

Forth Bridges Visitor Centre Trust's Commemoration of Sir William Arrol at Queensferry Lodge Hotel on 3.9.2000 – Book launch; Arrol portrait acceptance and donation to ICE Scotland Museum in 2012

In association **with TICCIH** [International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage], **RCAHMS** [Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland], **Clarke Chapman Ltd** [acquirer of Sir Wm Arrol Ltd, 1969], the **Forth Road Bridge Authority** and **Network Rail**.

Opening address by Professor Roland Paxton, Chairman of the Forth Bridges Visitor Centre Trust, coimprising:

Acceptance of a gift from Clarke Chapman Ltd of a Victorian oil portrait of Sir William Arrol formerly in the firm's Glasgow boardroom {donated in 2012 to the Institution of Civil Engineers Scotland Museum at Heriot-Watt University. Details under 'collections' at: <https://ice-museum-scotland.hw.ac.uk/>

A joint launch by Kathleen Dalyell [Chair: RCAHMS and myself as Chair of the Commission's Architectural Programme Committee] of a catalogue of *The Sir William Arrol Collection* of images of the firm's international work

Acceptance of a presentation from the Japan delegation of TICCIH and making presentations to them and other Visitor Centre supporters

Professor Paxton's Address

FBVCT/TICCIH Reception - Queensferry Lodge Hotel, 3.ix.2000

On behalf of the Forth Bridges Visitor Centre Trust I welcome you all - I intend to keep my remarks as brief as possible but I have three main things to do which I hope will enhance your enjoyment of this evening to launch a new book by the RCAHMS about Sir William Arrol's international work - to accept a gift of an original portrait of him to the Trust from Clark Chapman Ltd and to make several presentations.

Just in case there is anyone here who has not seen yesterday's Herald Magazine coverage which waxes more or less eloquently about our event today and Sir William Arrol. He lived from 1839-1913 and was an eminent civil engineering contractor and bridge builder. He is best-known for building The Forth Bridge our much-loved symbol of Scotland and 8th wonder of the world. It is not widely known that Arrol's connection with the bridge site was much earlier than that of the designers of the present bridge Sir John Fowler and Sir Benjamin Baker. In the 1870s Arrol and his team were hard at work building a suspension rail bridge at this site to the design of Thomas Bouch, part of the Inchgarvie pier of which still survives. Arguably it is this bridge that we should have been looking at today if Bouch's Tay Bridge had not collapsed in a gale in December 1879 resulting in the death of 75 rail passengers. This story and much else about our two great bridges is told in the Visitor Centre below which I hope you will all visit during the

evening. After the Tay Bridge disaster Bouch's suspension bridge design was abandoned in favour of the present and more substantial balanced cantilever bridge, a magnificent achievement, Arrol's successful accomplishment of which established his firm internationally.

It now gives me great pleasure to launch another magnificent achievement - RCAHMS's illustrated guide-book to a unique collection of outstanding photographs showing the international work of the firm of Sir William Arrol. The publication is based on the firm's own collection of photographs, now conserved, curated and made available to the public in the National Monuments Record of Scotland at the Royal Commission, John Sinclair House, Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh. The high quality reproductions in this guide provide the reader, at a glance and for the first time, with an indelible impression of the firm's outstanding achievement abroad from the 1880s to the 1980s. With its companion volume of Scottish material, these publications constitute an index to one of the most significant archives of Scotland's industrial history which will be an invaluable aid to researchers.

Conserving and curating the material, amounting to some 10,000 items, and producing these fine guides reflects tremendous credit on all concerned at the Royal Commission. Ladies and gentlemen I am delighted that we have the new Chairman of the Commission Mrs Kathleen Dalyell with us this evening. With my Commissioner's hat on for a moment I should like to thank them and mention three people without whose efforts we should not be here celebrating this new publication tonight. They are, Bill Cox, formerly of Sir Wm Arrol - NEI Thompson, my co-author of the best-selling and long out-of-print book '100 years of the Forth Bridge', whose generosity, assistance and advice led to the formation of the collection and, Miriam McDonald and Dr Miles Oglethorpe for their superb and most professional compilation. Please show your appreciation in the usual manner.

We now come to the presentation to the Forth Bridges Visitor Centre Trust of the fine portrait of Sir William Arrol which for many years adorned the firm's offices. I have great pleasure in calling on the Managing Director of Clark Chapman Ltd., Mrs Jill Hill, to do the honours..... Just so that Clark Chapman may have a little reminder of Sir William Arrol, it gives me great pleasure, as a token of the Trust's appreciation of their generous gift of this portrait, to present Jill with an encapsulated rivet made by his workmen. Regarding a visit to the exhibition this evening, my co-trustees, who are wearing blue name labels will be delighted to show you round on request. I suggest at or just after coffee. The Trustees have worked particularly hard in the past year and I should like to take this opportunity of thanking them for their efforts. We managed to obtain from the Scottish Office and, with the invaluable assistance of Alastair Andrew of the Forth Road Bridge Joint Board, to mount in-situ, the superb model of the Forth made to demonstrate a second road crossing of the river - we are not allowed to display the bridge but if you look carefully you can see its location! The other items are, a new leaflet written by myself and Trust Secretary Bruce Grewar to promote the bridges of which you have copies, and obtaining on loan from the Railway Museum at York a spare pin for connecting one of the suspended spans of the Forth Bridge to the end of a cantilever. This is no ordinary pin, like everything else to do with the bridge it is on a large scale weighing nearly a ton and getting it into the exhibition gave Bruce one or two anxious moments! I hope that our Japanese visitors will notice our Akasi Bridge display.

I should like at this point to take this opportunity of thanking all our sponsors and supporters, many of whose representatives are here tonight and without whose generosity the Trust could

not exist. The Forth Road Bridge Joint Board, Railtrack, the Institution of Civil Engineers, Fife Enterprise, The Kingdom of Fife Tourist Board, and the Hotel, come immediately to mind. If I have forgotten anyone - please forgive me. I hope that you will all continue to support us as we endeavour to develop our facility.

Now a word to our international guests. The Trust and the Royal Commission is honoured to be associated with TICCIH today - What could be a more appropriate occasion for launching a book on the international work of Sir William Arrol than to do in this forum and within sight of his best known work. We thank TICCIH and its organisers John Crompton, Miles Oglethorpe, Mark Watson and their helpers for their much appreciated help with the arrangements. In acknowledgement of this, it gives me particular pleasure to present your Conference President Eusebi Casanalles with a copy of '100 Years of the Forth Bridge' now a collector's item signed by both Bill Cox and myself as a memento of the occasion. Undoubtedly the highlight of the day for you will have been the visit to the top of the Forth Bridge. For this we all are greatly indebted to Railtrack and Duncan Sooman, Ian Heigh and Mike O'Brien. I understand that Duncan is arranging for you to receive a certificate commemorating this rare and remarkable event. In appreciating the significance of this it gives me great pleasure to make each of them a personal gift of something rare and of considerable interest. It is a compilation by myself for the Royal Society of Edinburgh of a signed numbered very limited facsimile edition of the rail ticket to Queensferry for the opening of the bridge on 4 March 1890 and the luncheon menu containing portraits of its three great engineers.

Finally, I should like to make a personal presentation of a bottle of Malt Whisky to Bruce Grewar as a token of the extraordinary amount of work he has done for the Trust, particularly in the last year and for making this event a success. Thank you.

R.A.P.



Presentation of Arrol portrait to Visitor Centre by Mrs Jill Hill Managing Director, Clarke Chapman Ltd



Presentation to the Visitor Centre by the Japan TICCIH Delegation



Kathleen Dalyell and Roland Paxton launching the Sir William Arrol Collection Catalogue [in front of Sir William Arrol portrait]



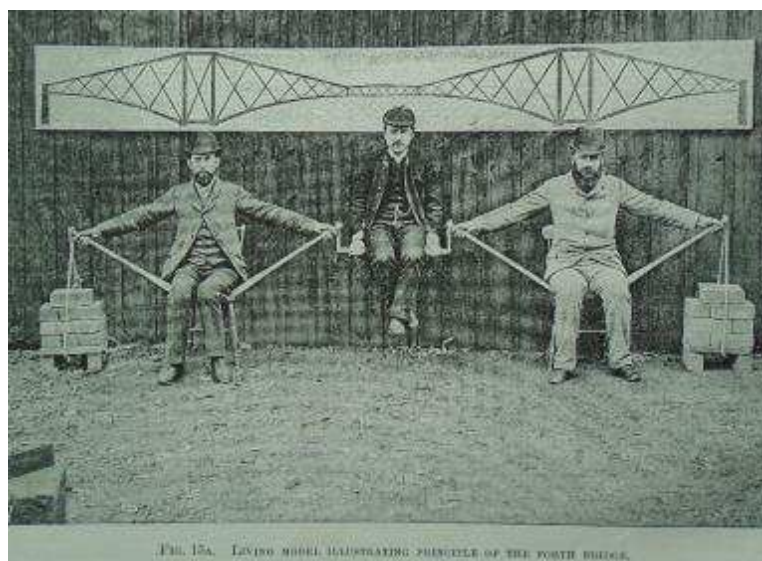
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Postscript to the last meeting of the Forth Bridges Visitor Centre Trust held at Orocco Pier Restaurant, Queensferry, on 29th March 2012 after 26 years of valuable service.

Trustees from left: Malcolm Fraser, Dr Scott Arthur, Bruce Grewar (former Forth Road Bridge-master and Secretary of the Trust); Prof Paul Jowitt PPICE; Allan Smith (former managing director Rosyth Royal Dockyard Ltd); Prof Roland Paxton (chairman); Gordon Masterton PPICE; Bob Gardiner (Network Rail); and Alastair Andrew (Forth Road Bridge-master}.

This photograph featured in an article by Dr Henry Petroski in the *American Scientist* at the time, and next year will be published by Yale University Press in a chapter on anthropomorphic models in his new book *In Touch with the Universe* [actually finalised as *Force* and published in 2022]

The front-row trustees are sat on the Visitor Centre's notional and less than perfect model donated at this time to the Restaurant where it would continue to be publicly available. It is based on the anthropomorphic model devised and mounted by Benjamin Baker in the Bridge Works Yard demonstrating the bridge's structural principle as published by Westhofen in 1890.



Roland Paxton. Heriot Watt University - Institute for Infrastructure and Environment
21 May 2021