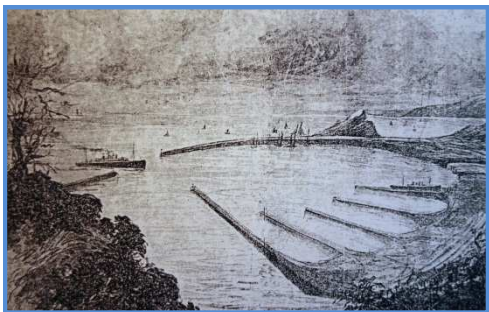


The Wembury Dock and Railway Proposal of 1909

Peter Broughton



Wembury Local History Society

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Extract from the Minutes of Wembury Parish Council

16th April 1909

"The Clerk reported that all plans and documents in respect of the proposed Wembury Dock Scheme had been deposited with him in accordance with advertisements which had appeared in the daily papers.

"The Council considered that as the scheme was one of national importance no comment either in favour of or against the scheme, coming from the Parish Council, would be considered of any importance."

Editor's introduction

This publication was researched and written by Peter Broughton in the late 1990s, and published in 2000 by Wembury Local History Society as a photocopied booklet.

Unfortunately, Peter died before this second edition could be produced; this new version is, however, a tribute to his diligence in researching an important aspect of local history and making it available to the public in such an accessible manner.

In producing the second edition we have taken advantage of new technologies to produce a digital version suitable for distribution on disc and capable of downloading from the internet. The opportunity has also been taken to make minor changes to the design of the original. For example, illustrations have been augmented and enhanced, the typeface has been changed, lists in the text have been converted into tables, and a number of asides now appear as footnotes. Despite these adjustments, however, the text is essentially that provided by Peter in the first edition.

We are grateful to Dr Tony Bowring for his work in scanning the original text, and also to Peter's widow for his papers on the subject, which she has donated to the Society. Among other things, this collection of papers has made it possible to produce a facsimile copy of the original parliamentary Bill promoting the port. Too large to download, this copy is available on CD via our website: www.wemburyhistory.org.uk.

David Pinder

Editor

1 Background to the Proposal

The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was a time of rapid expansion and technical change for the world of shipping; large and growing numbers of people were travelling, and immense quantities of goods and materials were being moved. Much of this trade and movement took place between Europe and the Americas, although the routes to and from Australasia, the Far East, Africa, and the Middle East were also growing.

Undoubtedly the leading nation in this field was Great Britain, with its enormous Empire supplying materials and demanding manufactured goods in return. The financial services of the City of London financed these flows, and the world's largest merchant navy carried them. Consequently, a large proportion of all shipping moved to and from British ports, the leading ones being London, Southampton, Bristol, Liverpool, and Glasgow. This is not to understate the significant volumes of shipping using the continental ports - Hamburg, Antwerp, Cherbourg, etc, and the potential threat they offered to British ports if the latter did not provide all the facilities needed.

At the same time the technology of shipping, particularly the ships themselves, was advancing rapidly. With the advent of steel construction, and the use of steam propulsion, the size of ships was growing almost year by year, with the result that ports faced continual and expensive updating if they were to continue to attract traffic. Inevitably, many ports lagged behind, so that in 1909 the two largest ships then in service (the *Mauretania* and *Lusitania*, both about 31,500 tons) did not have a single British port which they could enter at all stages of the tide. Indeed, the chairman of the Cunard Company, when apologising to his shareholders for there being no dividend, put part of the blame on the amount of time his large ships had to wait outside Liverpool. And the size of ships was still increasing - the White Star Line had two vessels of 40,000 tons on the stocks, and the *Titanic* (46,000 tons) was on the drawing board.

The main trouble for the ports was the draught of the ships - the depth of water they required to float. The *Mauretania* drew, fully loaded, between 35-36 feet; the depth of water at Low Water Springs (the lowest normal level of the tide) at Liverpool was 27 feet, at Southampton 30 feet. So the large ships, and their even larger successors, could only enter or leave these ports at or about high tide, resulting in costly delay for the shipowners, and frustration for the passengers.

Whilst Plymouth had deeper water than the others, being adequate for the 31.5 feet draught of the Dreadnoughts, there was still some doubt about deeper vessels, especially in rough weather, and there was also a complete lack of suitable quays. All the larger

commercial vessels had to anchor in the Sound and have their passengers ferried ashore in tenders.

Speed was the key issue - for the passengers, the shortest route plus a high-speed vessel meant that they reached their destination sooner, whilst for the shipowners the shortest route plus a fast turnaround meant better equipment utilisation. (Faster access to the Continent was said to be the reason for the White Star Line having moved its terminal from Liverpool to Southampton.) So the ports vied to offer these attributes: Liverpool and Southampton undertook major dredging programmes, Falmouth improved its harbour in the hope of attracting transatlantic passengers to its rail link with London, and even Cork offered itself as a terminal.

Plymouth joined in with a proposal in 1897, backed by the City Council, to build a new quay for large ships at Cattedown; this was opposed by the Admiralty who argued that large commercial ships would interfere with naval movements. Then, in 1907, another scheme for the Cattewater was put forward by a Mr. Duke, who owned wharves there; again it failed on the opposition of the Admiralty, who made it clear that they did not want any commercial development of Plymouth. Although the Admiralty came in for much criticism, it is worth noting that a commentator at the time, speaking of competition from continental ports, pointed out that the French Admiralty had much the same policy towards commercial development at Brest and Cherbourg.

2 The Proposal

The exact origins of the proposal to construct the docks and railway at Wembury Bay are slightly obscure, but it seems that, very soon after the collapse of the 1907 plan to extend in the Cattewater, the idea of a port at Wembury occurred to either a Mr. Edward Bath (an engineer), or to a Mr Knott, described as a "*very large contractor*". Presumably the idea was discussed by the businessmen of Plymouth, for we find that during 1908 a company was formed entitled "*The Wembury (Plymouth) Commercial Dock and Railway Company Limited*". Table 1 lists the directors of this company.

Table 1 Directors of the Wembury (Plymouth) Commercial Dock and Railway Company Ltd

The Earl of Morley	President of the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
Mr A. Edmund Spencer	Mayor of Plymouth
Mr J.P. Goldsmith	Mayor of Devonport
Mr I. Pearce	Chairman, East Stonehouse Urban District Council
Mr Brown	Former Chairman, Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
Mr A. Latimer	Secretary, Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
Mr W.O. Hosking	Former Chairman, Plymouth Mercantile Association
Alderman T.G. Wills	Former Chairman, Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
Alderman J.H. May	
Mr. John Yeo	
Sir J.A. Bellamy	Former Mayor of Plymouth
Mr H. Hurrell	
Mr J.P. Brown	
Mr Wade	
Mr Thomas Bacon	
Mr John Coleman	Shipowner and Shipbroker (a major shareholder)
Colonel Gardner	Director of several Indian railways
Mr Thomas Inskip	Former Chairman, Taff Vale Railway

It will be seen that the composition of the Board showed the support of the local authorities and commercial interests, as well as some relevant technical experience. At the time it was said that the reasons for Plymouth City Council supporting a private scheme (rather than proposing it themselves), was that they were unhappy at the high costs they had incurred in the abortive 1897 scheme, and that, the site of the new docks being outside Plymouth's rating area, there was some doubt about the legality of Plymouth putting public money into the scheme.

The plans, engineering specifications, and cost estimates were prepared by Mr J.M. Dobson, a member of the firm of Hawkshaw and Dobson of Great George St, Westminster, London. This was a highly reputable firm of engineers, one of whose former partners had earlier been President of the Institute of Civil Engineers, and had also been responsible for part of the planning and design of the first Channel tunnel in the late 19th century. In his evidence to the House of Lords Committee, Mr Dobson, whose evidence on this part of the proposal can only be described as evasive, stated that the scheme was originally "*brought about*" by Mr Bath, an engineer, but that he, Mr Dobson, had been asked to prepare the plans by a Mr Knott, whom he described as "*a very large contractor*". When asked who was paying for the plans, Mr Dobson replied that he was doing the work for nothing; he later enlarged on this by saying that, having visited the site, he thought the proposal was so good that he was prepared to work on the basis of "*no cure, no pay*", i.e. only if the scheme went ahead would he be paid by the promoters. Despite this, it is worth noting that the plans, etc bear the names of both Messrs Hawkshaw and Dobson and Mr Edward Bath (as engineers) - although the latter does not appear to be known to any of the professional associations of the time.

The works proposed

The proposal put forward (Figures 1, 2 and 3) called for the building of massive breakwaters around Wembury Bay; one from Wembury Point out to the Mewstone; a second one from the Mewstone to a point about halfway to Clara Point; a third from Clara Point towards the Mewstone, but stopping short of the breakwater coming the other way, so as to leave an entrance gap; and a fourth out along Blackstone Reef (starting below St. Werburgh's Church) and extending out towards the end of the second breakwater, but again stopping short to provide an entrance. The total enclosed area was to be 880 acres, which may be compared to the 667 acres of Holyhead.

On the inside of the breakwaters, substantial areas were to be reclaimed to provide working surfaces on which would be railways, coaling facilities, cranes, warehouses, etc. Up to four piers were allowed for, although only two were to be built initially, running out from the shore and parallel with Blackstone Reef.

The promoters also spoke of building two graving (i.e. dry) docks at a later stage. One available plan shows one, in the north-western corner. This is approximately where the remains of the old slipway and boathouse /cottage are today. Dredging would ensure that the alongside depth, and the approach channels, would have a minimum depth at low-water springs of 42-48 feet. The area to the East of Blackstone Reef; i.e. just outside the mouth of the River Yealm, was to be used as an anchorage for smaller commercial craft.

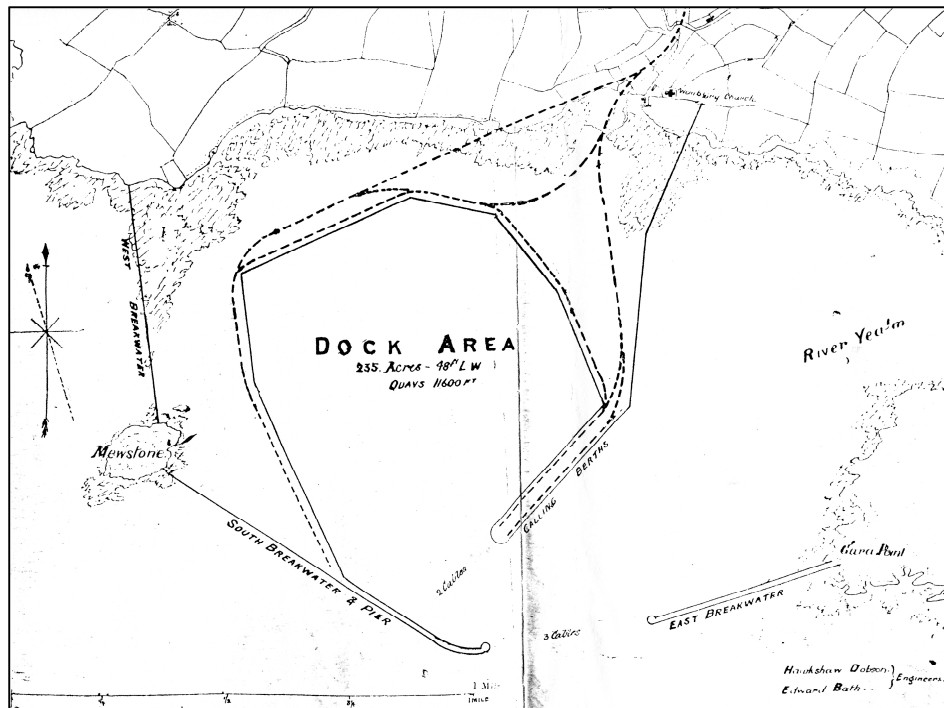


Figure 1 Basic layout envisaged for the port

Dotted lines indicate planned railways.

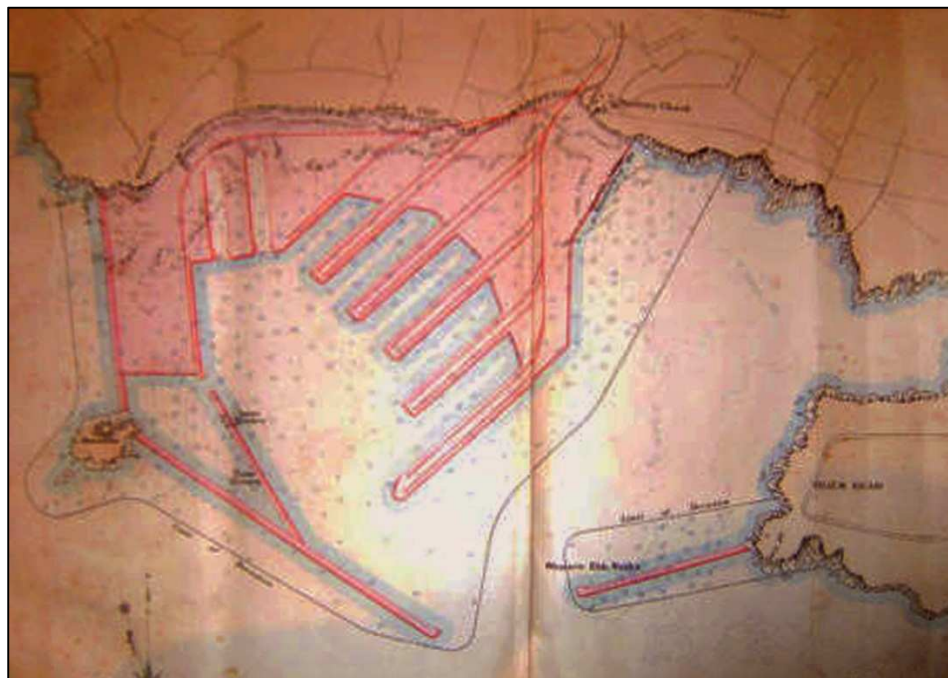


Figure 2 Photograph of plan showing more detailed proposals

The inclusion of finger piers would have substantially increased quay length; the graving (dry) dock envisaged in the north-west corner was seen as an important ship-repair facility.

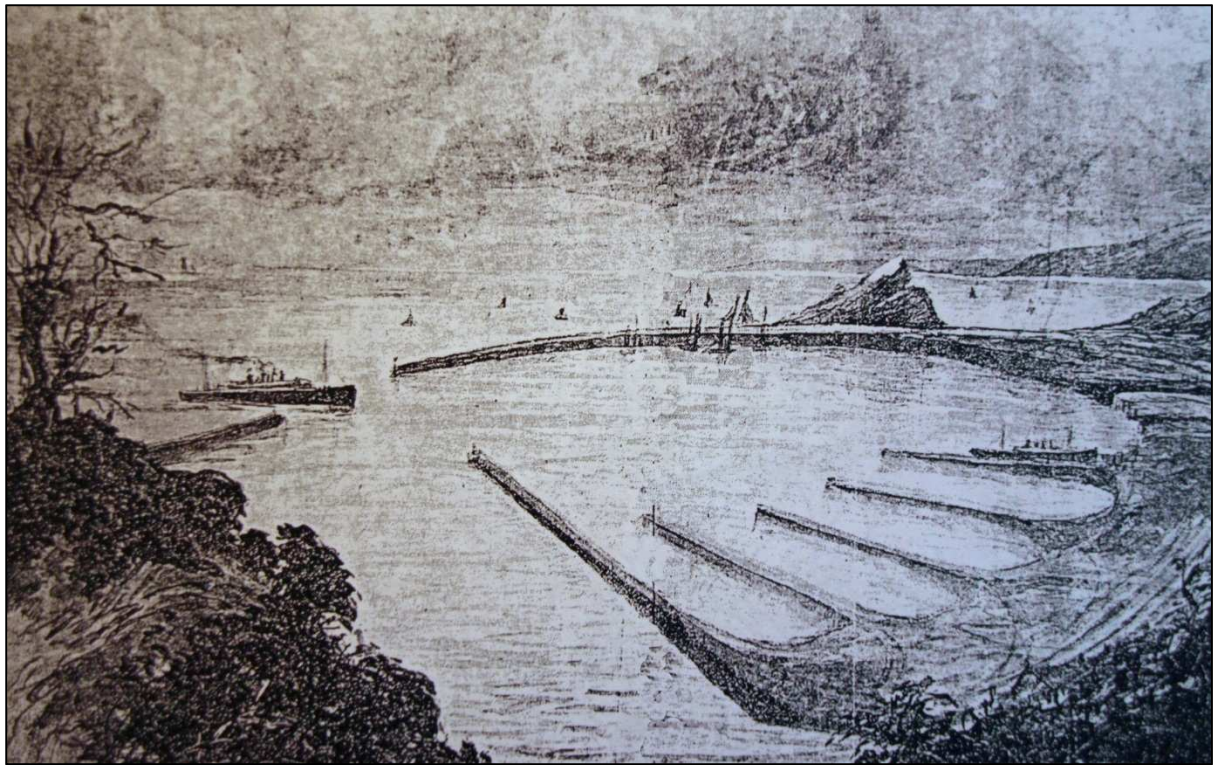


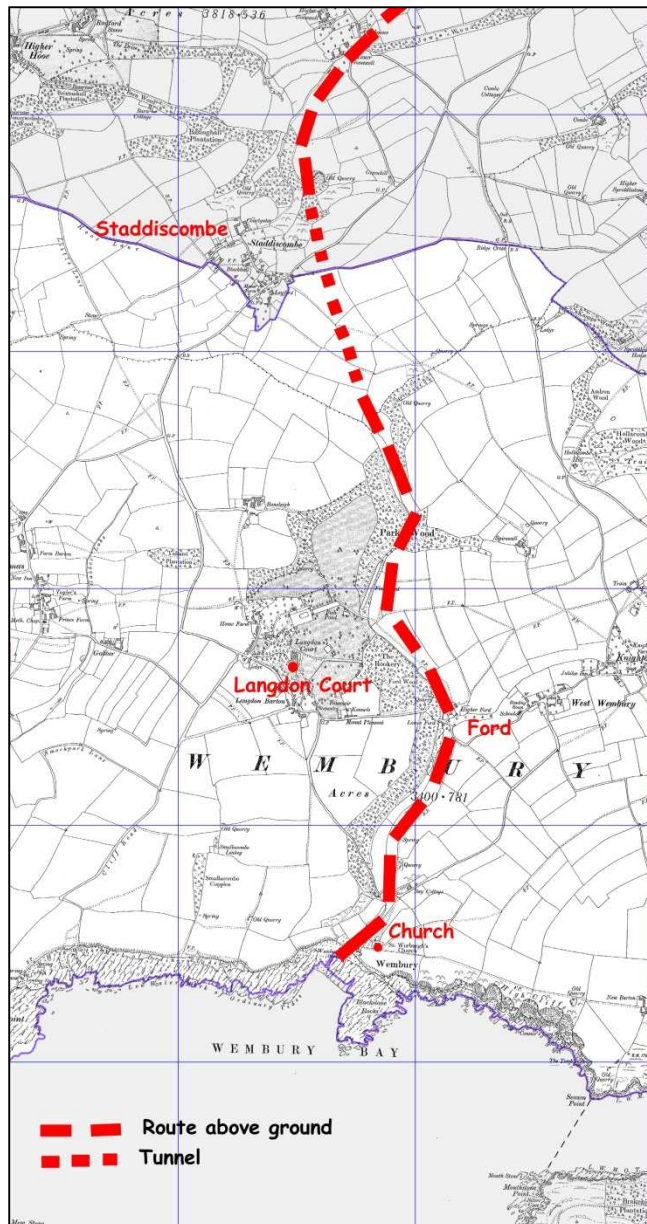
Figure 3 Artist's impression of the port, viewed from the north-east corner of Figure 2

Railway sidings and working lines were to be laid along the breakwaters, coming together at a point just below St. Werburgh's Church. From there, a single track line (Figure 4) was planned to connect with the network at Billacombe. (This single-track decision was an economy measure, although the land required, and the bridges, etc, were sufficient for the anticipated later doubling of the line.) Heading inland from the port, the railway was to run across Mill Meadow more or less alongside the stream, crossing the bottom of Pump Hill about where the telephone box is, and then running up the valley just below the Churchwood chalets.

Following the valley, and running very close to Langdon Court and towards Raneleigh, the line would then have entered a tunnel about 900 yards long beneath Staddiscombe and emerged part-way down Goosewell. From here the route would have been via Pomphlett to join the existing railway network at what was then Plymstock Station (just behind what is now the roundabout at the beginning of Billacombe Road).

There were then two railway companies using Plymstock station, the Great Western and the London & South Western,¹ which shared the same track running towards and across the Plym Estuary at Laira Bridge. Trains from Wembury would have used this shared

¹ East of Plymstock Station, the GWR line ran alongside what is now Billacombe Road towards Elburton and Yealmpton. The L & SW railway branched off towards Oreston and Turnchapel.



Base map © Crown copyright

Figure 4 Planned railway route

line on their way to and from the rest of the country.²

² The author has seen a reference to the electrification of the line from Wembury, but has found no evidence of this being planned; possibly the report derives from a prophecy by the Mayor of Plymouth (in Feb 1909) that there would in the future be a tramway between Plymouth and Wembury. There is no doubt that, had the port been built, it would have generated substantial urban development between the city and Wembury, almost certainly leading to the latter's absorption by the city. Reflecting this, the Bill contained a provision allowing for the possible future amalgamation of the Wembury and Plymouth commercial shipping facilities under one company or board of Commissioners.

3 The House of Lords Committee Hearing

Major schemes of this sort required Parliamentary approval, and the method of obtaining this was the Private Bill. The Promoters engaged Parliamentary Agents (Messrs W. & W.M.Bell), and in late April 1909 the Bill was examined by a Select Committee of the House of Lords to determine if it should be presented to Parliament. (Such Committees were used by both the Commons and the Lords, it being a matter of chance as to which House would hold the initial hearing on a Private Bill.) The Committee, chaired by the Earl of Camperdown, had as other members Lord Kenyon, Lord Abinger, Lord Kilmarnock, and Lord D'Isle and Dudley; evidence was heard at the House of Lords on the 28th, 29th, & 30th April and on the 3rd May 1909, and a decision was given immediately after the last hearing on 3rd May.

Both Promoters and Objectors engaged King's Counsel to represent them, the Promoters being The Wembury (Plymouth) Commercial Dock and Railway Company, the Objectors being The Great Western Railway Company, the London and South-Western Railway Company, the Duke of Bedford, and the Plympton St. Mary Rural District Council. There was also a petition from Mr. R Cory (owner of Langdon Court), but he did not appear and was not represented.

There was a touch of farce at the beginning of the hearing when the Committee started unexpectedly early, so that there were no maps or papers ready, and the only KC present was the one for the Promoters.

The case for the Promoters

The hearing opened with the KC for the Promoters stating that the object of the Bill was to obtain authority to construct a dock which the largest vessels then envisaged could enter at all stages of the tide, it being a "*surprising fact*" that there was not a single dock in Great Britain at that time which the "*Mauretania*" and the "*Lusitania*" could enter at all stages of the tide. This would be overcome at Wembury, where a minimum depth of 42 feet was planned.

Apart from the natural depth of water in Wembury Bay (although it would still need dredging) and its approaches, the major attraction of the site was the shorter distances from Wembury to the main destinations, as compared to other ports.

Table 2 Extra distance from major UK ports to New York and Bombay,^(a) compared to Wembury (miles)

To	From			
	<u>London</u>	<u>Southampton</u>	<u>Bristol</u>	<u>Liverpool</u>
New York	305	125	181	351
Bombay	295	115	133	341

^(a) Similar savings were claimed for the routes to Adelaide, Cape Town and St. Thomas.

Thus, on a return journey, the route to New York from Wembury was over 700 miles shorter than the route from Liverpool. With similar reductions on the other routes, it was argued that the savings in time and money meant that the major shipping lines would be attracted to Wembury, particularly those specialising in passengers and high-value freight. A further advantage claimed was that those passengers going to or from the mainland of Europe would not have to face lengthy rail journeys to or from the cross-Channel ferries, which could be run direct from Plymouth to Cherbourg, St.Malo, etc.

It was also argued in favour of Wembury that, in time of war, merchant vessels carrying imported food could unload on British soil without having to face the hazards of enemy naval vessels in the confined waters of the Channel. Additionally, the new dock could, in wartime, offer damaged warships entrance to a secure harbour and graving dock, whereas some vessels, e.g. Dreadnoughts, might not be able to enter Plymouth at all stages of the tide if their damage made them low in the water.

The safety of the new docks in wartime was claimed to be assured, as the site was well covered by the guns of the existing defences of Plymouth. However, during the hearing, the War Office required the addition to the Bill of clauses to allow more guns to be mounted on the breakwaters, and some form of closing device, e.g. a boom, to be added to protect the harbour. Their main worry was that the new harbour might allow an enemy to land troops to outflank the Plymouth defences.

Expert Witnesses for the Promoters

As is usual at such hearings, expert witnesses were produced to give backing to particular aspects of the proposals. They were heard at great length by the Committee, and even so there were still more whose evidence was not called. Those called by the Promoters (Table 3) gave, between them, evidence supporting the technical feasibility of the scheme, its commercial viability, the level of local support (both political and commercial), and (particularly) the nautical aspects.

Table 3 Expert witnesses for the Proposers

Mr. J.M. Dobson	Engineer, Partner in Hawkshaw and Dobson.
Mr. B.H. Blyth	Engineer
Sir Whately Eliot	Former Engineer to Devonport Dockyard Extension
Mr. R.E. Cooper	Vice-President, Institute of Civil Engineers
Sir Joseph Bellamy	Shipping agent, former Mayor of Plymouth, former Chairman Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
Mr. J.P. Brown	Former Chairman, Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
Mr. E. Windatt	Former Mayor of Totnes, Member Devon County Council
Mr. J.H. Ellis	Town Clerk of Plymouth
Mr. P.F. Rowsell	Chairman, Exeter Chamber of Commerce
Mr. A. Edmund Spencer	Mayor of Plymouth
Capt. Tysard RN FRS	Former Assistant Hydrographer to the Admiralty
Capt. Holloway	Younger Brother of Trinity House
The Earl of Morley	President, Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
Mr. Harry Leyland	Channel Pilot
Mr. Marshall Stevens	First Manager of Manchester Ship Canal
Mr. A. Bodey	Surveyor and Valuer
Mr. G.H. Phillips	Trinity House Pilot at Plymouth
Mr. E.S. Holman	Shipowner, broker and underwriter
Sir William White	Former Director of Naval Construction, Admiralty; Consultant Naval Architect for the construction of the "Mauretania"

The objectors to the proposal

Formal objections to the Bill were registered by the Duke of Bedford, the London and South-Western Railway, the Great Western Railway, and the Rural District Council of Plympton St. Mary. All were represented by KCs.

In addition, a petition was presented by Mr. Richard Cory, owner of Langdon Court, although he did not appear and was not represented. His opposition was not significant, as his wishes were met by the promoters early on - he was concerned that the Bill gave the promoters power to purchase only the land they needed. He wanted (and got) an agreement that if any of his land was required, the promoters would have to buy the whole of his estate (including Langdon Court). Granted that, his opposition ceased.³

³ An interesting sideline relating to compulsory purchase lies in the workings of a Parliamentary Standing Order intended to protect the houses of the poor. All Private Bills which gave authority for the purchase of land had to be accompanied by a Statement "*in regard to any house or houses (occupied either wholly or*

Equally trivial was the objection by Plympton St. Mary RDC. Although very much in favour of the proposal, they were concerned that the Bill gave Plymouth City Council the right to supply mains water to the Wembury Docks. Arguing that the entire docks development took place within two parishes (Wembury and Revelstoke), both of which were within the RDC, they sought the right of supply for themselves. Plymouth replied (rightly) that Plympton St. Mary did not have a sufficient supply of water; they also pointed out that most of the dock development was in Wembury Bay and therefore outside the Parish boundaries anyway. Plympton St. Mary riposted that Wembury Bay was also outside Plymouth City limits, so they could not claim jurisdiction. Plymouth won the argument by saying that, although outside City limits, Wembury Bay was within the boundary of Plymouth Harbour, to which they did have the right of supply. At the end of the hearing, the KC for Plympton St. Mary sought to have their costs reimbursed, but this was refused, leaving the RDC to explain to the ratepayers why they had to meet the very substantial bill for the objection.

The objection by the Duke of Bedford stemmed from his ownership of a substantial amount of land in Plymstock, some of which would be needed for the last mile of the Wembury line and all of the links at Billacombe to the GWR and L&SWR networks. Housing had already been built in the area, and roads, etc, were being constructed to allow further development. The Duke's concern was said to be that the dock and railway scheme was under-capitalised and unlikely to be profitable, and therefore in danger of collapsing; his Counsel claimed that *"the effect of this scheme would be to tie the landowners' hands and suspend building operations...."*. Rather oddly, he went on to say that, had the scheme been backed by one or two railway companies and therefore likely to have the capital needed, the Duke would not have objected but would have been content with the compensation offered.

Perhaps the most formidable opposition came from the Great Western Railway. Their objections stemmed from the fact that they had, over the past few years, invested substantial sums in Millbay dock, and anticipated that a new dock at Wembury would attract much of their business away from Millbay, despite an undertaking by the promoters of the Bill that they would never undercut Millbay rates for general traffic.

partially by thirty or more persons of the Working Class whether as tenants or lodgers) which may be taken compulsorily or by agreement in any local area under the powers of the above named Bill". Houses were listed in Wembury parish were:

- Wembury Mill. Stone built, slated roof, 5 rooms and scullery. Three persons.
- Higher Ford. Stone built, slated roof 5 rooms, wash house, pigsty. Nine persons.
- Higher Ford. Stone built, slated roof, 7 rooms, wash house, linhay. Four persons.

Considerably more houses and people were listed as being affected by the railway after it emerged from the tunnel at Goosewell; all are detailed in the original Statement.

Expert witnesses for the Objectors

The GWR called a number of witnesses (Table 4) to attack the proposal on grounds of engineering, nautical safety, finance and general shipping considerations.

The conflicting opinions expressed by this group and the Proposers' expert witnesses caused the Chairman of the Committee to comment that "*Of course, it would not be an unheard-of thing if one set of engineers came here and said the estimates were quite correct, and another set of engineers appeared and said they were all wrong.*"

Table 4 Expert witnesses for the Objectors

Capt. Edwards RN	Former QHM at Plymouth; Sub-Commissioner of Pilotage at Plymouth
Capt. Rogers RN	Former KHM at Plymouth
Mr. J. Skelton	Trinity Pilot at Plymouth
Sir Charles Owen	Chairman, Great Western Railway.
Mr. Inglis	General Manager, Great Western Railway
Mr. A.G. Lyster	Engineer to Mersey Docks and Harbour Board
Mr. G.N. Abernathy	Engineer

Apart from one or two minor questions, the Counsel for the LSWR does not appear to have contributed to the arguments before the Committee; presumably they were content to let the GWR make the running. Their interests were not only in the Millbay tenders and the traffic they brought, but they also had a newly built railway line to Turnchapel which presumably explains their earlier support for the proposal to develop the Cattewater for passenger-liner traffic. The LSWR also owned Southampton docks, from which much of the traffic sought by Wembury would have come.

Most of the argument led by the GWR centred on the adequacy or otherwise of the financial provisions and estimates, and it does seem that the promoters had under-estimated both the amount of capital required and the costs of running the docks, whilst taking a very optimistic view of the revenue they would earn. The resultant profit estimates were so high that nobody believed them, leading to doubt about the basic soundness of the rest of the promoters' case. There was also a fascinating dispute about how profitable (or otherwise) large liners were for harbours; to back their case, the GWR had sought the experience and views of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, but the latter's reluctance to publicly discuss their commercial arrangements with the major shipping lines meant that the House of Lords had to compel the Engineer to that body to give evidence. In the end the argument on this aspect was inconclusive, although of little help to the Promoters' case. A further blow came

when it was shown that there was little hope of much general traffic for the new dock, and that it would have to rely mainly on passenger traffic.

Rejection

Less than five minutes after the end of the hearing, the Chairman of the Committee announced "*We do not deem it expedient to recommend that this Bill should go forward*". This was the traditional form of rejection, with no reasons given.

4 Retrospect

The hearings at Westminster were closely followed in the West Country press. The rejection of the Bill caused much outrage in Plymouth, although the more sober commentators said that the weakness of the capital and revenue estimates, highlighted by the way counsel for the GWR and the Chairman of the Committee kept returning to the subject, was evident from early on. Harsh words were directed at both the Duke of Bedford ("*opposition was both paltry and inconsistent*") and the GWR, although the latter's opposition was said, perhaps charitably, to be due to the troubles they had experienced with their own harbour investment at Fishguard.

Technically, it may well be that the proposed port could have been built and operated, although whether it would have been profitable can, of course, never be known. What cannot be doubted is the weakness of the financial case put forward by the promoters; their initial estimate of a capital requirement of £3.5m (£2.5m in share capital, the balance in bank borrowings) was clearly shown to be inadequate and it also emerged that their figures for the capital needed omitted the costs of the graving docks, the warehouses, and the railway rolling stock. The first two items were then said to be supplied and operated by independent contractors (which did not impress the Select Committee at all), whilst the Promoters seemed to have assumed that the rolling stock would be supplied by the existing railway companies. Equally, the revenue estimates placed before the Committee showed an unlikely level of profit; and were difficult to reconcile with the evidence given by the Liverpool Docks representative.

These shortcomings seem unlikely to have been caused by simple incompetence, given the number of experienced engineers and businessmen amongst the Promoters. It may be that, alarmed by the huge sums required (by the standards of the time), there was an attempt to play down the cost in the hope of raising further capital when the need arose. (This was not unknown when the railways were being built.)

If so, it backfired. Both the Duke of Bedford, opposing the scheme, and the Earl of Camperdown, commenting on the scheme's finances, said or implied that their attitudes to the proposal would have been different had it had the backing of one or two railway companies, who were assumed to have access to whatever capital would be needed. But rather than having their support, the promoters found themselves actively, and effectively, opposed by the railways, and this was probably the major cause of the scheme's rejection.

However, another element in the rejection may have been the attitude of the Chairman of the House of Lords Committee, the Earl of Camperdown. From early on in the hearings there were suspicions of hostility on his part (stemming from the form of his questions, and the evidence he was willing to accept) , and it is a remarkable fact that the manuscript record of

the hearings do not contain a single reference to questions or comments by other members of the committee.⁴ Add to this the reported fact that "*less than five minutes*" elapsed between the end of the hearings, and the announcement of the Committee's decision, and it does seem at least possible that the Committee was perhaps less open and objective than it should have been.

During the Westminster hearings, much was made by the promoters of the Wembury scheme of the dislike felt by passengers for the inconvenience and discomfort involved in transferring between Millbay and the liners by tender, all of which would be avoided in Wembury where it was intended that passengers could walk off the ship and step straightaway into their train. However, it is worth noting that, despite the continuance of the tender system, the number of passengers and ships using Plymouth continued to increase for some years and then ran at an historically high level until the Second World War. (For details, see Crispin Gill in *The New Maritime History of Devon*, Table 22.1). It may be that the shipping companies preferred the tender system, as it saved them the cost of docking and allowed a much faster turnaround of their vessels.

While the precise mix of factors behind the rejection is debateable, however, there is no doubt that the project's failure meant that the Wembury, Noss Mayo and Newton Ferrers areas escaped an unfortunate fate. Wembury Bay as it is known and enjoyed today would have been transformed completely. Moreover, experience in other ports suggests strongly that, inland, large-scale urbanisation would have come along with the docks. The scheme may well have had fatal in-built weaknesses, but present-day local communities should indeed be grateful.

⁴ The chairman's attitude may well have been connected with the fact that, from 1870 to 1874, he was the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, and thus oversaw the country's commercial ports – Ed.

Sources and Acknowledgements

For those who wish to see the original sources, the following are the main ones used for this article; I am grateful to the owners of these sources their their assistance:

Plymouth Central Library, Local Studies Department	A variety of minor items, but particularly the <i>Western Morning News</i> of 29,30,31 April 1909 and the <i>Western Daily Mercury</i> of 5 Dec 1908.
West Devon Records Office, Plymouth	Records of Plympton St. Mary Rural District Council and Wembury Parish Council
Devon Record Office, Exeter	Documents from Devon County Council Records, particularly DP 655
House of Lords Record Office, Westminster	House of Lords records, particularly HL Evidence 1909 vol 16, and Plan 1909 W16
The Institution of Civil Engineers, London	Membership lists and obituaries

Permission to reproduce part of the 1907 Ordnance Survey 6" map as the base for Figure 4 was kindly given by the Ordnance Survey.