

TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 159 dolphins and fenders



Ferries bouncing off dolphins rather than hitting and damaging the quay walls.

Those of you who have crossed the river Clyde on a Navigation Trust ferry will no doubt have experienced being bumped against a “Dolphin” The Dolphin was the name of a wooden structure used to guide the ferry into the steps, without damaging quay walls. Dolphins are also used to prevent collisions with bridge piers. If a ship went off course and was on a collision line with a bridge pier, it would hit the wooden (or other material) dolphin first and be fendered off away from the pier. Bridges on the Clyde in our harbour area, have dolphins to protect them. Its like the fenders beside protruding ladders to stop ships damaging them. Recent occurrences in other parts of the world show that not all port authorities insist on dolphin protection.

If you ever wondered what these wooden structures or piles around bridges were, now you know. Dolphins are well documented at the following. https://www.ngm2016.com/uploads/2/1/7/9/21790806/086-163a-ngm_2016_-_design_of_protective_dolphins_in_difficult_geotechnical_conditions_1_krivokapic_sj%C3%B6stedt.pdf

I had to rescue a man who having fallen off a bridge, climbed onto the dolphin, and had to wait there until I took him off by boat. Lucky man, falling in, being swept downriver with the tide, and bumping into a wooden structure which he could climb on to.

Many of the dolphins at ferries, had spaces behind them, Heavy wooden piles formed the dolphin in a kind of u shape out from the quay wall, and the river flowed behind, and through the dolhin. This meant that sometimes an item requiring recovery, was trapped behind the dolphin. We climbed over beams, crawled through gaps, waited for tides to rise or fall to make a retrieval.



Pier protection Bells Bridge. Millenium Bridge. Wooden protection fenders at dock mouth.



Old ferry steps showing dolphins.



Broken dolphins showing gaps.



Wooden dolphins.



Fenders protecting quay wall. Fenders protecting ladder.



Fenders/Dolphins, on our newest bridge.



New bridge between Renfrew and Yoker, doesn't require dolphins.

It is amazing the amount of thought that goes into bridge building and the protecting of quay walls. Clever designers and engineers try to think of any eventuality, and deserve much credit. I don't know half of it, I am always learning. Look around and ask questions. I am pleased to have had input into the design of the railings on our two new bridges, and the lifebelt provision and numbering.

Safety is the name of the game. Stay safe out there.