

TAKE ME TO THE BRIDGE!

£2

50 years across the Tay



The Bridge is a symbol as well as a route, linking Fife and Dundee into Scotland as a whole. It embodies modernity as simple lines, ease of communication, and directness. It is also a place where rivalries and jokes about the two ends can coalesce- nowhere more keenly than in the 2002 Tay FM competition to find a slogan for the bridge. It was decided to abandon the competition after it became clear that the runaway leading entry was, "It's all downhill to Dundee."

It is an iconic structure in the self-image of Scotland as a modern country. Once again, a cycle of demolition and re-creation is building new prospects around the bridge.

This publication commemorates and celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Tay Road Bridge, opened on 18th August 1966. I hope you enjoy it.

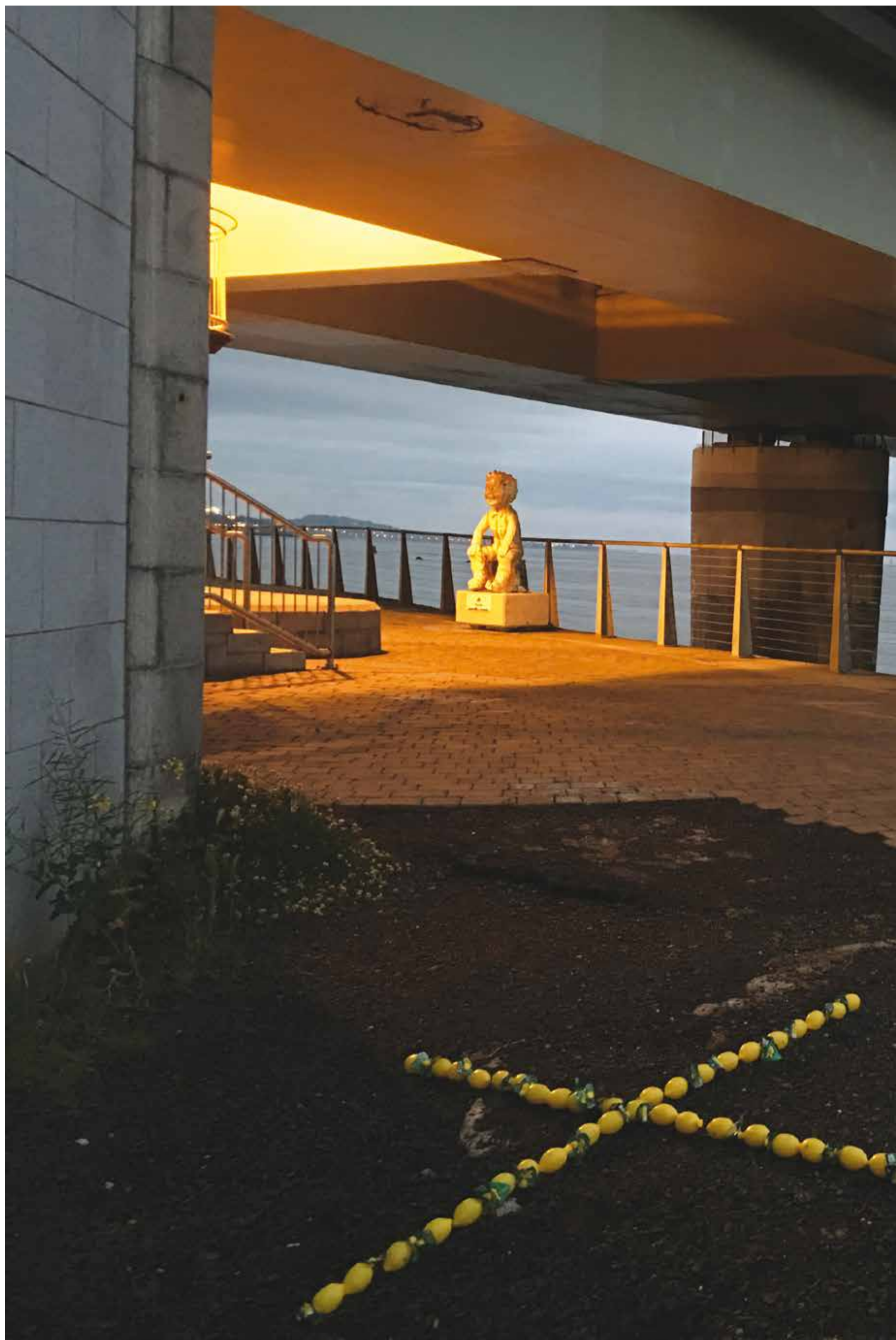
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B R I D G E

a drive between
the wild
and the
civilized





I WALKED ON THE BRIDGE, THERE WAS A BLUE SKY, A MAN WITH TOO MANY CLOTHES ON, IN FRONT OF ME, STOPPED. HE MOTIONED ME TO PASS. HE'D BEEN GLANCING BACK AS HE WALKED.

I PASSED, FURTHER ON A WOMAN WITH SAFETY GEAR, YELLOW, FLUORESCENT, WALKED SWIFTLY PAST ME

I GLANCED AROUND, THE MAN WITH TOO MANY CLOTHES ON HAD CLIMBED OVER A BARRIER, WALKED ACROSS 2 LANES AND WAS LEANING OVER THE EDGE OF THE BRIDGE. I STOPPED, THEN STARTED WALKING AGAIN. I THOUGHT, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO. I GLANCED BACK AGAIN, HE WAS STILL THERE. I WALKED ON, AHEAD, A COUPLE OF VEHICLES HAD STOPPED AND THE PEOPLE HAD LEFT THE CARS AND WERE LEANING OR STANDING NEAR THE EDGE AND LOOKING BACK AND DOWN. I GLANCED BACK, HE WAS GONE

HE HAD JUMPED. I EXCHANGED SOME WORDS WITH 2 WOMEN WEARING SHADES STANDING OUTSIDE THEIR CAR. THE BRIDGE PATROL VEHICLE CAME AND MOVED THEM ON. A POLICE VAN CAME AND FORCED ANOTHER VEHICLE TO START TRAVELLING AGAIN. I WALKED ON INTO A BEAUTIFUL DAY.

I SAW A MAN PULL SHEETS OF COTTON ALONG A FIELD TO WARM UP THE SOIL.
I SAW A HIND AND HER YOUNG.
I SAW TREES, GREY AND YELLOW, 2 DOGS CHASED ME, MY FEET STARTED TO ACHE.
I SAW A BARN FULL OF HAY, WHERE I COULD SLEEP IF I NEEDED TO.
I SAW YOUNG CABBAGE PLANTS IN THEIR THOUSANDS.
I SAW A BRIGHT REFLECTIVE GLOBE ON A STICK, SPIN IN THE WIND.
I SAW SPRAY PAINTED FARM EQUIPMENT.

I DRANK FROM A STREAM AND PICKED SOME WILD GARLIC. MY GREY STUBBLE WAS REFLECTED IN THE WINDOWS OF A COTTAGE. I REACHED THE FIRTH. I RESTED AND ATE HALF AN ORANGE, I'D PREVIOUSLY EATEN THE OTHER HALF. I TOLD AN ELDERLY COUPLE LOOKING AFTER THEIR GRANDCHILDREN OF THE MAN AND THE BRIDGE. THE LADY SAID AT ONE POINT "IT DOESN'T COST ANYTHING TO BE HAPPY."

I WALKED ON AND SAT IN THE SUN.

I WALKED ON AND ENTERED A VILLAGE.

I SAW A MAN WITH HIS 2 YOUNG DAUGHTERS, TELLING THEM OFF. A YOUNG WOMAN LEFT A HOUSE, SOME LADS WERE PLAYING FOOTBALL, OUTSIDE A SCHOOL 3 LONG HAIRIED TEENAGERS WERE SLOWLY TRAVELLING.

I CAME BACK TO THE BRIDGE.
A WOMAN ON A BIKE SMILED AT ME.
WALKERS , RUNNERS, PASSED ME.



In the Stars with the Tay Bridge
Star Sign – Leo
Date of Birth: 18th August

Shares birthday with: Patrick Swayze, Robert Redford, Roman Polanski
Lucky Numbers: 1, 4, 10, 13, 18, 28
Lucky fragrances: Sandalwood and Bergamot
Solar hero: The Knight
Best love match: Aquarius

Traits: You live in the fast lane. Prone to back pain.
Strengths: Strong and reliable. You like to help others get out of a rut. Adventurous and energetic when it comes to sex.
Weaknesses: Lazy and inflexible, you can spend your time dreaming your life away rather than living it.

Your Year Ahead

If you've been dating, the full moon could mark a serious moment in your relationship. Saturn may test your attachment or keep you apart. You may be deciding on matters of importance involving plans to have a baby.

If you want to rent a cottage, October would be the month to do it.

You will be highly sensitive to criticism during most of November.

Remember, pride goes before a fall.

If you have been auditioning for a film part, you will get an answer on December 17th.

Do not take unnecessary risks. Keep a watch on finances. Above all, keep your feet on the ground.

Allow yourself to be more laid back and something which could be to your advantage will surface. Maybe a lottery win.

Overall, you couldn't ask for a better year.



The Swimmer's Bridge

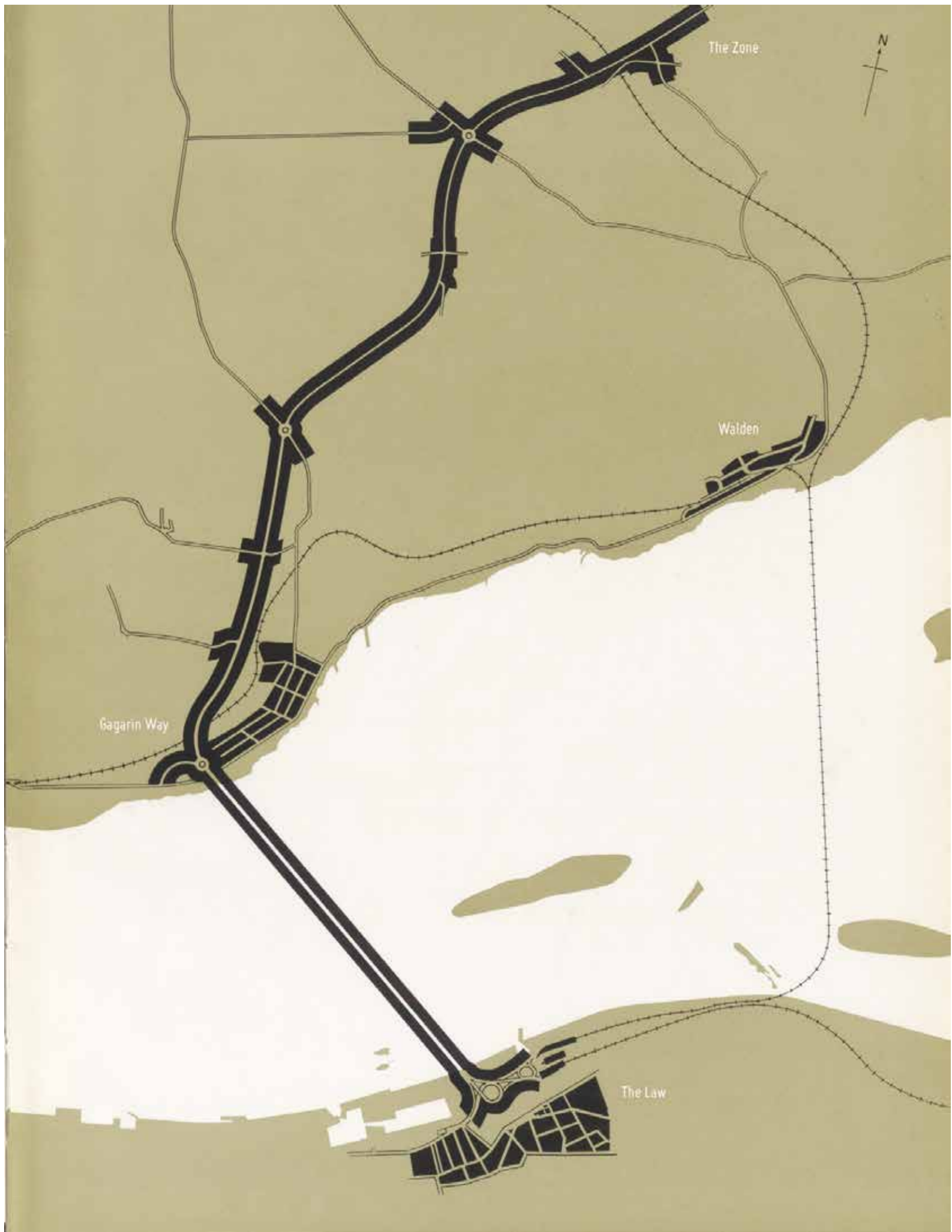
feints from the Ferry, soon slashes
between breaths, as you salt
in the flood tide up to the city.
Through a ruptured horizon it rungs
ever larger, draws a side-on
ladder between lands.
Squint from your stroke
by the corrugating fish dock,
growing surer past studdings of ragwort, past
silk sneaky willow herb lips. Now certain
beyond crashpiles of cars. A raised elbow
from here, a quay's balconies mesh
washings and hopes towards Fife, then
all water drops
cold into shadows. Stop;
check this vast frame on upstream – note
that putative museum's new jut, before
Tesco pagodas in portal pretensions. Peer
through to a somewhere
where low tide remembers
in serried slippy black posts. Admit
that next bridge's stand, sense
how it sits among sandbanks,
tadpoled with baskings of seals.
But in this current's urge,
there is only one window. Now –
swim.

Far under the tire of commuters' exhaust,
below air, angel-winged in despair, you move
where a bulwarked space darks
where waters rush hard. Fin
between made forearms, hairy weed bright
on concrete intent, raised still
from this fathomless churn. Trace up to slims
of sculpted support, note the impossible
aloft. Below this chill lintel, pierce thought
one fat gull, or bats...or flickers of fear
worry in scuttles of invisible midnight rats, now
swim.

Under a cathedral-high roof, you sweep
through a green-black grace,
which allows you neither halt nor return –
impossibly swift and profound.

Beth McDonough





A Knight on the Bridge

It would be difficult to imagine an engineering feat of this scale not having a degree of intrigue tightly wound within its construction. For the Tay Road Bridge, it was the renowned Lochee character Stewart Francis who cast the “new bridge” into controversy. Francis lived in a tin shack on the original Tay Road Bridge for almost twelve years, where he was recognised as the man who fixed broken-down vehicles; supplied feed and water for the passing horses and shovelled up the dung to sell to the allotment holders in Dundee. During the summer he would make a living renting out deckchairs and windbreaks on Broughty Ferry beach, and in the winter months, be amongst the Sidlaw hills trapping rabbits. These pre-myxomatosis years in Scotland offering enough rabbit fur to ship to the Baltic with the coal heading from Fife.

As a young child, my grandfather took me to Francis’ tin home on the bridge several times “to buy paraffin”. They would chat and drink away for what seemed like hours in the rabbit fur-lined room, with seemingly never a mention of paraffin or anything getting carried home, apart from occasionally my grand father.

Stewart Francis was never out of the papers at this point as he held up the construction process by nine months, refusing to move out of his house to make way for the completion of the bridge.

Rumour has it that the only way he would leave was if the Queen Mother made a special visit to his shack, where he insisted that she (not Queen Elizabeth as planned) open the new bridge. The deal also included that he would be re-housed in Dundee and offered a job on the bridge as the nature warden. A position, which he of course invented. There were mixed reactions regarding this news, as although he had a large following supporting his protest, there were obviously a lot of people outraged that the bridge was not yet open.

The Queen Mother did open the bridge and Stewart Francis became as much of a feature on the new bridge as he had on the original. Although horses were not allowed to cross, he somehow managed to find enough wildlife to keep himself in full time employment. His trapping skills were put into practice instantly with his concerns about the minks from Dundee crossing the bridge into Newport and Wormit. Minks were rarely seen in Fife in the 1960s, with only a couple of sightings in Tayport and around Methil.

Another of his inventions was the Adder case, “The Adder Subtractor” as he called it, which he insisted was based on scientific research. If an adder was found on the bridge crossing south to Fife, it had to be returned to its natural habitat in Angus. The snake couldn’t be put in a vehicle, as according to Francis, the speed of travelling combined with the amount of steel in the fabrication of the bridge confused the reptile’s magnetic instincts. The snake had to be carried back at a slow “snakes pace”. The good Catholics of Lochee found this hilarious and reminded us that Saint Patrick was able to drive the snakes from Ireland, but Stewart Francis had to walk them from Fife!

I believe it was this popularity with locals on both sides of the Tay, where families would cross the bridge for a chance meeting with him, which ended his life.

For less than six months into his new position, Stewart Francis mysteriously disappeared. There was never much press or police interest in his vanishing. His house was repossessed within a month and of course the position of the bridge nature-warden removed. My grandfather was adamant that it was his messing with royalty, which ended him.

In particular, the Queen Mother, who at this time had a reputation and interest in the dark arts.

He was also aware of the bridge architect William Fairhursts’ design for the walkway, which was based on the stealth of the knights’ move in chess. My grandfather saw this as a cryptic warning to Francis, foreseeing his fate with the Queen Mothers’ legion. He always said -look under one of those obelisks; you’ll find him there. Or under both!

The Dundee folk band – Copper Beech, who played several gigs on the original bridge in support of Francis’ protest, released their first single the following year. *Trappin’ the Minks* and *A Knight on the Bridge* were recorded live at the legendary Silver Tassie folk sessions in Lochee, with both songs referencing Stewart Francis’ disappearance. The band featured the enigmatic bridge walkway pattern on the record cover, with the A side encapsulating his departure. None of the records went into circulation as it was rumoured that one person bought all 500 singles on their release. Interestingly, one was donated anonymously this year to the Tay Road Bridge Museum for their 50th anniversary collection.

Trappin’ the Minks

*Upsetting the family and ancients of mischief
Stewart Francis had the wrong mother under his tin roof*

*With the men from Balmoral one night at his door
He’ll be out trappin’ the minks on the bridge no more*

*He’d be trappin’ the minks fae crossin the Tay
He’d be trappin’ the minks if alive till this day
Trappin’ the minks frae crossin’ tae Fife
It’s trappin’ the minks that cost him his life*

*With the men from Balmoral one night at his door
He’ll be out trappin’ the minks on the bridge no more*

*Upsetting the family and ancients of mischief
Stewart Francis had the wrong mother under his tin roof*

Lyrics reproduced with kind permission from Copper Beech / Beat Dodds record label

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAzbnpR7JTY>

Stewart Francis' hut:
Eight months in to the delay of the construction of the new bridge

From the 1966 Tay Road Bridge celebratory publication.



Stewart Francis' Adder Subtractor

Tay Road Bridge Museum archive

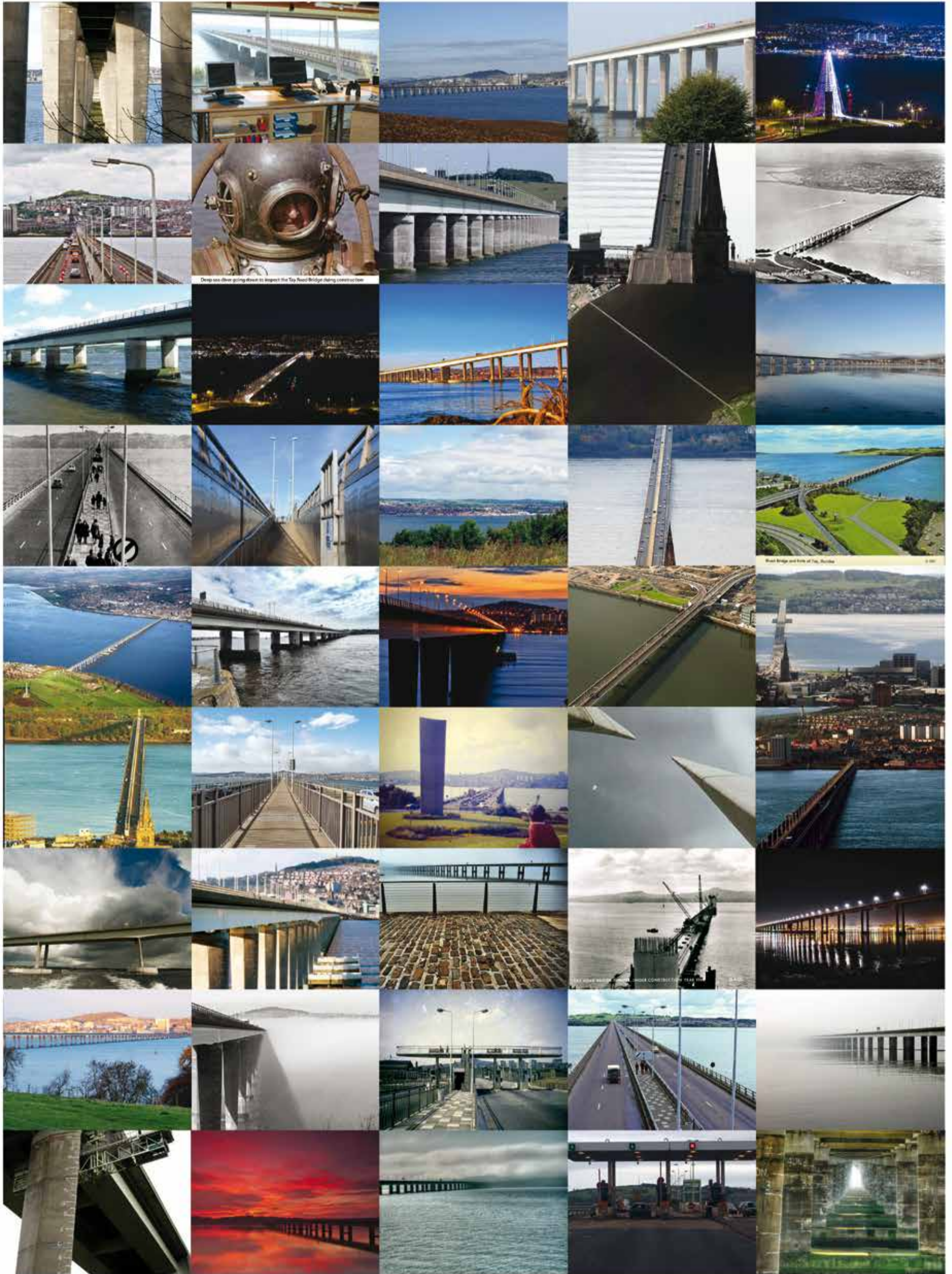
The Copper Beech single
Trappin' the Minks / A Knight on the Bridge
Released in 1967 on the Beat Dodds record label

Tay Road Bridge Museum archive



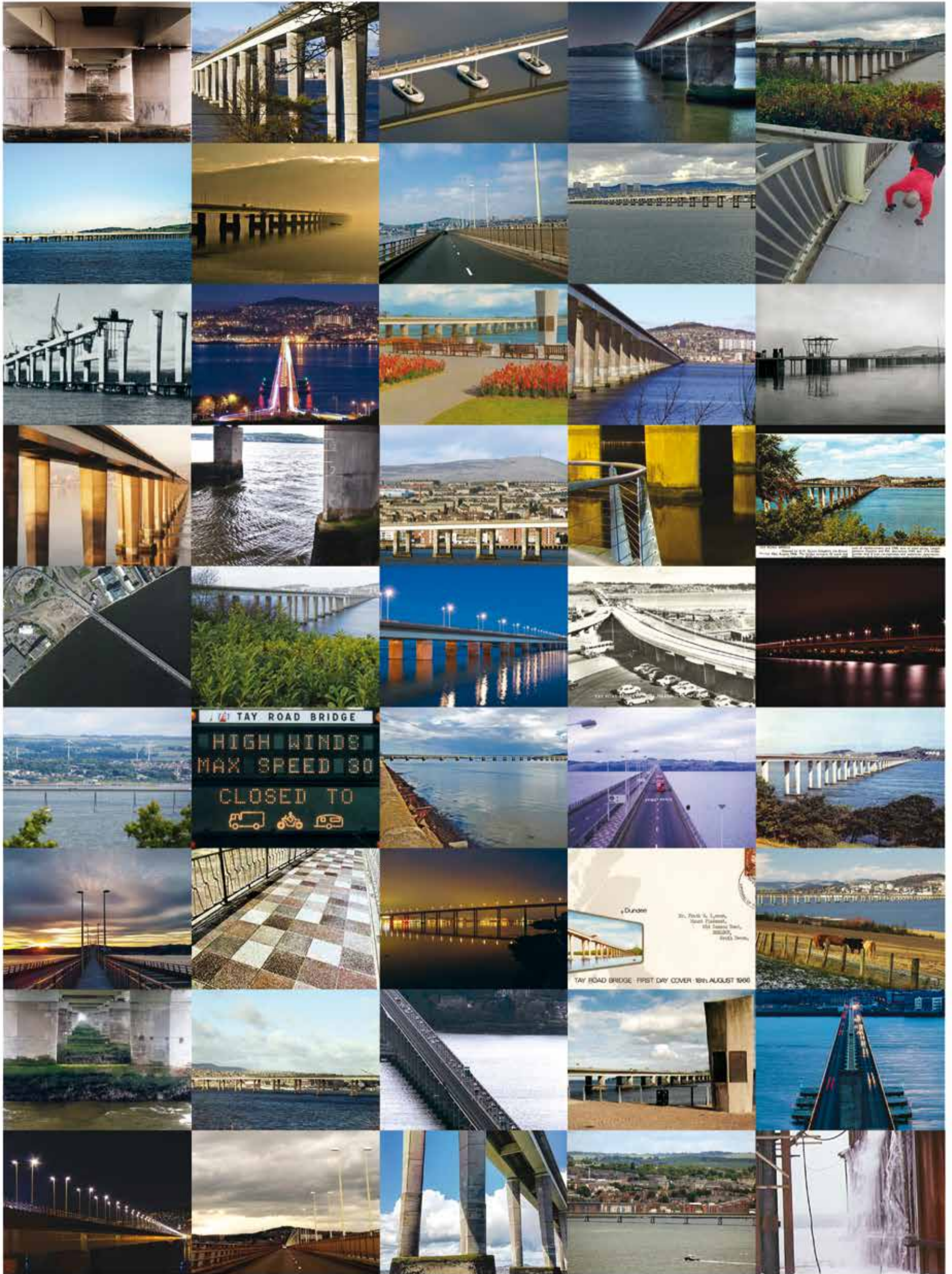






Deep sea diver going down to inspect the Tysoe Road Bridge during construction

View of bridge and hills of Tysoe, Scotland







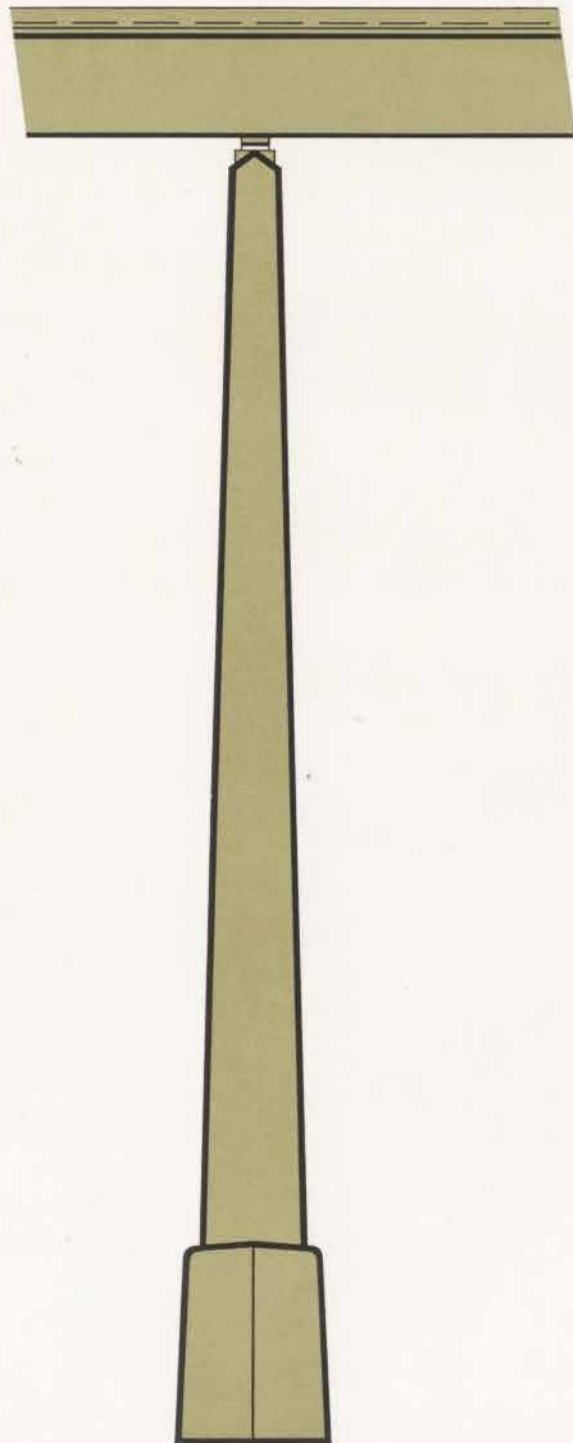
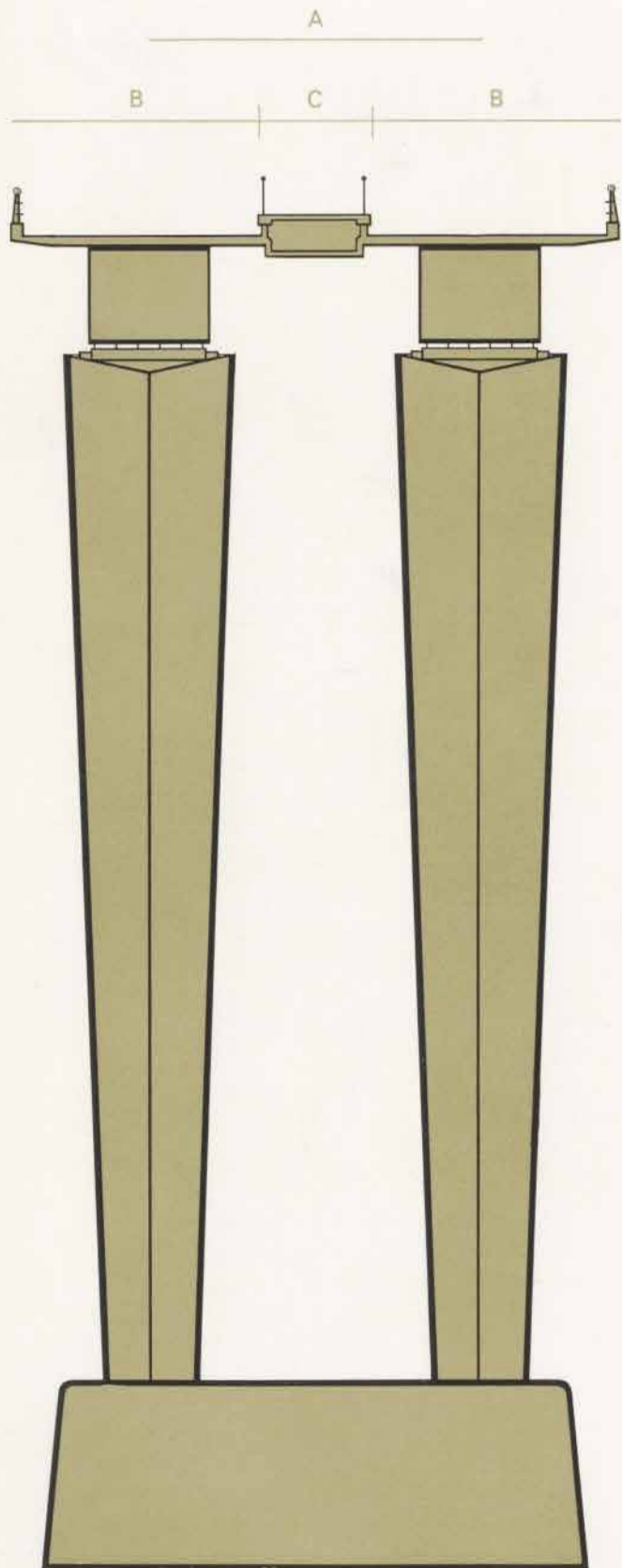




A: The distance from centreline to centreline of each pair of piers is 32 feet.

B: Each carriageway is 24 feet 9 inches wide.

C: The walkway in the centre of the bridge is 9 feet 1 inch wide. The service duct under the walkway shows clearly in this elevation.



BUILDING

Acknowledgements and Thanks

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William A. Fairhurst, Bridge Designer and International Chess Master. Artist: Paul Saville 1965.
Courtesy of Fairhurst Consulting Engineers Ltd.

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OUT OF CHAOS 1966-2016

The Tay Bridge celebrated by artists and writers

