
THE
NAUTICAL MAGAZINE

AND

Naval Chronicle.

MARCH, 1855.

THE HARBOURS OF PORTSMOUTH AND LANGSTONE, *with the proposed Hayling Docks and Railway.*

The advantages of commercial docks are so numerous and important to this country, that it is quite unnecessary to enumerate them. All mercantile men have long considered them wanted by us, and their non-existence has frequently subjected the merchant to much inconvenience, and occasioning loss of trade, and thence also a corresponding loss of profit to the *neighbourhood* in which they might be made. The projectors of the Wet Docks at Liverpool, in 1708, (which were the first ever made in this kingdom,) would have been deemed extravagant enthusiasts, or arrant impostors, had they promised to the subscribers a hundredth part of the advantages which have arisen from that undertaking.

Nevertheless, since that period, the dock duties in Liverpool have increased from little more than £800 to £230,000 per annum. In the reign of Charles the Second, it is stated, there were 15 boats at that port, the burthen of which amounted to 2560 tons. In the reign of Queen Anne their vessels had increased to 170. In 1756 the dock dues only amounted to £2,200. In 1801 they increased to £28,000, and in 1850 they were £230,000; so that it is now, for commercial purposes, the second port in the united kingdom. Yet, although the situation of Liverpool secures to it important advantages, in many particulars it is inferior to the position of Langstone, near Portsmouth. It is a well-known fact, that for want of dry docks in the neighbour-

hood of Portsmouth, many vessels have been prevented from obtaining the necessary repairs they required, and were obliged mostly to go to Southampton or London. Under all these considerations the consent of the Admiralty has been obtained to embank in a portion of the mud lands on the **Hayling** Island side of the main channel, leading from the entrance of Langstone Harbour towards the bridge, by which the present channel will be considerably deepened and widened, for the passage of vessels from the mouth of the harbour to Langstone quay; and to form a railway on the whole line of embankment to the entrance of the harbour, where wet, dry, and timber **docks**, with requisite warehouses, wharfs, and cranes for discharging goods, may be erected abreast of Sinah Lake, contiguous to the new buildings on the south beach of **Hayling** Island. The projectors of the undertaking have already secured the mud lands by a grant from the lord of the manor; and are willing to transfer to a company the whole of the land enclosed, containing about one thousand acres, which will embrace the whole frontage adjoining the main channel of the harbour, on the same terms as they are taken, without premium; and they are desirous of entering into a contract for including the purchase of any other land required, all claims for compensation, to obtain an Act of Parliament at their own expense, and to complete the embankment and railway from Havant Station to Sinah Lake, to the satisfaction of the company's engineer, within two years from the commencement of the work, and also to keep the whole in repair for twelve months after completion, for the sum of eighty thousand pounds, and to subscribe for shares to the amount of ten thousand pounds in the undertaking.

The customs duties received at Portsmouth in the year 1850 were £50,426 1s. 5d., and the duties received on the article of wine only, during the same period, amounted to £11,377 2s. 3d.

Southampton in March, 1852, was fixed upon as the port of arrival and departure for the East India and China Mails. Practical experience shows that a site like Langstone would form in fact an outport of London, and that ships lying in Langstone Harbour would, to all intents and purposes, be as close to the business portion of the City of London, as if they were lying at Blackwall. No **docks** at a greater distance will, however, accommodate the London traffic, and it is worthy of notice that no steam ships landing and embarking mails at Plymouth can, for various reasons, ever remain there to complete their business, but are compelled to proceed to London, there to discharge and receive their cargoes, having to encounter all the delay, danger, and expence of Channel and Thames navigation.

The inducements to shipowners and merchants to adopt Langstone are of the strongest possible nature, for not only are the well-known perils of the Channel altogether avoided, but the saving on a voyage up and down Channel, a distance of 300 miles each way, would be on a vessel of 150 tons £59 16s. 6d., of 300 tons £101 2s. 0d., of 600 tons £228 18s. 6d., and on one of 1060 tons £358 16s. 0d., exclusive of the saving of insurance, the difference of port charges, pilotage,

light dues, seamen's wages, and various other items of expenditure familiar to every merchant and shipowner.

In consequence of the great increase of merchant traffic on the Southern Coast, and of the appropriation of Portsmouth Harbour to Naval purposes, and necessity having thus pointed to make Langstone Harbour available, advantages of no ordinary character have been found in depth of water and security as contrasted with others. An enemy might destroy the shipping in Shoreham Harbour without difficulty, whereas Cumberland Fort already guards the entrance of Langstone Harbour on the Portsmouth side and a martello tower on the **Hayling** side in communication with the fort about to be built on the Horse Sands, would render the entrance of a hostile force a hazardous enterprise. These are important advantages; Langstone will be secured by the national defences of the country.

This conclusion is confirmed by the evidence given by his Grace the late Duke of Wellington, before the Shipwreck Commission of 1843, wherein his Grace stated "That it was important to the navigation of this country that every means should be adopted to preserve and improve the natural harbours of the country;" and by the following extract from the first Report of the Tidal Harbours' Commission, as presented to both Houses of Parliament, by command of her Majesty, wherein the commissioners say:—"They cannot close their report without expressing, in the strongest terms, their conviction that immediate measures for detailed inquiry and local examination into the state and condition of every port and navigable river of the United Kingdom are indispensably necessary, with a view to a thorough superintendence; and when they consider the great want of accessible harbours along the whole of the coasts of your Majesty's dominions, more especially when the extended use of steam navigation points to such great changes in maritime affairs, whereby every sheltered creek is likely to become of value; and when they consider that by the improvement of our tidal harbours your Majesty's beneficent intentions for the preservation of the lives and property of a large class of your Majesty's subjects may be best fulfilled, they earnestly trust that no minor consideration may be allowed to impede the accomplishment of objects of such national importance."

A distinguishing feature of Langstone Harbour in a **nautical** point of view, is its close contiguity to Spithead, the celebrated anchorage between the Isle of Wight and the coast of Hampshire, capable of receiving, with care, more than a thousand sail of shipping. There are however other considerations in favour of Langstone.

It is well known that in time of war, the invention of steam forms a new and serious arm of strength for consideration. The navigation of the narrow seas, commonly called the Straits of Dover, would then be extremely hazardous, unless all merchant vessels were accompanied by a steam-boat, which might not then be sufficient for their protection, however active our officers might be. During the war which terminated in the peace of Utrecht, the privateers of Dunkirk took 1614

ships from England, valued at £1,334,375. The security of the proposed docks from an enemy is, therefore, obvious.

On the whole Southern Coast, from the Land's End to the Nore, Langstone is, for these reasons, adapted to form the best harbour for mercantile purposes; its proximity to Spithead, the great naval depôt of Portsmouth, the unequalled excellence of its anchorage, the capacity of its basin, the ease and safety with which, after the improvements in contemplation have been carried out, it will be entered by vessels of any burthen, all these establish its nautical superiority, while, with London only distant 66 miles from the docks to be made, a rapid communication is insured by railway or canal.

Successive administrations from the time of Mr. Pitt have recognized the importance of establishing at a point of the southern coast of England, within an eligible distance of the Metropolis, a harbour with docks and warehouses for bonding merchandize, whereby all vessels from the westward might save the delay and expence of a voyage up Channel, and avoid the risk to which that tedious and dangerous navigation necessarily exposes them. The political considerations which originally suggested the formation of such a harbour, are of course infinitely strengthened by the revolution effected in naval warfare through the agency of steam; while the vastly improved modes of transit between London and the provinces, invest such an undertaking with a commercial importance, which could not have been previously anticipated. Langstone Harbour is just in this position, but has hitherto been left as nature formed it. If stronger proof were necessary for the absolute necessity of forming docks there, it is to be found in a recent report by Mr. Young of the Underwriters' Room at Lloyds, that accompanies a list of wrecks and casualties to shipping, officially reported to have occurred between Dungeness and London, during a period of eighteen months, from January, 1849, to June, 1850, inclusive, although he states it to be impossible to come to a precise knowledge of the total extent, owing to the numerous vessels which are annually lost on the Goodwin and adjacent sands with all on board. But he calculates the quantity of property lost, in that period, to amount to between £400,000 and £500,000, attended by the sacrifice of a great number of lives. His object was to show the enormous annual destruction of property between the Isle of Wight and the Thames, and which would be avoided by homeward bound ships discharging in local docks, besides the saving that would be effected in the rate of insurance, time occupied between the Island and London, and the extra cost of wages, provisions, and incidental expences. Another interesting document is added by him, being an abstract of the loss of shipping and life between the Isle of Wight and London for the seven years from 1837 to 1843 inclusive, by which it appears that during that period 499 vessels lost anchors and cables, were partially dismantled by bad weather, or being run foul of, or sustained other damage, 560 vessels took the ground, but got off again, 260 vessels entirely wrecked or foundered, of which the crews and passengers were saved, 56 vessels

were totally lost with all or several of the crews or passengers, the total number of casualties being 1375. During the first six months of 1850, it appears that no less than eight vessels have been lost between London and the Isle of Wight with all on board, and the number of lives so sacrificed is estimated at little short of 500. These are important facts, all tending to show the necessity of establishing a harbour by which they will be avoided,—indeed, by which this loss of life and property may be all saved.

Though it is impossible to approximate to an accurate estimate of the proportion of trade likely to be secured to Langstone, yet it must be evident that much of it must be secured, and that even a fractional part of it alone would constitute a very extensive business. But it will be apparent that a large proportion must be concentrated at Langstone **Docks**, when it is considered that a great portion of the goods imported is housed and bonded for exportation—that such goods cannot be deposited so advantageously as at Langstone, and that thence merchandize may be re-shipped and dispatched to sea more speedily and at far less expence than from any other part of the United Kingdom.

Since this paper was completed, we are glad to find that the good people of Portsmouth have discovered the real position of their harbour with reference to commercial enterprise, and finding it hopeless, from the requirements of the country, to avail themselves of it, have turned the tide of their patronage and support to the **Hayling Docks**. We read the following in the *Hants Telegraph* of last week:—

Philosophical Society.—Last evening a paper prepared by Mr. Fincham was read on “on the means by which and the extent to which Portsmouth may be benefited by acquiring a commercial character.” Several remarkable instances were cited from ancient and modern history of the elevated position which cities and towns have attained as the result of commercial enterprise; the favourable position of Portsmouth was pointed out, and the following question was proposed for discussion. If the chief obstacle to its acquirement of a commercial character consists in the fact that Portsmouth is a naval arsenal, may not the advantages be secured by the formation of **docks** in Langstone Harbour. Mr. Fincham submitted to the meeting a plan which he had devised for the accomplishment of this object. Extracts were then read from a publication recently issued, which stated, on the authority of Sir John Ren-
nie and other eminent Government engineers, that Langstone Harbour is capable of being made a safe resort for merchant vessels, and a valuable asylum harbour for ships of war, protected by Cumberland Fort.—*Hampshire Telegraph*, 3rd February.

With the latter part of this argument we by no means agree, seeing that our men-of-war have asylum enough already; and we recommend the friends of the design to stick to their merchant ships, and have nothing to do with the bulky vessels of war,—which indeed are not very likely to have anything to do with them.

But on the whole the foregoing is a sensible view of the subject, and if we are not mistaken Portsmouth will gain greatly by it. For our own part, as mere unconcerned spectators of these matters, excepting inasmuch as the advantage of the country is concerned, we

look on the whole undertaking as one of the most desirable schemes yet devised. When complete, the harbour will possess extraordinary facility of access and egress, the intricate and dangerous navigation to the Eastward will be entirely avoided by it, a capacious asylum of trade will be opened in a most advantageous position, from whence vessels may be at sea in the very middle of the Channel within two or three hours free from all the dangers of narrow navigation; and from its central position on the coast, foreign produce by means of the rail would thence flow at once into the very heart of the country. We sincerely wish the undertaking that success which in every point of view it so justly merits.

It is no doubt on account of its great advantages that we find the scheme has met with the support of his Grace the Duke of Richmond and of Naval Officers high in official position as well as some influential civil authorities at Portsmouth and Chichester.