

# The Great Steam Crane

by Roderick Stewart

**Many of the more dramatic changes to Dundee during the post-war period took place around the docks. Dundee's sea-port was established around an extensive system of docks and the post-war period saw great activity. Ships arrived with jute for the mills, the Caledon was still building ships, the 'Fifies' were a main transport link, the RNVR was active onboard HMS Unicorn and even the Festival of Britain came to Dundee by sea - in the form of the converted aircraft carrier 'Campania'.**

...but the incoming Tay Road Bridge was to take priority. Despite proposals for the bridge to link directly into the Kingsway ring road, it was decided it should strike right into the heart of the City: this meant wholesale change at the landfall.

Earl Grey Dock, King William IV Dock and the Tidal Harbour were all ruthlessly filled in to be replaced by a concrete swirl of approach roads for the new bridge. Dock edge copstones were simply toppled into the basins, giving some romantics the illusory hope of a future re-instatement - which did indeed very nearly come to pass during the present waterfront redevelopment when HMS Unicorn was offered a location next to RRS Discovery. Sadly this opportunity to bring Dundee's two great historic ships back together has passed.

The gloriously Victorian confection of Dundee West Station was demolished and the line of the platforms which, in the early 1960s, had seen Dundee's last steam engines simmering as they waited to haul passenger trains to the west, is now marked by a multi-carriageway sector of the inner ring road.

HMS Unicorn herself was displaced from Earl Grey Dock, her home of 90 years, and made a dramatic 'escape' to sea when Admiralty advice was that she could not be moved and should be broken up.

One dramatic dockside landmark did survive, however, almost to the end of the period covered: the Steam Crane.

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