

ADDRESS

South Pier, PENZANCE

Parish PENZANCE
District PENWITH
County CORNWALL

Case UID: 169092

Date First Listed: 06-MAR-2003

Formerly Listed As: South Pier with Dock Office and Lighthouse and Dock Pier to North West, ,
PENZANCE, PENWITH, CORNWALL

RECOMMENDATION

Outcome: Yes, upgrade

Recommended Grade: II*

30-NOV-2009

BACKGROUND:

After examining all the papers on this file and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the item should be upgraded.

HISTORY

The date at which a pier was first built at Penzance is not known with certainty. Documentary evidence clearly indicates that by the early-C14 Penzance was already supporting a small fishing fleet, but the date at which a pier was built to protect these vessels is not recorded. There was certainly a pier in existence before 1512, for in that year Henry VIII issued a charter which refers to the "kaye and bulwarks" as already existing. The form of the earliest pier is known from an illustration of around 1540, which indicates that it occupied the site of the existing south pier and extended in a straight line from the shore. The pier at this time may have been up to 85m long and probably survives within the fabric of the existing pier.

The importance of Penzance's Harbour increased from 1663 when the town was granted stannary town status and local tin production significantly increased; the port became busier, more prosperous and dwarfed the importance of its neighbours. Indeed the wealth of the whole town and its hinterland depended on the success of the port and this is reflected in the constant upgrading of the facilities. The fortunes of the harbour were inevitably closely linked to those of the metal mining industry; the port would have been busiest in the periods preceeding the coinage fairs, but throughout the year coastal shipping and ocean going vessels seeking shelter would have made frequent use of the facilities. The second major export from the pier was hogsheads of pilchards many of which were sent to Mediterranean countries.

In 1745-6, following years of remedial repairs, the existing pier was repaired, rebuilt and extended by Penzance Corporation with much of the work being supervised by Tobias Vibert. Considerable contemporary documentation including details of workers and sources of stone and lime relating to this work survives. The earliest significant extension to the length and alignment of the pier was carried out in 1764-68 to provide deeper water and increased landing facilities for the increasingly busy and prosperous port. The contract for the work was awarded to Thomas Richardson of Plymouth, who agreed to build a 170 foot long by 40 foot wide battered wall for £2,900. This contract was never fulfilled and instead a 113 foot length together with a colonnade store was completed by a directly employed labour force in 1768. A contract to complete the work unfinished by Richardson was awarded to local masons in 1785 and despite some dispute concerning its quality, it appears to have been completed. A second colonnade store (since removed) was added at this time.

The final section of the new alignment started in 1764 was completed in 1811-12 by Edward Hambleton at a cost of about £6,500. A third colonnade was added at this time. In the period between 1812 and 1840 a number of relatively small scale, but significant, works were completed including the provision of: mooring posts; bollards; capstans; a light; protective timber baulking; new paving; a crane; new access road; protective wall and quay. Additional remedial works were also carried out, especially as a result of the considerable damage caused by a severe storm on 20 January 1817. The final extension to the South Pier was built between 1853 and 1855 on a third alignment. This length of pier was built using the same ashlar bond facing techniques employed successfully at the nearby listed Albert Pier [LBS 490125] completed in 1845. A small lighthouse was built at the seaward end of this extension and in 1871 the new length of pier was widened. Between 1882 and 1884 the western part of the southern pier was incorporated into a wet dock, created by adding a new pier to the north, widening the existing South Pier and inserting gates between. After 1884 the South Pier changed very little and subsequent work seems to have included mainly repairs and renewals.

A considerable body of surviving documentation provides a real insight into the life, characters and work of the people and ships that operated from Penzance. On the national stage the South Pier at Penzance is reputed to be the site of at least three notable events. The first is the claim to be the first place in England that tobacco was smoked (by Sir Walter Raleigh), the second as the site of the last incursion of England (by the Spanish) in 1595, and the third where news of Nelson's victory and death at Trafalgar was first received. The pier was also the site of a number of dramatic shipping events including the great storm of 20th January 1817 which resulted in considerable damage to a number of vessels, and the exploding of the gunpowder carrying "Jane" in 1830. When the metal mining industry declined in the latter years of the C19, the harbour continued operating as an important commercial port handling a variety of products including: china clay, cement, potatoes, coal, artificial manure and flowers, before finally succumbing to the impact of road transport in the mid-C20. The harbour is now mainly used by vessels serving the Isles of Scilly.

The wet dock at Penzance Harbour represents the final major addition to the complex. As early as 1839, plans for a wet dock were prepared (although in a different location at the northern end of the harbour), but it was not until 1873 that these were finally approved. In 1878 a design submitted by Robert Harkness Twigg, M. Inst C.E. (1839-1915) and Messrs. Beardmore and Barnes was accepted and parliamentary sanction for the work was obtained in 1879. In October of the same year the foundation stone was laid and a direct labour work force engaged by the Penzance Corporation. By 1882 the work was nearly completed, but following the collapse of a coffer dam, parts of the dock wall collapsed and the contract for the repairs and remainder of the work was awarded to Mr Lang of Liskeard at an additional cost of £17,000. With the completion of the wet dock in November 1884, Penzance was for the first time capable of providing secure and protected anchorage together with a safe environment for loading and unloading of ships. The dock gates were manufactured by Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Company of Blackwell and subsequently maintained by Holmans. In March 1891 the original gates were damaged in a storm and finally in 1982, the old hand capstan operated dock gates were replaced by a new "flapdown" system. The completion of the wet dock coincided with the shift from sail to steam and it ensured that the town and its hinterland continued to receive and export its heavier goods by sea. The success of the venture may be judged from the revenues which nearly doubled in the space of a few years from £3291 in 1882-3 to £6060 in 1888-9. Penzance became for a short time after the First World War until the 1930s a significant exporter of china clay. The large concrete warehouse on the north pier was built in 1935 for Ranks, later taken over by the fish market. Sometime after the 1970's the harbour office was added on top of the eastern end. The arrival of larger lorries on

the roads in the 1950s represented the end of most coastal trade, although occasional ships still brought in cargoes including a 298 ton transformer in 1996. The dock is currently used by the Isles of Scilly Steam Ship Group for the berthing of the Gry Maritha cargo vessel and the winter berthing of the Scillonian III passenger vessel. The Dock is also used for other commercial activities, leisure visitors and long term lay-up.

DESCRIPTION

Pier, built before 1512, with significant additions in 1740, 1745-46, 1764-68, 1785-87, 1811-12, 1817, 1853 and 1882-84 when the northern pier and dock gates were added. The South Pier walling survives in a variety of building styles, utilising stone (mainly granite, with some elvan, a form of local quartz-porphry). The multi-phase evolution of the pier has resulted in considerable differences in the character and form of the walling as well as preserving a series of pier heads, each of which was subsequently abandoned as the pier moved ever seaward. The evolution of the pier is clearly visible in the fabric of the seaward side. Early photographs indicate that further architectural details survive encased within the pier behind the existing wet dock wall. The earliest fabric is very likely to be medieval: it survives within the body of the pier and although not visible, is believed to consist of irregularly-shaped, massif granite rocks similar in character to the earliest parts of the Mousehole Pier. The oldest visible fabric includes a short length of bulwark walling at the south western end of the pier and survives as vertically laid square blocks of stone. The 1745-46 pier walling survives mainly as small vertically-placed stones topped by large roughly-shaped rocks, visible only on the seaward side. Occasional large irregular-shaped stones within this fabric may represent reused material from the medieval pier. The pier head is constructed of flat laid blocks. The 1764-68 length of the pier is similar in character to the earlier C18 work, but here the quality of the masonry is superior. The 1785-87 extension is relatively short, but the character and profile of the pier head is very clearly visible within the fabric of the wall, indicating that the seawall parapet terminated in an angle a short distance from the cambered edge of the pier itself. The 1811-12 work is also clearly expressed in the seaward fabric of the pier and includes a mixture of horizontal and vertical set stones. Most of the vertical work is confined to that part of the wall around the high water mark. Some isolated fragments of masonry probably belong to the remedial works carried out in the period between 1812 and 1840. Foremost amongst these are the repairs carried out after the Great Storm of 1817.

The largest single extension forms the easternmost arm of the pier and was added in 1853-1855. The pier is composed of regularly-shaped granite, ashlar blocks of granite with a loose rubble infill and paved surface now covered with concrete. At the end of the pier stands a small lighthouse including a circular lantern room, with weather vane above, resting on a square plinth supported by an iron column built up from cast iron rings. The plinth bears the inscription "PIER EXTENDED 1853 T.S. BOLITHO MAYOR".

A number of buildings stand on the pier. Foremost amongst these are the pair of dressed granite-built stores built against the inner face of the sea wall. Both buildings are flat-roofed with a distinctive arcaded front with triple openings. These buildings are known as the colonnade stores, and are Palladian in their architectural character. The northern store was built in 1768 and the central round arch has been in-filled with concrete blocks, whilst those on the sides have been partly blocked to accommodate smaller wooden doors. The southern store built in 1812 is essentially a replica of the first, but the central archway now contains a full sized wooden door with window above and the side arches have been partly blocked with brickwork to accommodate windows. Other buildings on the pier include a public convenience, built sometime before 1963, a small flat roofed granite building now used as a waiting room, built sometime after 1970 and a small locker.

The most recent element of the southern arm of the harbour relates to its widening and the addition of a gate pier, consisting of a bulbous reinforced projection to carry one side of the dock gates associated with the adjacent wet dock in 1882-4. This work increased the width of the northern part of the pier and resulted in the encapsulation of the eastern elements of the C18 pier walls. The result is that the visible fabric forming the eastern wall of the pier is of a mixture of late-C19 dressed, but irregularly sized, granite blocks and more precisely cut granite blocks laid to a camber.

Late C19 wet dock built within the southern part of Penzance harbour. The wet dock measures up to 125m long by 112m wide internally and is defined by a substantial granite built wall, with rubble infill, up to 16m wide. The entrance faces north east and across this are a pair of "flapdown" dock gates" which are opened only in the hours around high tide. A number of later buildings stand on the northern arm of the dock and amongst these are the large two storey, flat roofed concrete warehouse built by Ranks in 1935. This building has a cantilevered second storey extending over providing cover for part of the pier. The harbour office built upon the east end of this building is accessed by a spiral staircase and overlooks the dock entrance. A second large building standing at the landward end of this pier, extends over the outer edge and is supported by a metal girder resting on a series of pillars. The building is a single storey warehouse of weatherboard construction and corrugated asbestos roof.

ASSESSMENT:

CONTEXT

English Heritage has received an application to consider upgrading the listing of South Pier with dock office and lighthouse and dock pier to north west at Penzance (490124). The applicant is concerned that the true significance of the pier is not appreciated and that proposed developments to update the facilities at Penzance Harbour by The Route Partnership will result in damage to a structure with more than special interest. The proposed work has a long developmental and planning history, and there is considerable local opposition to elements of the project, as well as determination to improve the harbour facilities on the part of its promoters. Cornwall Council has recently granted consent for the scheme.

The architectural and historic special interest of the harbour at Penzance was recognised by its listing at Grade II in 2003. More recent research, undertaken in advance of redevelopment and supplemented by research undertaken by English Heritage, has allowed a fuller appreciation of the development of the harbour and its historic interest.

CONSULTATION

In response to the consultation on the Initial Report a total of 34 responses were received and are summarized as follows:

- * Fourteen asked for the South Pier to be upgraded and did not provide any additional historical or architectural evidence
- * Fourteen asked for the South Pier to be upgraded and referred to the Cahill Report to support this position
- * One supported the retention of the current grade and provided no additional historical or architectural evidence
- * One mistakenly believed that the South Pier had already been upgraded.
- * One presented the case that the crucial role of the harbour in the tin industry had not received due acknowledgment. This is addressed in the assessment.
- * One was concerned at the very brief mention of the Battery Rocks during World War II and provided information on the size of the guns deployed at that time
- * One stated that it was generally held to be true that the Pilgrim Fathers set off to colonize America from the South Pier. No evidence to support this position has been identified.

* One provided a copy of an Institute of Civil Engineers Report giving historical information regarding the construction of the wet dock. This information has been utilised to enhance the description of the wet dock.

SAVE Britain's Heritage has written in as well, supporting the upgrading. The local authority has not responded specifically to the consultation, but its consultants' report stressed the multi-phased nature of the structure and its need to evolve. Grading was not addressed.

ASSESSMENT

According to CLG Circular 01/2007, "Buildings on the list are graded to reflect their relative architectural and historic interest. Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest." Two separate special interest headings provide a clear indication of the criteria employed in assessing special interest. The architectural interest criteria emphasises the importance in architectural design, decoration or craftsmanship and notes that special interest may also apply to nationally significant examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms. The other criterion is historic interest.

The English Heritage Selection Guide for Maritime and Naval Buildings provides greater clarification about the special interest of harbours, stating that docks and harbour walls pre-dating 1840 generally form the most impressive engineering structures of their date, and even where they have received alteration, as nearly all have, they will normally merit designation, with those displaying technical innovation or association with major developments in shipbuilding, warranting a high grade. Examples would be key developments in modern dock construction such as those pioneered by Smeaton and Rennie, including the use of hydraulic cement, which sets underwater.

This assessment will first consider the context of Cornish harbours and then address the issue of the architectural and visual interest; construction interest; context; historic interest; comparative interest and group value of the South Pier. England has a rich maritime heritage and this is reflected in the substantial number of designated historic assets around its coast. The significance of the myriad of harbours, ports, piers and quays which formed a crucial role in this island nation's place on the European (and latterly on the world) stage is beyond doubt. Cornwall's position on the south-western tip of England combined with its long shore line has meant that its contribution has generally been maritime in character. Consequently a variety of significant harbour structures survive and considerable numbers belonging to different periods, size and complexity are designated. There are around 85 listed harbour structures in the county. These vary enormously in size, history, character, function and date, ranging from small isolated quays extending for a short distance into mud-filled estuaries to substantial complexes such as at Hayle; some have a single phase of building and use, whilst others remained in use for centuries and developed to accommodate changing needs; some were built to serve local needs, whilst others served a larger hinterland. Most harbours were built to serve a principal or single activity such as: fishing (St Ives); lime burning (Merthen); quarrying (Lamorna); tin and copper exporting (Portreath); china clay (Charleston) or even as at Tremayne Quay, which provides access to a single home. A few harbours developed into true commercial centres dealing with a wide diversity of goods and amongst these were Fowey, Truro, Falmouth, Hayle, Padstow and Penzance. Successful harbours inevitably expanded over time with the earlier elements either being replaced or incorporated into later structures. Alteration is thus to be expected in structures of this sort.

Architectural and Visual Interest:

Architecturally the South Pier is endowed with high visual interest. Although functional in purpose,

there is attention to detail in elements such as the colonnade stores, the paving, and the lighthouse. Its striking form, punctuated by the picturesque lighthouse at the end, dominates this part of the town. In addition its interest also lies in its early origin and the survival of its construction details in the fabric of the walls illustrating, as they do, the complex developmental history of the structure from the medieval period to the C20. The significance of the South Pier does not, therefore, rely solely on its early origins. The neoclassical lighthouse and Palladian design of the colonades, endows the structure with interest in terms of polite architecture.

Construction Interest:

Compared with the natural harbours such as Fowey and Falmouth, the harbour at Penzance was not a natural choice, given its exposed location and the difficulty in providing safe shelter - a situation that was not resolved until the building of the wet dock in the late C19. Indeed as an excellent example of human endeavour triumphing over adversity it is one of the very earliest where a harbour was built in a far from perfect position to fulfil other requirements rather than convenience. The construction and subsequent development of the harbour required considerable technological skill, adapting accepted construction techniques to the challenging conditions. In particular, the considerable work carried out during the C18 in very difficult circumstances represents a bold, large and complex maritime engineering project for the period. The C18 work within the South Pier at Penzance is an excellent example of an ambitious and innovative project which emphasises and illustrates the vital part being played by pioneering Cornish engineers who came to world renown at this time. The difficulty of this venture is emphasised by the fact that, despite failing to successfully complete the contract, Thomas Richardson of Plymouth was subsequently still held in very high regard and he went on to build the Grade II* listed Smeaton's Pier at St Ives. Thomas Richardson's involvement at Penzance is significant in that introduces a direct link with the leading C18 marine engineer John Smeaton. Indeed Richardson came to Penzance immediately after his leading role in the building of Eddystone lighthouse (which is Grade I listed despite being re-sited on Plymouth Hoe). The use of hydraulic cement was pioneered at the Eddystone lighthouse, and its use at Penzance represents its earliest application within harbour construction. The skills developed and lessons learnt during this pioneering phase were influential and were exported throughout the world. This ambitious and innovative role played by the South Pier at Penzance thus deserves to be recognised more fully.

Context of Cornish Trade and Industry:

Cornish mining played a significant part in the Industrial Revolution and the fortunes of Penzance harbour were intricately linked with those of the tin and copper industries. The importance of the industry itself is clearly recognised by its World Heritage status and the harbour at Penzance played a significant role in the exportation of minerals and importation of raw materials for the mines in the Penwith and Kerrier Stannary. As the industry shifted westward, the area surrounding Penzance became increasingly important and the presence of a coinage hall from 1663 meant that the town and its harbour played a pivotal role in the success of the tin industry. The increasing confidence of those involved is manifested in the ambitious, bold and sophisticated engineering response for the improved harbour facilities at C18 Penzance.

Historic Interest of Penzance Harbour

The constant growth of the pier during the C18 in particular emphasises the growing importance of the harbour, its town and hinterland and provides clear tangible evidence of a prosperous community, reflected in the impressive scale of the work and the sophisticated engineering that made this possible. To a certain extent its claims to more than special interest are derived from the scale and ambition of the project which was essentially many years ahead of its time. Indeed in a pre-industrial revolution world, commercial undertakings of this scale were rare and point to a very

special set of circumstances being responsible. The explanation hinges around the very significant technological developments being made in metal mining and engineering which for the first time allowed the rich mineral deposits in Penwith to be profitably exploited. The boldness of the venture is the more remarkable because the work was agreed and financed by a borough corporation, highlighting the foresight and determination of a society that would ultimately play a noteworthy part in the industrialisation of the world. In addition Penzance, unlike most Cornish harbours, had multifarious commercial roles and through the years the character of the port adapted to changing economic opportunities and circumstances some of which is reflected and in some senses enhances the character of the structure.

Finally, much of Penzance's special historical interest comes from its position as the first English harbour available to vessels heading up the busy channel from the Atlantic. This explains why a large number of significant events including the last "invasion" of England - the 1595 incursion by Spaniards - and the first smoking of tobacco on English soil have associations with the harbour. Indeed compared with the majority of highly graded harbours, the historical significance of Penzance is particularly high.

Comparative Interest:

Eight of the Cornish harbours are listed at Grade II*. Penzance's nearest neighbours Mousehole, Newlyn and St Michaels Mount have early origins which makes them of more than of special interest and this is reflected in their higher grading. All three have seen considerable alteration over the years and in particular the harbour at St Michaels Mount was largely rebuilt in 1824. Two harbours of later date at Boscastle (68721) and St Ives are also Grade II* listed as are the C17 Custom House Quay (460232) at the important port of Falmouth; the C18 fishing harbour at Mevagissey (395279) and the purpose built early C19 china clay port at Charleston. The South Pier at Penzance is amongst the best preserved of the early Cornish harbours and compares very favourably with all broadly contemporary examples which are also listed at a high grade.

Group Value:

When making a listing decision, the Secretary of State may take into account the extent to which a building or structure contributes to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings of which it forms part. The South Pier at Penzance benefits from group value on a number of different levels. The pier forms part of a group of three harbour structures including the Albert Pier, dry dock at Penzance Shipyard and the wet dock. Within the vicinity of the are a number of closely related buildings including the Abbey Warehouse, Custom House , Trinity House Depot, the National Lighthouse Centre and Old Lifeboat House. In Penzance itself there are 171 listed buildings most of which to a greater or lesser extent owe their very existence to the harbour. Finally, the harbour makes a contribution to the historic character of Mount's Bay which is dominated by St Michaels Mount. Group Value thus applies in a number of levels.

Overall, then, the pier includes at least eleven phases of development. Clearly some elements of the resulting complex structure are individually of greater significance than others, but the more than special interest claim is derived in part from the complexity of the structure, the clearly legible developmental history; and its exceptional historic interest. The public convenience, built sometime before 1963, and a small flat roofed granite building now used as a waiting room, built sometime after 1970 and a small locker are not of special interest.

What needs special consideration here is the significance of the later branch of the harbour: the North Arm. Presently listed, closer consideration reveals its questionable claims to special interest. The late C19 wet dock represents a relatively late development in the history of Penzance Harbour

and compared to the earlier ambitious schemes for the South Pier represents a more traditional and cautious approach. The impact of the work upon the commercial viability of the harbour is beyond doubt and indeed without it the harbour would have probably become redundant. The documented construction problems have left their mark on the fabric and the delays in agreeing the project meant that it was not carried out until 1879. Docks and harbour walls pre-dating 1840 even where they have received alterations will normally merit designation. Because of the greater survival of dock and port facilities from the mid-C19 onwards, greater selection should be exercised. The most significant aspect of the wet dock is its association with the South Pier. The wet dock also benefits from group value association with some other harbour structures. The dock is also relatively intact with only minor minimal alterations. However, the wet dock is of a late date for this type of structure, does not demonstrate any technological innovation and indeed is of an unimpressive, inferior standard design. It has no particular historical significance beyond its association with the South Pier and is a mixture of competent and barely competent workmanship. Buildings on the north arm of the wet dock include the 1935 warehouse with harbour office built upon the east end and these are not of special interest. Therefore despite its close association with the South Pier the north arm of the wet dock does not possess the special interest of the adjacent South Pier. We therefore recommend that the listing is revised to exclude this element.

CONCLUSION

The South Pier at Penzance represents an historic structure of more than special interest illustrating a complex well documented developmental history and commercial success. In particular, the medieval core and the C18 work are of outstanding interest representing as they do an example of an early pier and a large-scale, ambitious and bold project respectively. The public convenience, built sometime before 1963 and a small flat roofed granite building now used as a waiting room, built sometime after 1970 and a small locker are not of special interest. The pier fully meets the standard for listing at Grade II* and should be upgraded, but the North Arm should be omitted as it is not considered to be of special interest.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION:

The South Pier at Penzance Harbour is recommended for upgrading to Grade II* for the following principal reasons:

- * **Historic Interest:** an important element of England's most westerly port, this pier stands on an earlier medieval pier which survives within the later fabric. It served the highly significant Cornish tin industry (one which is recognised by World Heritage Site Designation), and was witness also to several significant events: the last unsuccessful 'invasion' of England, by Spaniards in 1595, and the first reference to tobacco-smoking in England.
- * **Construction Interest:** the pier shows the evolution of pier design, and embodies technical achievement in its structure. The several phases are clearly visible in the fabric of the pier. It amounts to one of the largest C18 maritime engineering projects in the region, and was a very early employment of building with hydraulic lime.
- * **Architectural Interest:** visually most impressive, the pier is carefully designed and the upper elements (in particular the colonnades and the lighthouse) display clear architectural interest.
- * **Group Value:** the pier has a close relationship with other designated structures in this renowned Cornish harbour, and is executed in complementary granite materials.

VISITS

29-SEP-2009 Partial Inspection

13-NOV-2009 Partial Inspection

Accompanied by Roger Bowdler, Deborah Porter and Rachel Williams

COUNTERSIGNING

Countersigning Comments: Agreed. As an evolved pier with medieval origins, and an especially accomplished feat of engineering in a difficult environment, the South Pier is clearly of more than special interest. Its rich history adds to its interest, as does the strong group value it shares with a range of maritime building in the harbour. The South Pier should, therefore, be upgraded. 2 March 2010

Second Countersigning Comments:

HP Director Comments:

Proposed List Entry

PENZANCE

06-MAR-2003

South Pier

(Formerly Listed as:

South Pier with Dock Office and Lighthouse
and Dock Pier to North West)

GV

II*

Case UID: 169092

Proposed LBS UID:

Pier, built before 1512, with significant additions between 1740-87 and 1812-84 when the northern pier and dock gates were added.

Materials: The South Pier walling survives in a variety of building styles, utilising stone (mainly granite, with some elvan) from a number of sources. The interior infill includes rough granite slabs and mine waste as well as incorporating walling from earlier building phases.

Description:

The South Pier includes a variety of different finishes in many cases different periods and types of work. It is built on three different alignments, reflecting the position and character of the underlying reef. The multi-phase evolution of the pier has resulted in considerable differences in the character and form of the walling as well as preserving a whole series of pier heads, each of which was subsequently abandoned as the pier moved ever seaward. The evolution of the pier is clearly visible in the fabric of the seaward side. Early photographs indicate that further architectural details survive encased within the pier behind the existing wet dock wall. The earliest fabric is very likely to be medieval: it survives within the body of the pier and is therefore not visible, but is believed to consist of irregular shaped, massif granite rocks similar in character to the earliest parts of the Mousehole Pier. The oldest visible fabric includes a short length of bulwark walling at the south western end of the pier and survives as vertically laid square blocks of stone. The 1745-46 pier walling survives mainly as small vertical placed stones topped by large roughly shaped rocks, visible only on the seaward side. Occasional large irregular shaped stones within this fabric may represent reused material from the medieval pier. The pier head is constructed of flat laid blocks. The 1764-68 length of the pier is similar in character to the earlier C18 work, but the quality of the masonry is superior. The 1785-87 extension is relatively short, but the character and profile of the pier head is very clearly visible within the fabric of the wall, indicating that the seawall parapet terminated in an angle a short distance from the cambered edge of the pier itself. The 1811-12 work is also clearly expressed in the seaward fabric of the pier and includes a mixture of horizontal and vertical set stones. Most of the vertical work is confined to that part of the wall around the high water mark. Some isolated fragments of masonry probably belong to the remedial works carried out in the period between 1812 and 1840. Foremost amongst these are the repairs carried out after the Great Storm of 1817. The largest single extension forms the easternmost arm of the pier and was added in 1853-1855. The pier is composed of regularly shaped granite, ashlar blocks with a loose rubble infill and paved surface now covered with concrete. At the end of the pier stands a small lighthouse including a circular lantern room, with weather vane above, resting on a square plinth supported by an iron column built up from cast iron rings. This structure bears the inscription "PIER EXTENDED 1853 T.S. BOLITHO MAYOR".

A number of buildings stand on the pier. Foremost amongst these are a pair of dressed granite built stores built against the inner face of the sea wall. Both buildings are flat roofed and include a distinctive triple round arched front. These buildings are known as the colonnade stores. The northern store was built in 1768 and the central round arch has been in-filled with concrete blocks, whilst those on the sides have been partly blocked to accommodate smaller wooden doors. The southern store built in 1812 is essentially a replica of the first, but the central archway now contains a full sized wooden door with window above and the side arches have been partly blocked with brickwork to accommodate windows. Other buildings on the pier include a public convenience, built sometime before 1963, a small flat roofed granite building now used as a waiting room, built sometime after 1970 and a small locker.

The most recent element of the pier structure relate to its widening and the addition of a gate pier consisting of a bulbous reinforced projection to carry one side of the dock gates associated with the adjacent wet dock in 1882-4. This work increased the width of the northern part of the pier and resulted in the encapsulation of the eastern elements of the C18 pier walls. The result is that the visible fabric

forming the eastern wall of the pier is of a mixture of late-C19 dressed, but irregular sized granite blocks and precisely cut and engineered granite laid to a camber.

The formerly listed north arm of the C19 wet dock represents a relatively late development in the history of Penzance Harbour and compared to the earlier ambitious schemes for the South Pier represents a more traditional and cautious approach. The most significant aspect of the wet dock is its association with the South Pier. The impact of the wet dock upon the commercial viability of the harbour is beyond doubt and indeed without it the harbour would have probably become redundant. A number of associated later buildings stand on the northern arm of the dock, including a large two story warehouse of 1935. However, the wet dock is of a late date for this type of structure, does not demonstrate any technological innovation and indeed is of an unimpressive, inferior standard design. This element is not included because it is not of specialist interest.

HISTORY

The date at which a pier was first built at Penzance is not known with certainty. Documentary evidence clearly indicates that by the early-C14 Penzance was already supporting a small fishing fleet, but the date at which a pier was built to protect these vessels is not recorded. Furthermore, it is difficult to envisage that the known early C15 expansion of the town, relying as it did on access to the sea was not accompanied by the construction of a pier. There was certainly a pier in existence before 1512, for in that year Henry VIII issued a charter which refers to the "kaye and bulwarks" as already existing. The form of the earliest pier is known from an illustration of around 1540, which indicates that it occupied the site of the existing south pier and extended in a straight line from the shore. The pier at this time may have been up to 85m long and probably survives within the fabric of the existing pier. In 1745-6, following years of remedial repairs, the existing pier was repaired, rebuilt and extended by Penzance Corporation with much of the work being supervised by Tobias Vibert. Considerable contemporary documentation including details of workers and sources of stone and lime relating to this work survives. The earliest significant extension to the length and alignment of the pier was carried out in 1764-68 to provide deeper water and increased landing facilities for the increasingly busy and prosperous port. The contract for the work was awarded to Thomas Richardson of Plymouth, who agreed to build a 170 foot long by 40 foot wide battered wall for £2,900. This contract was never fulfilled and instead a 113 foot length together with a colonnade store was completed by a directly employed labour force in 1768. A contract to complete the work unfinished by Richardson was awarded to local masons in 1785 and despite some dispute concerning its quality, it appears to have been completed. A second colonnade store (since removed) was added at this time. The final section of the new alignment started in 1764 was completed in 1811-12 by Edward Hambleton at a cost of about £6,500. A third colonnade was added at this time. In the period between 1812 and 1840 a number of relatively small scale, but significant, works were completed including the provision of: mooring posts; bollards; capstans; a light; protective timber baulking; new paving; a crane; new access road; protective wall and quay. Additional remedial works were also carried out, especially as a result of the considerable damage caused by a severe storm on 20 January 1817. The final extension to the South Pier was built between 1853 and 1855 on a third alignment. This length of pier was built using the same ashlar bond facing techniques employed successfully at the nearby listed Albert Pier [490125] completed in 1845. A small lighthouse built at the seaward end of the pier bears the inscription "PIER EXTENDED 1853 T.S. BOLITHO MAYOR". The new length of pier was widened in 1871. Between 1882 and 1884 the western part of the southern pier was incorporated into a wet dock, created by adding a new pier to the north, widening the existing South Pier and inserting gates between. After 1884 the South Pier changed very little and work seems to have included mainly repairs and renewals.

Up until the mid-C17 the nearby harbours at Marazion and Mousehole (69237) were more important than Penzance, but from 1663 when the town was granted stannary town status and local tin production significantly increased, the port became busier, more prosperous and dwarfed the importance of its

neighbours. Indeed the wealth of the whole town and its hinterland depended on the success of the port and this is reflected in the constant upgrading of the facilities. The fortunes of the harbour were inevitably closely linked to those of the metal mining industry and the revenues would have been used to pay for the documented extensions and upgrades. The port would have been busiest in the periods proceeding the coinage fairs, but throughout the year coastal shipping and ocean going vessels seeking shelter would have made frequent use of the facilities. The second major export from the pier was hogsheads of pilchards many of which were sent to Mediterranean countries.

As well as the standing fabric a considerable body of surviving documentation provides a real insight into the life, characters and work of the people and ships that operated from Penzance. On the national stage the South Pier at Penzance is reputed to be the site of at least three notable events. The first is the claim to be the first place in England that tobacco was smoked (by Walter Raleigh), the second as the site of the last invasion of England (by the Spanish) in 1595 and the third where news of Nelson's victory and death at Trafalgar was first received. The pier was also the site of a number of dramatic shipping events including the great storm of 20th January 1817 which resulted in considerable damage to a number of vessels and the exploding of the gunpowder carrying "Jane" in 1830. When the metal mining industry declined in the latter years of the C19, the harbour continued operating as an important commercial port handling a variety of products including: china clay; cement, potatoes; coal; artificial manure and flowers before finally succumbing to the impact of road transport in the mid C20. The harbour is now mainly used by vessels serving the Isles of Scilly.

Sources:

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Pool, PAS, The history of the town and borough of Penzance (1974)

The Cahill Partnership with Eric Berry, Penzance Harbour, South Pier Historic Building Analysis (2009)

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REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

The South Pier at Penzance Harbour, built in several stages by Penzance Corporation is designated at Grade II* for the following principal reasons:

* **Historic Interest:** an important element of England's most westerly port, this pier stands on an earlier medieval pier which survives within the later fabric. It served the highly significant Cornish tin industry (one which is recognised by World Heritage Site Designation), and was witness also to several significant events: the last unsuccessful 'invasion' of England, by Spaniards in 1595, and the first reference to tobacco-smoking in England.

* **Construction Interest:** the pier shows the evolution of pier design, and embodies technical achievement in its structure. The several phases are clearly visible in the fabric of the pier. It amounts to one of the largest C18 maritime engineering projects in the region, and was a very early employment of building with hydraulic lime.

* **Architectural Interest:** visually most impressive, the pier is carefully designed and the upper elements (in particular the colonnades and the lighthouse) display clear architectural interest.

* **Group Value:** the pier has a close relationship with other designated structures in this renowned Cornish harbour, and is executed in complementary granite materials.