

[Note: This document consists of 10 sheets stitched together. Sheets 1 to 9 form the body of the document and sheet 10 acts as an outside cover. Sheets 1 to 8 are written on both sides and sheet 9 is written on one side only. The document was originally double folded.]

[On outside of document on the front portion when folded]

Copy

Precognition
Of
George Anderson
Commision Agent &c
South Bonar

1876

[at bottom]

Maclachlan & Rodger
W J

[Inside]

[First page]

George Anderson, Commission Agent and Ship owner, South Bonar.

I have been in this part of the country about 40 years. I was brought here when a boy 6 years of age. Since that time I have lived where I now live on the Ross-shire side of ^ in what is called Bonar^ Bonar Bridge. I have the farm of Kincardine under Sir Charles. When a boy I ran about the place amusing myself and was very often with the salmon fishers. I have often been upon the island where the fishermen fish from. I have seen cows on it and sometimes horses. Ever since I recollect there has been a gullet or channel between the island and the mainland but it has grown very much in size. It is three times

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times now the width I have seen it. The water ran through and through it at spring tides and at some neap tides but not in all. At the full of some neap tides I have seen the ridge at the upper end of the gullet dry and I could walk across it dry. At the top of some neap tides however there would be some water on the ridge. At low water of all tides the gullet would be dry except that there would be a standing pool here and there. At the top of the gullet the natural beach separated the gullet from the river and was considerably higher than low water in the river or than the bottom of the gullet. That ridge was quite firm. The people going to and from the island

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island and the cattle all went that way but at low water they could go at almost any part of the gullet except at the pools. I do not remember that there was any large stones on the top of this ridge. The ridge was made of ordinary shingle of the river and stiff clay. It confined the water of the river in its natural channel until the tide rose so high that it ran over.

When I first recollect the fishermen shot their nets when fishing the Bonar shot at much the same place as the present and they drew them in at much the same place as they do now, but there was no winch then. The fishermen, often 3 or 4 men hauling a line over their shoulders to which

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which the net was attached, pulled the rope straight across the island and across the gullet till they had got the end of the net on to the beach of the island. They could easily do so when the tide was out.

In addition to the Bonar shot the fishers sometimes took what was called the little shot. They cast their nets in taking this shot from the point where they had drawn them in when taking the Bonar shot and they hauled them in on the beach below the south point of the island. I do not recollect that this was a dirty place. I did not pay much attention to this but the hauling rope might be sometimes muddy. They fished this

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this little shot only occasionally and took only a few casts of the net each time.

The fishermen shot their nets at the third place near the beacon halfway to the quarry down the channel but the current was too strong for them there and they gave it up as a shot. They just took a few casts of the net at this too. It was called the Black Scaup shot. They now fish it at a point further down opposite to the quarry which they call sometimes the quarry and sometimes the Black Scaup shot

From the lower end of the island there was a quite firm beach to walk on which went as far as the water which broke into the

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the “carry” and ran in the direction of Kincardine point. That interrupted it and it was the only interruption in my young days. When I first knew the place there was an embankment or kind of earth embankment on the margin of the ploughed land to keep flood water off the arable land, and that exists there still. There was no facing of stones or other protection to prevent the grassy banks between the arable land and the river from being undermined and tumbling into the current. The banks both on the main land and on the island were washed away and undermined by the water and by the ice in winter and they tumbled into the gullet and were swept away leaving the earth as

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as a kind of mud.

The channel I have spoken of ran in the direction of Kincardine Church direct out from the main river, a little to the East of the present great rush of water in the beach which floods of 1874-5 made.

When I recollect first the weir or carry of Kincardine was in ruins and there were just stakes left here and there to shew where it had been.

I do not recollect of the first embankment on the Skibo side being made, but I know it. It was a low embankment just a road to enable the fishers to get with dry feet on to the Black Island so that they might draw their nets a little

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little earlier than they otherwise would have done and it enabled them to haul the towing rope easier. The remains of it are to be seen to this day – a stone here and there like stepping stones. I recollect that in these old days there was a channel of the river between the Black (scaup)[*stroked out*] Island and the Skibo side and water running at low tide between these stepping stones. When I recollect it first it would not take us up to the knees in depth. There was no addition made to Macpherson’s

embankment until Mr Dempster of Skibo made the new embankment a good many years ago. I cannot tell when. Mr Dempster's embankment was made higher than Macperson's and

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and the shore end of it came nearer Bonar Bridge and it is further out. Macpherson's had a bend in it which was hard upon the men drawing the tow rope and the new one was made straight. It goes more into the deep water than Macperson's did, and so must have had a greater effect upon the current. In my apprehension it has changed the current and sent it more onto the Balnagown side. Ever since it was made the water has had a tendency to break out from the Balnagown side into the Bay of Kincardine or Bay of Ardgay and it has been constantly doing so. I recollect that there was a break out into Ardgay Bay from the main channel just about

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about the lower end of the island sometime before Mr Lipscomb made his embankment which was in the year 1862. It was that break out that was the cause of that embankment being made. In the course of making the embankment there was one or two further breaks out at the lower end of it and that made it necessary to extend the embankment. Then in the year 1864 there was another break out at the lower end of the embankment which caused a further extension of it. Mr Lipscomb's embankment closed the channels which had thus been formed time after time. I was often down seeing it. In my opinion it was made flush with what had been the top of the natural beach there,

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there – neither higher nor lower. It was flush with it at the island end and flush with it at the scaup end. The island was higher than the embankment but it sloped down to the beach and where the slope and the beach met the embankment commenced. They pitched the island end of the embankment and part of the island itself for some way with stones to prevent the water getting between the island and the embankment and they did so at the (upper)[*stroked out*] other end where it met the scaup. At that time they did not protect the channel at the upper end of the island. If it had been protected then the protection would have been more effectual than Pavrie and Pitcaithly's embankment can make it now. I cannot tell the length of Mr Lipscomb's embankment

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embankment nor can I be quite sure whether or not it went as far down as the end of the embankment which Pavrie and Pitcaithly made. They made an addition of some kind to it.

In the winter of 1874 – 5 the flood water and ice broke through Pavrie and Pitcaithly's embankment carrying a part of the embankment before it and made a deep and rapid stream which has gone on increasing since and is still on the increase. This is a very powerful, deep and dangerous channel. It is sawing into the soft banks every day and emptying the main channel of the river, and it will be very prejudicial to navigation if it is not stopped. From the nature of Kincardine Bay it is impossible that this stream can make

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make a good new and navigable channel in substitution for the old one as the water after breaking through the beach spreads in shallow streams everywhere over the Bay, and if the emptying of the main channel goes on it will soon become too shallow for navigation. I look upon this as very dangerous indeed and I intend to memorialise the Board of Trade on the subject if the channel is not otherwise stopped or effectual remedial measures taken.

I am Tacksman of the quay at Bonar Bridge. The first quay a small one was made there about 40 years ago by Andrew Ross the then tenant of the Balnagown Arms and also of the farm of Lower

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Lower Gladfield [*sic*] which belonged then either to Mr Mathieson of Ardross or to the Duke and which belongs now to Mr Mathieson. Ross built the pier at his own cost and it was just to serve the neighbourhood. Part of it fell into the River and it was replaced by a larger and more substantial quay built in 1855 or 1856 by Mr Mathieson of Ardross the then and the present proprietor of Gladfield [*sic*]. It is on the foreshore of Gladfield [*sic*]. I became Tacksman of it when it was rebuilt and have been ever since. I levy dues of a penny a ton on all vessels discharging at the quay. The ship pays a penny per ton register and the person getting merchandise pays shore

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shore dues also. Ships taking in cargo again have to pay according to the registered tonnage but the shipper pays shore dues in addition. A ship both discharging and loading only pays tonnage dues once. There is no Act of Parliament for enforcing dues. That quay is private property and the dues are voluntary. I have seen 5 and sometimes 6 vessels at the quay at one time. I have seen a dozen ships up in a month. The biggest ship that came up to Bonar Bridge was the Arvaon of Carnarvon of 112 or 120 tons register.

Sometimes, since the gullet got so wide and before Pavrie & Pitcaithly closed the upper end of it, the current of water running up it was so

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so powerful as to be dangerous to the ships lying at the wharf. Ships have been some times torn from their moorings and swung broadside on against the Bridge. Part of one of the pillars has been broken in consequence. I have seen two vessels swing against the Bridge at one time. The Margaret and Ann of Eyemouth was one. I think that the effect of the embankments which have been put up by Mess^{rs} Lipscomb and Pavrie & Pitcaithly has been to protect the property of Sir Charles Ross as well as the fishings, and that the effect of them has been to improve the navigation of the river by preventing the water from spreading and confining it to the main and navigable channel. I am aware from

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from my own knowledge and from what has been told me by the pilot at the station and by ship masters that the effect of Pavrie & Pitcaithlys embankments has been to prevent the escape of water from the navigable channel, and if the lower embankment is removed and the island left unprotected it will be so wasted away, and the result will be seriously detrimental to the navigation of the river.