valuable Mammalian relics were found. About 17 feet down from the surface, and 13 feet above the boulder clay was found an antler of a red deer (*Cervus Elaphus*). The next find was an enormous humerus (the upper bone of the foreleg). It weighed 5 lb 12 oz and measured 18" in length. The specimen was submitted to a Professor Turner of Edinburgh University and he pronounced this bone as belonging to the extinct gigantic ox of Great Britain (the *Bos Primigenius*). Others, including the tail vertebrae of a Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera*) were found and because these bones belonged to different species of animals and were imbedded in sand and gravel, it was presumed that they were loose bones which had been carried to the spot by water and deposited where they were found.

It was also recorded, by Dr J Leitch, in Transactions, Cumberland Association, vol. ix, p 170, 1885, that at Silloth, from the surface downwards, the formations were:-

a) blown sand 8 feet; b) layers of sand and gravel, together 8 - 10 feet in which was a shell beach about 2 feet deep at about 11 feet from the surface - the shells were of a species at that time existing in British waters; c) gravel 10 feet thick; and d) to depth of at least 30 feet, though not probed further, red and sandy clay containing great water-worn boulders from Criffel, Ennerdale and other sources.

When the second wet dock was completed, and opened on 30th June 1885, the Marshall Dock became converted into a tidal harbour. The New Dock was then able to take vessels of 2000 tons burthen.

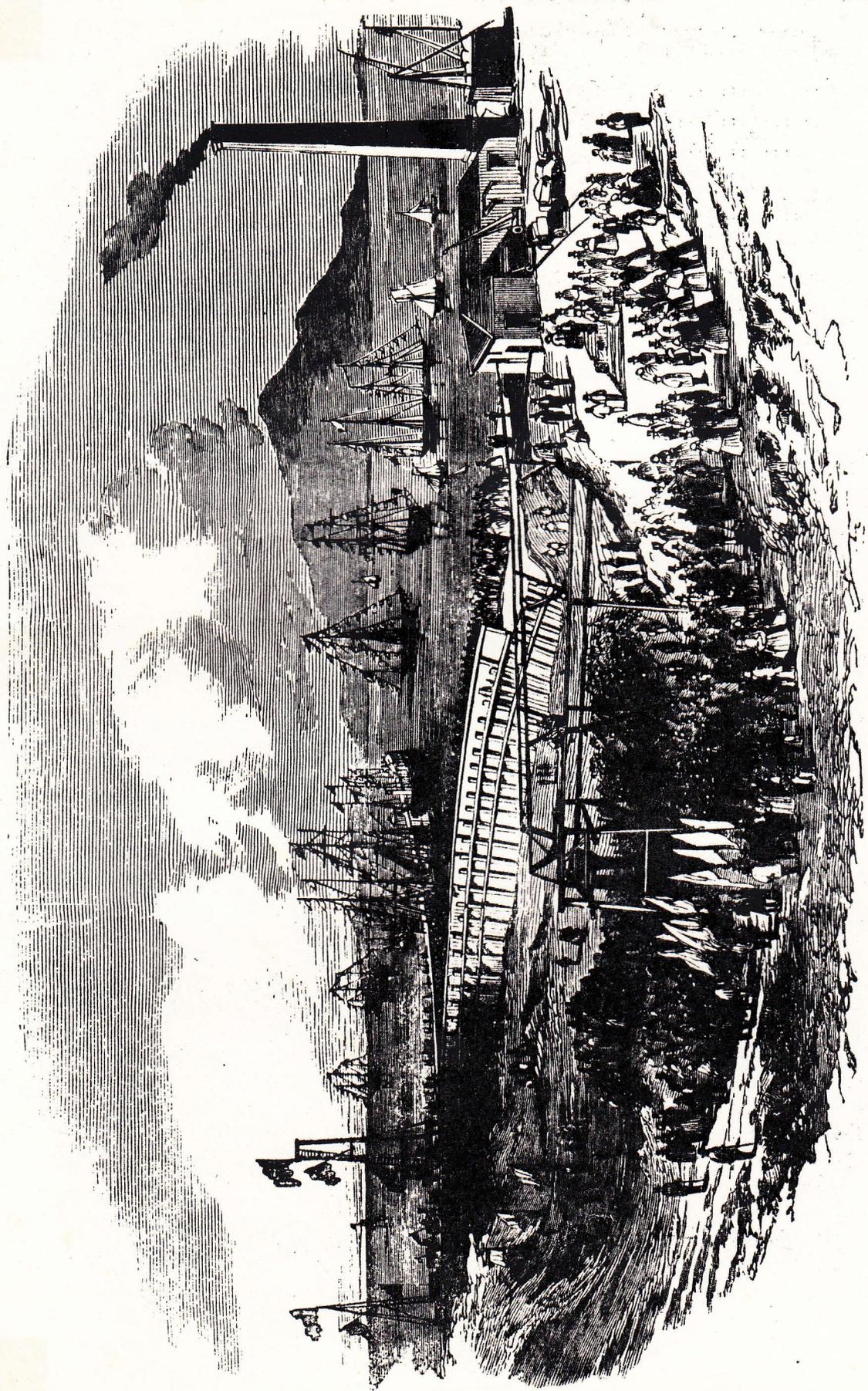
Much of the material excavated was deposited adjacent to the dock and thereby provided the basis for the golf course, which was opened in 1892. It was also during this period that the spacious green adjoining the town was laid out.

In 1883 the principle trade of the port consisted in the export of coal, manure (fertilizer), and burnt ore from sulphur ore, and the import of grain, phosphate from South Carolina for the manufacture of chemical manure, timber and goods, including cattle from Liverpool and Dublin. These had been the major trade of the Port since it opened, as well as the passenger Steamer service;

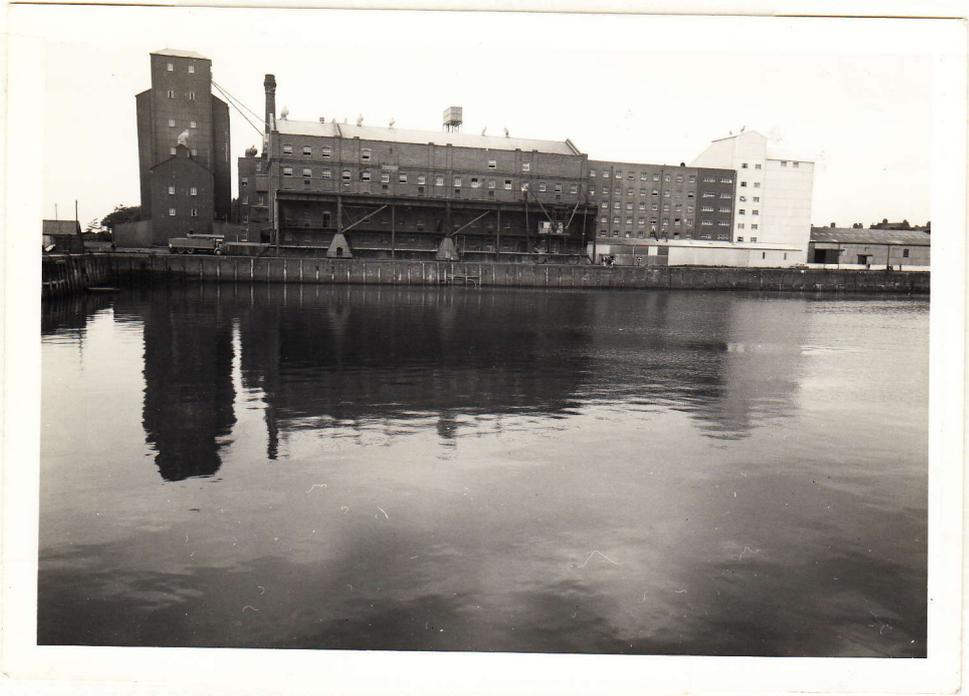
Silloth, Dundrum & Belfast, once weekly
Silloth, Dublin & Douglas (Isle of Man), twice weekly
Silloth, Liverpool, up to three times a week

From the Annual Report, to Holme Cultram Urban District Council, by the Medical Officer of Health who was responsible for the inspection of ships into Silloth Port for health purposes. Dr Crerar was the MO from 1907-1932 (from records found).

1920	2	Foreign Steamers	45	Coastwise Steamers
1921	3	" "	47	" "
1922	7	" "	45	" "
1923	8	" "	50	" "
1924	4	" "	46	" "
1925	6	" "	54	" "
1926	6	" "	121	" "
1927	7	" "	136	" "
			+ 2	Coastwise Sailing Vessels
1928	(No figures found)			
1929	4	Foreign Steamers	132	Coastwise Steamers
1930	45	" "	100	" "
1931	130	" "	184	" "
1932	111	" "	102	" "



SIR JAMES GRAHAM LAYING THE FOUNDATION-STONE OF MILLOTH DOCK, THE NEW PORT FOR CARLISLE.





"Outward bound." Leaving the Docks, Silloth.

J. WOOD & CO., SILLOTH



Silloth Docks

