

The Grand Marine Promenade and Seawall

In 1881 the Bray Town Commissioners applied to Parliament for permission to construct a seawall for the protection of the Esplanade. With permission the Bray Town Commissioners could raise the capital to construct the seawall. Prior to 1881 the esplanade was protected by wooden pilings and groins. The cost of maintenance in 1880 was greater than £500, maintenance was required annually.

The town commissioners called on Mr Storey to design a scheme to protect the Esplanade. The original idea was to have a seawall and parapet with a gravelled footpath on the inside of the parapet.

The Grand Marine Promenade and Seawall would be one thousand and forty three yards (953 meters) from the harbour to the boathouse. The boundary of the Bray Harbour and Pier Company (this company was established by an act of Parliament in 1863 with the idea to construct a harbour in front of the Bray Head Hotel at the southern end of Bray seafront, the company could not raise sufficient capital and the project was scrapped).



From the seating to the edge of the seawall was nineteen feet (5.7 meters). It was decided to raise the level of the Esplanade by two foot three inches and allow for seating with cast iron seating running the length of the promenade a total of one thousand yards. Eleven sets stone steps and four invalid ramps gave access to the raised promenade and a further six sets of steps gave access to the beach. On the promenade the steps and ramps were lit by gas lights. The face of the Seawall was eighteen foot; the bottom of the wall was twelve inches (0.3 meters) under the low water line of neap tides. The works included shifting sand and shingle on the beach. On 4th July 1885 Joseph Kinsella was killed when the chains of a bucket snapped and the bucket containing over a ton of shingle fell on him.

The Seawall was seven foot six inches (2.2 meters) at the bottom of the wall and tapered to four foot six inches (1.3 meters) at the top the top of the wall was dressed in Wicklow granite. The construction of the wall was top quality Portland cement with mass mixture of 6 to 1 laid into carefully prepared strong wooden casings.

Concrete and stones were lowered into a trench in Iron Boxes with hinged bottoms by steam cranes. Stoneware drains pipes nine inches in diameter were built into the Seawall took surface water from the Esplanade. The Seawall was built in section of four hundred yards.

The promenade was also made of Portland Cement with the mixture of 3 to 1 and then covered in asphalt. The total length of the Seawall is one thousand and forty three yards.

The edge of the Seawall was decorated with Iron railings. Hollow standards of 3/8 inch metal with moulded caps, the standards fixed in concrete with seven inch Lewis bolts. Two smaller or dwarf standards in each bay and three lines of horizontal railings passing through the standards. The top railing is three foot six inches above the top of the Seawall.





The first section of four hundred and forty one yards cost £15-8s-6d per yard, the second section of six hundred and two yards cost £20-4s-0d per yard. The total cost including railings and seating was £20,000

The work was completed in August 1886 and the same contractor built both sections. Equipment used included, three steam cranes capable of lifting three tons, one concrete mixer driven by steam, one steam pump, the trenches were excavated using hand tools. The main contractor was Robert McAlpine of 208 West George Street, Glasgow. The granite coping stones were supplied by Tinakilly Quarry near Aughrim Co. Wicklow. The Clerk of works was Mr J. E. Whitty.

On the 14th December 1886 the Seawall got its first test in a south east gale with only a small amount of damage. Its second test came on 1st November 1887 the asphalt floor of the promenade cracked in five places.

The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland opened the first section in September 1885.

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