

17 Holyhead and district: Short Introduction



The present-day importance of the town of Holyhead derives from its long history as a packet (or mail) port for Ireland. Had this not been so, the main A5 trunk road from England, heading straight as a die across Anglesey, would have been terminated instead at Bangor or Llangefni, and the main line railway long since closed down as an uneconomic and wayward country branch line, if indeed it had been built at all. In 1800, Holyhead was fourth only

in size of the island's towns, after Amlwch, Menai Bridge and Beaumaris.....

.....Starting in the year 1810, a proper quay was constructed by John Rennie, which enabled the boats to be received at most states of the tide. The clue to Holyhead's subsequent rapid eclipse of the River Dee ports lies in the far shorter sea crossing provided by the former. The 720 ft high landmark of Holyhead mountain was a useful aid for navigation into the harbour: its lighthouse, South Stack, had been commissioned in February 1809.....

.....The present car ferry terminal at Salt Island (253829) uses the former Admiralty Pier of 1821the Doric Memorial Arch, constructed by Thomas Harrison in 1824, commemorates the visit of King George IV three years previously when his sailing was detained for five days by bad weather; strangely, it carries its inscriptions in Latin and Welsh only.....on the east side of the harbour the dry dock was built in 1825 for the maintenance of the Royal Mail Packet steamers.....the Italianate style stone building housed a steam engine for operating water pumps used to empty the dock..... "Skinners Memorial" (1832), overlooking this side of the harbour, commemorates the contribution of a greatly respected mail-boat captain towards contemporary improvements to the facilities for shipping at Holyhead.....

.....The third of a mile extension to the present passenger terminus and harbour beyond was laid out by 1851, but the surviving structures were erected as a third and final station during the 1870's and 1880's.....there is a splendidly decorated clock tower on the concourse facing the dock.....the area adjacent to the station bridge contains on the east side a distinctive Italianate-style pumping house which supplied water for station and engine purposes, and the remains of the large Black Bridge foundry next to the "Boston" public house.....

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.....on the other side of the dock are the extensive workshops of the L&NWR marine department, laid out circa 1870-1880. The solid stone buildings with massive chimney stack form a good example of a compact Victorian engineering works, this one albeit lavishly capitalized by a large and wealthy company.....

.....Holyhead Breakwater, a solid stone arm jutting 1½ miles out into the bay, was constructed over a period of twenty-five years from 1848 to 1873, to enlarge and further protect the usable harbour area..... its railway was first used to convey stone from the quarry on Holyhead Mountain for the construction of the jetty..... the quarry was subsequently developed as a silica brickworks..... a short length of broad gauge track survives set in the floor of old engine shed.....the lighthouse still contains the original brass clockwork machinery installed to drive the lamp rotation mechanism in 1873.....

...The mile-long Stanley embankment was constructed in 1822 by Telford to carry his Holyhead Road (A5) to its final destination, and the railway line also accompanied it across to Holy Island several years later. The contemporary tollhouse at the west end has been dismantled and re-erected as part of road alterations, on a new site nearby.....



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