

HELENSBURGH PIER

Built in 1816 and in use for over 150 years by Clyde paddle steamers

Rosneath Point

Cowal Hills

Creachan Mor

Rosneath

Firth of Clyde

Rhu Narrows and
entrance to Gare Loch

Esplanade



Helensburgh Old Pier 1848



Helensburgh Swimming Pool 1947



Coaches at Pier



PS Waverley leaving Helensburgh

For Tourist Information
call:
Balloch iCentre:
01369 753533



Scottish Government
Riaghaidas na h-Alba
gov.scot

MAP KEY

Clyde Sea Lochs
Trail & Points

Stones Ladder Way

John Muir Way

The Coastal Way

Places of Interest

For more great views
and background
information, visit the
other Clyde Sea Lochs
Trail information points
at locations shown.

Images courtesy of
Helensburgh Heritage Trust
www.helensburgh-heritage.co.uk



SCALE: 1:25,000

2 Miles / 3.2 Km



The Pier

In 1816, just four years after Helensburgh innkeeper and provost, Henry Bell, had introduced Europe's first commercial steamship, the 'Comet', a rough stone quay was built here; at the time the press described it as a frail 'ruckle of stanes'.

In 1842, one of the worst shipping accidents on the Clyde occurred when the paddle steamer 'Telegraph' exploded just after leaving the pier, killing at least 18 people outright.

Prior to the arrival of the railway in 1858, Helensburgh Pier was in such poor condition that it was claimed that some passengers preferred to leave the steamers at Rhu and then walk back to Helensburgh! But that all changed, particularly after 1866, when the North British Railway started steamer services from Helensburgh. However, to make life easier for their passengers they proposed to extend the railway through the town centre onto the pier – a proposal which divided opinion in the town. When it was rejected by Parliament, they moved their steamer headquarters to Craigendoran, to the east of the town, opening there in 1882.

Helensburgh Pier continued in service until 1952 when it was closed because of silting. Dredging in 1979 allowed visits from the 'Waverley', the world's last sea-going paddle steamer, but by 2018 the wooden structure had deteriorated so severely that it was closed to all maritime traffic. Nonetheless, a stroll down the pier is still very popular with both visitors and town residents, perhaps with an ice cream in hand.

The Infilled Land

To alleviate town centre parking, a large section of the foreshore to the east of the pier was infilled in the 1970s. However, in storms the car park there could be underwater, even with some cars floating away! Every summer until 2017 a funfair occupied part of the site, which also hosted the annual Guy Fawkes fireworks.

The Swimming Pools

Helensburgh Amateur Swimming Club was founded in 1891 and for 38 years the waters off the pier were used for club activities. In 1929 future provost, Andrew Buchanan, gifted an outdoor swimming pool to the town – supposedly heated! Galas were particularly popular. An annual swim from Helensburgh Pier to Craigendoran Pier continued until the 1970s. In 1976, an indoor swimming pool and leisure centre was built alongside the outdoor pool. They functioned together for just one year, but then the outdoor pool was closed and eventually demolished. For many years, a skateboard park occupied the site. In 2020, construction started on a new leisure centre much closer to the sea, with the height of the surrounding infilled land considerably raised.