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Dublin Core

Title

The Hobbs Point Mail Packet

Subject

Pembroke Dock

Hobbs Point

Mail Packet

Creator

David James

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

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Relation

<https://perma.cc/MM8Q-R5FU>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Coverage

51.699778343128266, -4.9422888874048185

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

The first scheduled steam packet service between West Wales and Ireland can be traced to back the year 1824. It was in that year that the Post Office replaced its sailing packets on the Milford Haven to Waterford run with steamships.

Story

The first scheduled steam packet service between West Wales and Ireland can be traced to back the year 1824. It was in that year that the Post Office replaced its sailing packets on the Milford Haven to Waterford run with steamships. The vulnerability of sailing ships to wind and tide had meant an unreliable and irregular service, and with the advent and subsequent development of steam propulsion during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the possibilities of establishing swift and reliable scheduled services became a reality. The site may have been named after Nicholas Hobbs who had died on 4 May 1728, former owner of the land and a gentleman of some standing.

However the lack of facilities within the Haven soon led to a search for a suitable terminus. The obvious solution was a pier, suitably sited. However, the Navy, mindful of the need for an obstruction free approach to its Pembroke Dockyard, insisted on the shortest possible projection. The engineers had difficulty in finding a site where deep water was close enough and other considerations of sheltered land approach could be reconciled. A Government Select Committee thought the remedy was a pier out of the way above the Navy Yard at Pembroke Dock and in spite of oppositions from Milford, their views won the day.

Work began on a pier at Hobbs Point, Pembroke Dock, in 1829, the foundation stone being laid in 1830 by Captain E J Savage, Royal Engineers. Contractor Hugh Mackintosh, Bloomsbury Square, London, work was completed in 1832 at a cost of £20,250/ 19½ (nineteen shillings and a halfpenny). Cornish stone was imported for the job and the early stages were constructed using a diving bell.

The Government object was to further the packet service to Southern Ireland, however the public made many representations for use of the pier, many of which were conditionally granted. Annually, for one day, a rope was stretched across the approach road to prevent public access and thereby preserving the Government rights to the land.

The London Mail Coach Road (now shortened to London Road) and the Pier Hotel near Hobbs Point were built by Mr Henderson, Contractor of Bangeston Hall, Pembroke Dock.

The Pier Hotel was built on the corner of what is now Tremeyrick Street and London Road. Sadly in 1941 during the Second World War a twenty first birthday party was in full swing in the hotel when it suffered a direct hit during an air raid which totally destroyed not only the hotel but all nearby buildings as well, including the Criterion Hotel opposite. Among the dead were all the revellers, and as no one knew how many, or who many of them were, the ground was consecrated as a War Grave. All that remains as a sad reminder is a grassy patch on the crossroads. The mails were brought to Hobbs Point to meet the Royal Mail coaches which ran daily, starting at 5am from Hobbs Point

Soon after, the pier became the home terminal of the service. At about the same time the Irish terminal was moved from the Dunmore moorings to Waterford itself. Yet a further change

was made in April 1837 when the Post Office relinquished the running of the packets to the Admiralty. However, this mail service was not destined to last long. It ceased in 1848 and all Irish Mails were thenceforth shipped through Holyhead to Kingstown. The City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, after several years of endeavour, having secured the contract of carriage.

Post office packets were neither mercantile nor Navy, are somewhat elusive vessels, although Lloyds Register listed them in a special section until 1848, and they were listed in returns of 1822 and 1831. Those, which the Admiralty took over in 1837, were renamed, and also re-measured under new rules. Generally there were four on the Milford Station (Pembroke Dock), three in service and one relieving, in regular rotation so that the crews, fifteen per ship, could have a rest, and the machinery could be receive adequate maintenance.

Factoid

Related Resources

Elizabeth G. Stuart Peters, *The History of Pembroke Dock* (London: Elliot Stock, 1905)

Bruce Sinclair, 'When warships left Hobbs Point for fleets all over the world', *Western Telegraph*, 27 June, 2020, archived at <https://perma.cc/8TSX-3BQJ>

Official Website