The development of Oban as a tourist resort 1770-1901

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Abstract

This thesis has contributed to the existing knowledge of the development of tourism in Scotland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It has examined both the positive and negative influence which tourists had on the residents and on the overall development of the village of Oban. It focused on the transition of the locality from a village to a tourist-related town over a 130 year period from 1770 to 1901. Throughout the thesis the impact which the landowners and town councillors had on the town's development was examined. This is something which to date no other study of tourism in Scotland has looked at in any detail.

This study has utilised a wide range of historical source materials to reconstruct the evolution of tourism in Oban, making use of both qualitative and quantitative material. Comparisons have been made with other resorts to identify where Oban fitted in to the development of resorts in both the United Kingdom and also within Scotland. Extensive use was made of the early travellers' accounts to understand why visitors initially came to Oban especially in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In later chapters an in-depth analysis of statistical data taken from a variety of sources including the visitors' lists from the local newspaper were examined. This was done to not only identify the numbers of visitors who came to the town but also to identify the gender and place of origin of each visitor to determine who was visiting and where were they coming from. A detailed analysis of the census enumerators returns, were also used to illustrate how the occupations of the local population changed over time as tourism became more prevalent in the town.

Overall this thesis has highlighted that smaller rural resorts played an important role in the development of tourism in Scotland and their contribution should not be overlooked.

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my dad John Morrison, he loved Oban and Argyll and I hope he would have been proud.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the development of tourism in the village of Oban situated in the county of Argyll in the west coast of Scotland between 1770 and 1901 (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Map of Scotland showing location of Oban in Argyllshire

Source: (http://www.itraveluk.co.uk/maps/scotland.html).

Selecting this period enabled full consideration to be given to the time before tourism really developed in Oban. The start date of 1770 was chosen as it included the period just before the first recorded account of a visitor to Oban, following the 'discovery' of

Staffa in 1772 by Sir Joseph Banks, the eminent naturalist. The study begins by looking at the nascent tourism before Oban became a fashionable resort and endeavours to establish the motives behind the visits of the first travellers. As the Victorian period constituted the majority of the focus of this thesis, the end date of 1901 was selected as this corresponded with the end of Queen Victoria's reign. Studies of tourism tend to look at the 'long' nineteenth century up to 1914 with the outbreak of war seen as a justifiable end. However, extending the period to the start of the First World War would have included the impact of motor transport. The first motor car arrived in Oban in 1899 (The Oban Times 12 August 1899) and this would have provided a completely new area of investigation which was outside the remit of this piece of research. Another factor, which determined the end date, was the level of information printed in the visitors' lists in the local newspapers *The Oban Times* and *The Oban Visitors' Register*. These lists constituted a major part of this study and after 1901 they were published much less frequently.

A study of the growth of tourism in a small west Highland community with a population of around 5,000 at the end of the nineteenth century may appear an unusual choice for a detailed study. However, this thesis has identified that Oban was very different to almost all other coastal resorts in the United Kingdom. Whereas most seaside resorts were destinations, Oban was initially not the main attraction for visitors but was instead a gateway to the islands of Mull, Staffa, Iona and Skye. As Durie (2003, p.81) stated "Oban's appearance is rather more intriguing as it was a place people tended to pass through hence its nickname the Charing Cross of the Highlands."

Although tourism in Oban was a relatively recent occurrence, tourism in Scotland was not a new phenomenon. For centuries, people had travelled from their place of residence on pilgrimages to holy sites, spas and wells to seek forgiveness or cures for ailments. At many of these sites, facilities for the visitors were established, accommodation was occasionally provided and at St Fillan's Well in Aberdour in Fife, a hospice was built. After the start of the Scottish reformation in 1560, Protestant reformers endeavoured to prevent pilgrimages, as there was no reference to the worship of relics in the bible, although not always successfully as people believed in the medical value of many holy wells and springs (Simpson 1997, p.8). If travel for religious reasons was much reduced, scenic, educational and other types of tourism filled the vacuum.

The development of Oban cannot be studied in isolation and where possible its growth was examined within the context of resort development in other parts of Scotland and England. As the literature review will highlight, several detailed studies have been carried out regarding the development of tourism in England and Wales. This introductory chapter traced the growth of seaside resorts in Scotland looking at reasons behind the development of the earliest ones. Assessing the popularity of resorts in Scotland at the end of the eighteenth and start of the nineteenth century is difficult to gauge as there is little information relating to tourism at this time. Fortunately, the Statistical Accounts of Scotland, the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers and newspapers articles provided some information relating to some of the earliest resorts. This enabled a comparison to be made between selected resorts on both the east and west coast of Scotland in 1801, 1851 and 1881 and helped to establish where Oban fitted into resort development.

Exactly when and why tourism began in Scotland was difficult to establish although the health benefits attributed to salt water certainly played a part. In Scotland, as in England, the medical profession was primarily responsible for the origin of the seaside resort although generally Scotland's resorts developed later than those in England. Seaside resorts, which were easily accessible from London, were the most patronised although Scarborough had enticed sea bathers since 1735. Along England's south coast, Deal, Eastbourne, Portsmouth, Exmouth and Brighton had also attracted visitors from the middle of the eighteenth century (Gilbert 1954, p.12). The Devonshire resorts were generally too far from London and did not grow until transport links with Cardiff and Bristol were improved. Although by 1788 the Devon resort of Ilfracombe was reported as being "full of genteel company" (May 1983, p.188). By the end of the eighteenth century, the upper classes' desire for sea bathing had extended to Scotland. Dr William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine or a Treatise on the prevention and Cure of Diseases* was updated in 1786 to include a chapter on sea bathing. The popularity of sea bathing in Scotland was such that, by the end of the eighteenth century, several east coast resorts provided bathing machines (Durie 2012, p.4).

Similar to their English counterparts, the earliest resorts in Scotland developed due to their proximity to large populations. Within Scotland, these were mainly concentrated along the Aberdeenshire coast, Fife, East Lothian, Ayrshire and the Clyde coast,

although most of the Clyde resorts developed later. Although no official figures exist, the number of people visiting these resorts was likely to have been low as the majority of the population could not afford the time or expense of a holiday. In addition, many seaside villages did not offer accommodation and, with the exception of those providing lodgings, local residents were not involved in tourism but were employed in occupations unrelated to leisure; especially farming and fishing.

At the start of the nineteenth century many of Scotland's earliest resorts were relatively rural with small populations. However some of those on the east coast e.g. Aberdeen were much larger towns. In order to assess the growth of different resorts around Scotland, Table 1.1 provides a comparison of the population of a selection of Scotland's earliest resorts. This table provides a baseline on which future growth of individual resorts can be assessed in 1851 and 1881 which Table 1.2 and Table 1.3 will show.

However, as the census was taken before June, these figures may exclude any summer visitors. This is supported by a note in the margin of the 1801 Census which stated that the low population recorded at Portobello was attributed to there being no bathers when the census was taken. Some of the villages were too small for their populations to be recorded individually and were instead only included as part of a parish. In addition, the population of some villages e.g. Largs and Broughty Ferry were split between two parishes.

The number of villages on the east coast of Scotland which provided sea bathing was far greater than on the west coast. Access was of prime importance and those which were most accessible attracted visitors. The beaches at Portobello, Broughty Ferry and Aberdeen were likely to have attracted larger numbers as they were accessible by foot from the cities. The majority of the Clyde resorts did not become established until the nineteenth century as they were further from the main population centres and dependent on the steamers to bring visitors. Although by the end of the eighteenth century Rothesay, on the Isle of Bute, was attracting visitors. A regular steam packet service linked the island with Greenock, but Rothesay was considered isolated, amenities were limited and visitors had to bring their own supplies (Simpson 1997, p.40).

Table 1.1 Population of Scotland's seaside resorts in 1801 ranked by population size

East coast of Scotland	Population
Aberdeen	17,597
Arbroath	4,943
Peterhead	4,491
St Andrews*	4,203
Dunbar*	3,951
Nairn	2,215
Burnt Island	1,530
Prestonpans	1,432
Broughty Ferry*	1,407
Aberdour	1,260
Stonehaven*	1,072
Portobello*	1,003
Elie	730
North Berwick	700
South Queensferry*	505

West Coast of Scotland	Population
Ayr	5,492
Rothesay	5,231
Girvan	2,260
Largs*	1,361
Ardrossan	1,194
Millport**	506

* Parish population ** Population of Parish of Cumbrae

Source: (House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, Census 1801-02).

In the north east of Scotland the Statistical Accounts from 1791 to 1799 indicated that sea bathing had started to become popular. In the town of Nairn, situated on the Morayshire coast, the minister stated that the town was "remarkably well calculated for sea bathing". Two good inns provided accommodation for visitors and, for anyone who wished to bathe in the sea, one of the Innkeepers could provide a bathing machine (Sinclair 1791, Volume 12, p.393).

Peterhead's mineral well attracted numerous "genteel people" from a distance of 30 to 40 miles between June and September. The local landowner had built an inn and lodging houses were available to accommodate guests. A hotel was also being

constructed by the Free Masons to provide additional rooms. The Statistical Account stated that the only requirement was for warm baths and bathing machines on the sea beaches (Sinclair 1794, Volume 16, p.606). During his visit to Peterhead in 1799, Heron commented, "In the summer Peterhead is a place of polite resort and many good houses had been built for the accommodation of strangers" (Heron 1975, p.106). Twenty years later Webster noted that the town was popular during the summer due to the opportunities for sea bathing and a variety of accommodation was available (Webster 1819, p.555).

Further down the east coast, Arbroath's mineral springs, considered one of the best chalybeate springs in the country, attracted visitors in search of cures for their various ailments. There were also opportunities for sea bathing, but the minister commented that the numbers visiting were limited due to insufficient accommodation being available (Sinclair 1792, Volume 6, p.350). The Statistical Account for the Parish of Monifeith noted that the villages of East and West Ferry beside Broughty Castle near Dundee were considered to be the best fitted for sea bathing on the east coast and in the summer attracted the "multitudes" for the benefit of sea bathing (Sinclair 1791, Volume 13, p.497). Situated at the mouth of the Tay, East and West Ferry were the nearest coastal retreats for Dundonians and easily accessible from the city.

In the Kingdom of Fife, many towns and villages including Burnt Island, Aberdour and Elie had access to at least one sandy beach and the largest town, St Andrews, had a choice of two. The Statistical Account for Elie, written in 1795, stated that the village was remarkably well adapted for sea bathing with a sandy shore around a mile and a half long which was much used for bathing (Sinclair 1791, Volume 17, p.537). No indication was given of the number of people who visited although it was likely to have been very small. In addition to their beaches, the villages of Burnt Island and St Andrews also provided golf courses for visitors. The minister commented that the gentlemen of the county had proposed a ferry be established to link Newhaven in Edinburgh with Burnt Island in order to improve access for passengers (Sinclair 1791, Volume 2, p.424).

The Edinburgh area offered a large selection of resorts for its residents and visitors. In addition to the beach at Portobello, Edinburgh residents could also bathe at South

Queensferry to the north of the city. In his Statistical Account of 1791 the local minister for South Queensferry included a section entitled *Sea-Bathing quarters*. He commented that "the village's proximity to Edinburgh and its easy communications with that city and the dryness and salubrity of the air and the excellent accommodation for lodgers all renders the village a most convenient and pleasant situation for sea bathing" (Withrington and Grant 1975, p.809). The account for Prestonpans stated that the town was very popular for sea bathing with immediate access to the sea and was much resorted to in summer. Prestonpans also benefited from a daily stagecoach service, which operated between the village and Edinburgh, capable of carrying six passengers for a fare of 1s 6d (Withrington and Grant 1975, p.578). In June 1800 lodgings in Prestonpans, suitable for sea bathing, were first advertised (Caledonian Mercury July 28 1800). To the south east of Edinburgh, North Berwick and Dunbar also provided opportunities for sea bathing. Dunbar had two large inns for the accommodation of travellers and a room was provided among the rocks for bathers to undress (Withrington and Grant 1975, p.469).

The west of Scotland also offered a selection of resorts although these were generally further from the main centres of population. In Ayrshire, sandy beaches suitable for sea bathing were available at several locations. In the Statistical Account of 1791, Largs was described as the "Montpelier of Scotland". The local minister commented that it "was frequented by patrons and families for health and amusement but there was a lack of accommodation" (Sinclair 1791, Volume 2, p.361). Webster (1819, p.431) noted that Largs was a great resort in the summer for sea bathers. Further down the Ayrshire coast the new town of Ardrossan was developed as a resort by the Earl of Eglinton who proposed providing hot and cold baths. One of its major advantages was its deep water harbour which enabled steamboats to connect it with Arran, Belfast, the Isle of Man and Campbeltown (Caledonian Mercury 23 August 1806). By 1819, Ardrossan had become a genteel resort offering a hotel and warm and cold baths (Webster 1819, p.39). Further up the Clyde the town of Helensburgh, only 20 miles from Glasgow, was also a popular resort for sea bathing. In 1812, Henry Bell's paddle steamer *The Comet* began a regular, three times a week, service between Glasgow and Helensburgh which increased Helensburgh's popularity and opened up tourism to the Clyde coast (Durie 2003, p.47).

Hot and cold baths were available and the inhabitants depended on the visitors to whom they let lodgings (Webster 1819, p.320).

In 1822, the Reverend W.M. Wade compiled a guide to the watering places of Scotland, which gave an indication of the number and location of resorts at this time. His list included Fraserburgh, St Andrews, Elie and North Berwick on the east coast and Ardrossan, Campbeltown, Gourock, Helensburgh, Largs and Rothesay on the west (Durie 2003, p.69). Neither Dunoon nor Oban was listed and there was no evidence of Dunoon and Oban attracting visitors at this time even though *The Comet* operated a service between Glasgow and Oban in 1818. In 1826, the first advertisements appeared in the *Glasgow Herald* for "Sea bathing quarters for let at Dunoon" (Glasgow Herald 24 March 1826). Oban was much later in promoting itself to visitors as the first advertisements for accommodation to-let in Oban did not appear in any Scottish or English newspaper until 1849.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, seaside tourism in Scotland had become more established and there were more opportunities for sea bathing. The population of most resorts was rising although the population figures shown in Table 1.2 were for residents and may not include any summer visitors. They illustrate the generic growth in urban population and thereby a wider urbanised population that would later form the foundations of future tourism growth for Scottish resorts within certain classes of staying visitors and day trippers undertaking leisure trips.

On the east coast, Aberdeen and Portobello continued to grow although Portobello's growth can be attributed to its close proximity to Edinburgh and its rail connection with the city which opened in 1846. Stonehaven's population also experienced one of the largest increases, which may have been due to its rail link with Aberdeen and Perth, which opened in 1849. The west coast resorts also showed an increase in populations, most notably Helensburgh, which was close to Glasgow. The figures in Table 1.2 also implied that the population of some villages, for example Dunbar in the east coast and Dunoon on the west coast, had fallen. However, this is likely to be due to the 1801 population for both villages being for the total parish, as populations for the individual villages were not recorded. Although Webster (1819, p.209) noted that Dunoon had "decayed" as a new road around Loch Lomond and Loch Long offered travellers an

alternative route into Argyll and were no longer reliant on the ferry between Gourock and Dunoon. The populations of Oban, Largs and Millport also experienced a large increase due to improved steamer services from Glasgow. The Marquis of Bute realised the opportunities which the steamers provided and built a new pier in Millport in 1833. Girvan's population also grew rapidly although The Statistical Account for Girvan written in 1837 commented that the town's population was likely to be inflated by the large number of Irish immigrants, which had moved to the town (Sinclair 1837, Volume 5, p.397).

Table 1.2 Population of Scotland's seaside resorts 1801 and 1851

East coast of Scotland	1801	1851	% change
Aberdeen	17,597	53,808	206%
Arbroath	4,943	8,302	68%
Peterhead	4,491	4,819	7%
St Andrews*	4,203	4,730	13%
Dunbar*	3,951	3,038	-23%
Nairn	2,215	3,401	54%
Burnt Island	1,530	2,295	50%
Prestonpans	1,432	1,640	15%
Broughty Ferry*	1,407	2,772	97%
Aberdour	1,260	1,945	54%
Stonehaven*	1,072	3,240	202%
Portobello*	1,003	3,497	249%
Elie	730	843	15%
North Berwick	700	863	23%
South Queensferry*	505	1,195	137%

West Coast of Scotland	1801	1851	% change
Ayr	5,492	9,110	66%
Rothesay	5,231	7,319	40%
Girvan	2,260	7,306	92%
Dunoon*	1,750	1,286	-27%
Largs*	1,361	2,824	107%
Ardrossan	1,194	6,829	73%
Oban	734	1,742	137%
Helensburgh	632	2,229	253%
Millport**	506	1,104	118%

* Parish population 1801 ** Population of Parish of Cumbrae 1801 and 1851

Source: (House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1852-53).

Oban's population also grew rapidly between 1801 and 1851. As the following chapters will show, much of the rise was attributed to the improvements made by the various landowners and improved transport between Oban and central Scotland. The Duke of Argyll and the Captain of Dunstaffnage did much to improve the town at the start of the nineteenth century. The new town was laid out and the Duke arranged for a quay and an inn to be built. The Marquis of Breadalbane purchased a large portion of Oban in 1836, and continued to make improvements. A new steamboat pier was constructed in 1848, new roads were built around the town and much of his land on the surrounding hills was feued for villas.

By 1881, resorts on the west coast of Scotland showed the largest increase in population as illustrated in Table 1.3. Helensburgh's population again saw one of the biggest increases due to its proximity to Glasgow. Dunoon's population also increased considerably and it was a regular visiting place for visitors from Glasgow. However overall Scottish resorts such as Oban, Rothesay, Dunoon and Ayr had much smaller populations in comparison to the majority of England's coastal resorts.

Although the population of Scottish resorts was generally smaller than those in England, by 1881, Oban's population of 3,986 was similar to that of Lytham, Morecambe and Sidmouth. For this reason it is pertinent to briefly highlight the comparative growth of English and Welsh resorts as a means by which to establish the extent to which Scottish resorts followed a similar development path to their southern counterparts or not.

By 1851, some 112 spas and 71 coastal resorts in England and Wales catered to the demands of health and tourism, although fashions and fortunes for individual towns varied over time (Walton, 1983, p.53). Although the number of resorts in Scotland had increased there were still far fewer than in England and Wales. Many Scottish resorts showed a reasonably large population increase between 1851 and 1881, but again the percentages were generally much smaller than those in England as highlighted in Table 1.4.

Table 1.3 Population of Scottish Seaside Resorts 1801, 1851 and 1881 highlighting the percentage change from 1851 to 1881

East coast of Scotland	1801	1851	1881	% change
Aberdeen	17,597	53,808	100,503	87%
Arbroath	4,943	8,302	9,253	11%
Peterhead	4,491	4,819	10,922	127%
St Andrews*	4,203	4,730	6,406	35%
Dunbar*	3,951	3,038	3,619	19%
Nairn	2,215	3,401	4,148	22%
Burnt Island	1,530	2,295	3,197	39%
Prestonpans	1,432	1,640	2,573	57%
Broughty Ferry*	1,407	2,772	8,179	195%
Aberdour	1,260	1,945	1,736	-11%
Stonehaven*	1,072	3,240	3,948	22%
Portobello*	1,003	3,497	6,794	94%
Elie	730	843	664	-21%
North Berwick	700	863	1164	35%
South Queensferry*	505	1,195	1,676	40%

West Coast of Scotland	1801	1851	1881	% change
Ayr	5,492	9,110	20,821	66%
Rothesay	5,231	7,319	8,329	14%
Girvan	2,260	7,306	5,480	-25%
Dunoon*	1,750	1,286	4,692	265%
Largs*	1,361	2,824	3,076	9%
Ardrossan	1,194	2,071	3,960	91%
Oban	734	1,742	3,991	129%
Helensburgh	632	2,229	7,690	245%
Millport **	506	1,104	1,845	67%

* Parish population 1801 ** Population of Cumbrae 1801 and 1851

Sources: (House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1852-53 and 1882).

Table 1.4 Seaside resorts in England, Wales and Scotland ranked by percentage population growth 1851 to 1881

Resort	1851	1881	% change
Bournemouth	695	16,859	2326%
Eastbourne	3,433	21,595	529%
Skegness	316	1,675	430%
Hove	4,104	20,804	407%
Blackpool	2,564	12,989	407%
Shanklin	355	1,780	401%
Llandudno	1,131	4,807	325%
Southport	8,694	33,767	288%
Rhyl	1,563	6,029	286%
New Brighton	1,283	4,910	283%
Dunoon	***1,286***	***4,692***	***265%***
Helensburgh	***2,229***	***7,690***	***245%***
Cleethorpes	839	2,840	238%
Southend	2,461	7,979	224%
Weston-super-Mare	4,014	12,872	221%
Morecambe	1,301	3,931	202%
Broughty Ferry	***2,772***	***8,179***	***195%***
Redcar	1,032	2,818	173%
Folkestone	7,549	19,297	156%
Clevedon	1,905	4,869	156%
Portishead	1,084	2,730	152%
Lowestoft	6,781	16,781	147%
Hastings	17,621	42,258	140%
Scarborough	12,915	30,504	136%
Ayr	***9,110***	***20,821***	**129%**

Resort	1851	1881	% change
Littlehampton	2,436	3,926	61%
Seaton	766	1,221	59%
Tenby	2,982	4,750	59%
Prestonpans	***1,640***	***2,573***	***57%***
Ramsgate	14,853	23,068	55%
Filey	1,511	2,337	55%
Broadstairs	2,975	4,597	55%
Clacton	1,281	1,963	53%
Lytham	2,698	4,122	53%
Bognor	2,694	3,920	46%
Herne Bay	3,094	4,410	43%
Cowes	4,786	6,772	41%
Bridlington	5,786	8,117	40%
Gravesend	16,633	23,302	40%
South Queensferry	***1,195***	***1,676***	***40%***
Burnt Island	***2,295***	***3,197***	***39%***
Teignmouth	5,149	7,120	38%
Great Yarmouth	26,880	37,151	38%
Exmouth	5,961	8,224	38%
Aberystwyth	5,189	7,088	37%
Dover	22,244	30,270	36%
North Berwick	***863***	***1,164***	***35%***
St Andrews	***4,730***	***6,404***	***35%***
Shoreham	2,590	3,505	35%
Dawlish	3,546	4,519	27%

Resort	1851	1881	% change
Oban	***1,742***	***3,991***	***129%***
Peterhead	***4,819***	***10,922***	***127%***
Worthing	5,370	11,821	120%
Burnham	1,701	3,645	114%
Hornsea	945	1,836	94%
Portobello	***3,497***	***6,794***	***94%***
Ardrossan	***2,071***	***3,960***	***91%***
Seaford	997	1,887	89%
Walton on the Naze	729	1,371	88%
Ventnor	3,055	5,739	88%
Aberdeen	53,808	100,503	87%
Whitby	8,040	14,986	86%
Rhyd	7,147	13,012	82%
Dartmouth	3,147	5,725	82%
Margate	10,099	18,226	80%
Torquay	13,767	24,767	80%
Harwich	4,451	7,842	76%
Ilfracombe	3,677	6,255	70%
Paignton	2,746	4,613	68%
Weymouth	8,230	13,715	67%
Millport*	***1,104***	***1,845***	***67%***
Brighton	65,569	107,546	64%

Resort	1851	1881	% change
Stonehaven	***3,240***	***3,948***	***22%***
Nairn	***3,401***	***4,148***	***22%***
Deal	7,067	8,500	20%
Dunbar	***3,038***	***3,619***	***19%***
Brixham	5,936	7,033	18%
Cromer	1,366	1,597	17%
Budleigh Salterton	2,447	2,856	17%
Rothesay	***7,104***	***8,329***	***17%***
Minehead	1,542	1,774	15%
Lynton	1,059	1,213	15%
Rothesay	***7,319***	***8,329***	***14%***
Arbroath	***8,302***	***9,251***	*11%*
Swanage	2,139	2,357	10%
Largs	***2,824***	***3,076***	***9%***
St Bees	1,084	1,142	5%
Montrose	*14,324*	*14,973*	*5%*
Lymington	4,182	4,366	4%
Sidmouth	3,441	3,475	1%
Aberdour	***1,945***	***1,736***	***-11%***
Elie	***843***	***664***	***-21%***
Lyme Regis	2,852	2,290	-20%
Girvan	***7,306***	***5,480***	***-25%***

Scottish resorts highlighted in bold italics.

Source: (Adapted from Walton 1983, p.53 & p.60)

In comparison to resorts in England, Wales and other parts of Scotland, Oban was clearly late in developing as a resort. By the time it had become popular with visitors,

many other resorts had long been established. The following chapters will explore in detail the reasons behind Oban's relatively late start as a resort and examine the growth and development of the town of Oban from a small rural settlement into a thriving resort.

1.1 Thesis overview

Chapter 2 begins by reviewing the available literature. There is a vast amount of literature available regarding resort development although as the literature review highlights many of these studies were informed by an analysis of English resorts. The research methodology is outlined in Chapter 3 which is then followed by themed chapters, which are presented chronologically to reconstruct the development of Oban as a resort.

Chapter 4 concentrated on the period between 1770 and 1817 and looked at tourism in Oban in the very early days. It relied heavily on the travellers' diaries and journals for information regarding accessing the town and the facilities which were available. In Chapter 5 the social, environmental and economic development of Oban between 1700 and 1901 was examined. This chapter looked in particular at the role which the various landowners and later the local government had on the town's development throughout the period covered by this thesis. As this chapter covered a period of over 200 years it was divided into four historical periods which corresponded to key periods in Oban's development. Chapter 6; Transport and tourism examined the different travel options available to visitors looking at how accessibility changed over time. This chapter also continued with the theme of landownership and local government. Gaining access to and through the town especially in relation to rail transport was of prime importance and the landowners had great power in determining which routes would be followed. The changing employment prospects were examined in Chapter 7 which highlighted the opportunities which tourism brought to Oban. This chapter relied heavily on the census enumerators' returns between 1841 and 1901 and looked at the impact which tourism had on both males and females. It also examined the place of birth of those working directly and indirectly in tourism to determine whether the town had a large migrant population and, if so, where they originated. Chapter 8 looked at the changing composition of the visiting population. The purpose of this chapter was to examine

firstly where Oban's visitors came from and looked in some detail at those who visited Oban between 1868 and 1901. The chapter relied primarily on the visitors' lists published in the local newspapers *The Oban Times* and *The Oban Visitors Register*. The second section of the chapter looked at the visitor demographics to determine whether the town had a definite market and again to establish whether this changed over time. The final section examined the length of time visitors stayed in Oban to establish whether the town was a destination in its own right or just somewhere people stopped off on their onward travels. Chapter 9 concluded the thesis and presented answers to the questions which are posed in the methodology chapter.

Chapter 2

A historical analysis of tourism literature

2.1 Introduction

The thesis began with a review of the literature to highlight why this subject is worthy of research. Many studies have been carried out into the development of resorts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the aim of this chapter was to establish what has already been written about resort development during this period and identify where gaps existed.

There is a huge amount of literature available regarding the history of seaside resorts and spas, both coastal and inland. More recently several studies have been undertaken regarding the development of resorts in the twentieth century. However as this thesis was concerned primarily with the development of tourism in Oban in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, only literature written about this period was included in the review. This literature review also examined tourism models as they can help explain how resorts grew and developed. Butler's tourism area lifecycle (1980) based on the development of the Clyde resorts being the most enduring and probably most relevant to Oban's development.

Individual resort histories were also examined to determine which resorts have already been researched and again to identify any missing themes. This section looked primarily at studies of English and Welsh resorts as they have attracted the most attention. Although much has been written about the development of overseas resorts, only literature pertaining to resorts in the United Kingdom was studied as these are the most relevant to this thesis. Overseas resorts were not included for two main reasons: First there is an extensive literature about resorts in the United Kingdom; secondly if overseas studies had been included, which countries should be included and which excluded?

The next section looked in particular at studies which have been undertaken regarding tourism in Scotland. Fewer studies have been carried out on the development of tourism in Scotland than in England and many publications relating to Scotland look at tourism

in the country as a whole. One area which has been researched in detail is the history of transport especially in relation to the railways and the steamships which have both been covered fairly extensively. A study of the resort histories available highlighted that those in the east coast of Scotland especially around Edinburgh, the Fife Coast and Aberdeenshire have attracted the most attention. In the west of Scotland, resorts on the Ayrshire coast and the Clyde coast have also been the subject of some research. However, very few studies have been undertaken regarding tourism in Argyll and its islands and generally the area receives little more than a mention in any publication.

An examination of the literature highlighted that certain aspects of tourism have not been covered in detail. The role played by the landowners and local government had been included in some studies in England, especially Walton (1983), but virtually no research has been carried out into their role in Scottish resorts. Two other themes emerged which have until now not received a great deal of attention, especially in Scotland. The changing employment opportunities available to the residents as resorts grew and developed is an aspect which has until now not been studied. Another aspect of tourism which again has not been looked at in any detail is the visiting population. Some research had been carried out into excursionists and excursion parties, especially in the larger resorts in England, but virtually no research has been undertaken regarding the individual visitors. This is something which this study will address.

A study of resort histories will also identify how Oban was different from other resorts in both England and Scotland; instead of being the final destination for visitors the town was often perceived as a stopping-off point, not somewhere people stayed for any length of time. This thesis will establish whether indeed this was the case and also whether this changed over time.

The purpose of structuring the chapter in this way was firstly was to establish what research had already been carried out regarding the history of tourism in the United Kingdom as a whole then, more specifically, in Scotland. A study of the literature also highlighted the gaps which existed especially in relation to the history of Scottish resorts and identified where new contributions could be made to the existing research. The review begins by examining the literature written about resort development in the United Kingdom in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

2.2 What is a resort?

Until the 1960s there was a limited amount of literature available regarding the history of tourism in the United Kingdom. However the subject had been of interest to some historians and geographers especially in relation to resort development and morphology. Exactly what is meant by the term 'resort' is difficult to define as resorts did not all conform to a definite design and most are very different (Simpson 2013, p.28). Resorts were primarily places to which people travelled for leisure and pleasure. Some resorts had sandy beaches or shores where visitors could bathe and some were spa towns situated either inland or on the coast. Many were small rural communities where tourism was the mainstay of the economy and others were large towns and cities, which were not solely reliant on tourism.

Since the publication of Clunn (1929) *Famous South Coast Pleasure Resorts Past and Present: Their Historical Associations, Their Rise to Fame and a Forecast of Their Future Development* other papers have followed. One of the best known being Gilbert's (1939) paper: *The growth of inland and seaside health resorts in Britain.* Pimlott (1947) *The Englishman's Holiday: A Social History* examined the development of both seaside resorts and spas, although focussed on English resorts. Many of the earliest studies also concentrated mainly on the geographical development of the resort. One of the first being Barrett (1958) PhD paper *The Seaside Resort Towns of England and Wales.* His study of eighty resorts in England concluded that, regardless of their location, most resorts shared certain growth features. The seafront was especially important for leisure and commercial activity and behind this were located distinct areas for different types of accommodation.

2.3 Tourism models

The way in which resorts developed has been the subject of much research. Since the 1960s, several models have been proposed to describe the evolution of a resort using the lifecycle process focussing initially on Europe and North America. Christaller (1964) viewed the evolution of tourism in a resort as a development cycle beginning with a period of discovery. This was followed by a phase of development when the resort became fashionable and elite before finally becoming the destination of the package holidaymaker. Following his research, a number of models were proposed to help

explain the development of resorts in the United Kingdom and overseas in the twentieth century.

Even the most enduring model, Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle Model (1980), was not primarily concerned with the impact of tourism but instead on the development of an area and was more descriptive rather than prescriptive. He based his research on some of the post-war resorts of the Clyde coast and identified six stages of resort development from their early growth to their final decline. Butler began with the 'Explorer' stage where initially only small numbers of tourists visited a town or area, numbers being limited by cost and difficulty of access, lack of accommodation or resort facilities and travel constraints. At this early stage, there would be no facilities other than natural attractions available to the travellers who would visit usually for personal reasons to explore an area's culture, literary and historical connections. A great deal of contact would be made with the local inhabitants on whom the visitors would rely for information and accommodation. As the resort increased in popularity, it would enter the 'Involvement' stage. Here the number of visitors increased and more accommodation, entertainment and facilities were provided. A distinct season would become defined and local residents would adapt to meet the visitors' requirements. Once the third stage 'Development' is reached, local people would have less involvement, many decisions would be taken by outsiders, and increasing numbers of migrant labour would be employed. The fourth period is the 'Consolidation' stage where the number of visitors would continue to rise, but growth is less rapid. At this stage there is likely to be some conflict between local residents, especially those not involved with tourism, and the visitors. When the resort reaches stage five 'Stagnation', it is beginning to lose popularity. Natural attractions are replaced by artificial ones which bear no relationship to the area. The final phase is 'Decline' where the resort no longer attracts longer stay visitors but instead comes to rely on the day tripper, short break visitor or the unemployed.

Although many of the models relate to resorts in the twentieth century, Butler's model was based on the Clyde resorts and some of his earlier stages may be relevant to Oban's development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Butler's predictions are not all negative; his is not a determinist model and he does suggest that there is scope for rejuvenation. As Agarwal (2002) demonstrated, resorts have other options available and

she considered the effect of restructuring in her study of Scarborough, Minehead and Weymouth. The co-operation of internal and external bodies combined with new investment can go some way to resurrect the fortunes of a resort.

Butler (1985) also identified five stages in relation to the development of tourism in the Scottish Highlands. He suggested that there are identifiable but overlapping stages which reflect the social, economic, and technological forces to which the Highlands were subjected during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This study will consider how closely Oban's development relates to the first four of these stages. The fifth stage is outside the timescale of this study.

Stage 1 - Before 1745; The Age of the Explorer
Stage 2 - 1746 to 1810; The First Tourists
Stage 3 - 1810 to 1865; Romance, Red Deer and Royalty
Stage 4 - 1865 to 1914; Railways, Hotels and Sportsmen
Stage 5 – Twentieth century; The Era of the Automobile

2.4 Resort histories

Overall, much of the published research historiography of resort tourism in the United Kingdom is informed by studies of English and Welsh seaside resorts. There are also one or two for Ireland including Davies (2007) *That favourite resort: the story of Bray, Co. Wicklow* and Furlong (2008) *Irish Tourism 1880-1980*. Most studies have tended to focus on England as a whole or at least consider several resorts rather than concentrate on individual ones. In *The Seaside Holiday: The History of the English Seaside Resort* Hern (1967) covered the period from the middle of the eighteenth century to the mid twentieth century and included chapters on Scarborough, Brighton and Bournemouth. He was primarily concerned with English resorts in general but much of the information contained in the publication was not new and he relied mainly on secondary material. More substantially, Walvin (1978) *Beside the Seaside* aimed to update Pimlott's study of seaside resorts. Rather than provide a history of individual resorts, Walvin investigated the factors which changed many seaside towns and villages into places of entertainment for their visitors. Walvin also provided a background to resorts in the post-war years although again his study concentrated primarily on the English seaside

towns. The most comprehensive analysis of the seaside holiday is Walton (1983) *The English Seaside Resort; A Social History 1750 -1914.* Although written over 30 years ago this remains one of the most enduring accounts of resort development in England and Wales. Walton examined resorts in a different way to many previous studies. He made use of the census returns to compare the growth of resorts over time and also looked at the changing employment options for males and females in different towns. This was an aspect of tourism which had not previously been examined in any detail.

In *The Lure of the Sea: Discovery of the Seaside 1750-1840* Corbin (1995) examined the influence of the sea, focusing on the changing relationship between people and the sea both in the United Kingdom and the continent. He looked at how the sea became a place of pleasure rather than somewhere to be feared. By ending his study in 1840, Corbin excluded the effect which the arrival of the railways had on the coastal resorts.

The history of seaside architecture is becoming an increasingly popular subject for research. In *Designing the Seaside* (Gray 2006) provided a history of seaside architecture primarily in England and overseas, making extensive use of illustrative material. Scotland received scant attention with the author only commenting briefly on St Andrews, Ayr and Stonehaven. Brodie and Winter (2007) also examined the architecture of resorts from the eighteenth century to the present day in *England's Seaside Resorts*. Although a variety of resorts from all parts of England were studied, this publication made no reference to the seaside architecture in any of Scotland's resorts.

The environmental implications of tourism have been examined by Hassan (2003) in *The Seaside, Health and the Environment in England and Wales since 1800.* Hassan's approach differs from others in that he is concerned with the impact which tourists had on the natural landscape of the coast over the past 200 years. In particular he highlighted the problems which large numbers of visitors can have on an area and how these issues can be addressed.

In addition to publications covering the whole of England, regional studies have also been carried out on specific English resorts. Walton (1992) *Wonderlands by the Waves: History of the Seaside Resorts of Lancashire* concentrated on the resorts of Blackpool,

Southport, Morecambe and Lytham St Annes. This short well-illustrated publication traced the growth and in some cases decline of these resorts between the 1850s and 1970s. The Devon resorts too have attracted attention from Travis (1993) *Rise of the Devon Seaside Resorts, 1750-1900.* In his detailed study, he traced the growth of Devonshire resorts on both the north and south coast of the county. The Devon resorts have also been examined by Morgan and Pritchard (1999) especially in relation to the politics of tourism development although they concentrated on the twentieth century.

A study of tourism in individual towns has also been carried out by several authors. Brown (1985) examined the development of Weston-super-Mare during the nineteenth century, looking in particular as to why the resort became established. One of the most detailed is Walton's (1998) study of Blackpool. Margate has also been the subject of a study by Barker et al (2005) in *Margate's Seaside Heritage*, although much of the publication is devoted to the twentieth century. Similarly a study of Weymouth's seaside heritage has been undertaken by Brodie et al (2008).

2.5 The Scottish picture

Although resorts in England and Wales have attracted interest from historians fewer studies exist on the development of tourism in Scotland. Comparatively very little detailed information is available regarding the history of individual resorts, which is something this study will go some way to address. As Walton (2009, p.787) stated:

> "The great bulk of historical research on tourism before the twentieth century has focused on Western Europe and especially on Britain and the British, with far more emphasis on England than on Wales, Scotland or Ireland, as befits the balance of development."

By the end of the nineteenth century, tourism in Scotland had developed from a unique experience for the elite into something which could be enjoyed by the majority of the population. The first visitors to the Highlands of Scotland came to view the dramatic landscape and scenery, especially the mountains, caves and waterfalls. Literature was also a major pull factor, especially James MacPherson's Ossianic poetry and later the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Reasons for visiting changed over time and, by the end of the nineteenth century, different parts of Scotland attracted a differing, more diverse and widely motivated clientele. Landscape and literary tourism was still popular and, for the

more affluent, the grouse moors, Highland sporting estates and golf offered a more select experience. Tourism was no longer only the preserve for the wealthiest in society and, for large numbers of visitors the seaside offered a break from everyday life. There were opportunities for even the poorest, with many employers and societies providing excursions into the countryside or the coast.

The history of tourism in Scotland has only relatively recently become a popular subject for study. One of the first major publications was Gold and Gold (1995) *Imagining Scotland: Tradition, Representation and Promotion in Scottish Tourism Since 1750*. Their study encompassed Scotland as a whole but they were selective in the topics they included and much of the content was based largely on material, which had already been published by other authors. They also implied that the railway was the main driver behind tourism in Scotland which was not the case for all of the country, with much of the Highlands remaining unconnected until the latter part of the nineteenth century. The book also lacked quantitative material with almost no statistical information provided.

Durie (2003) has provided the most comprehensive guide to tourism in *Scotland for the Holidays c1780-1939.* Through a series of eight themed chapters he made use of a wide variety of information from several sources to trace the development of tourism in Scotland including statistical information on visitor numbers. Haldane-Grenier (2005) *Identity in Scotland 1770-1914: Creating Caledonia* also examined the history of tourism in Scotland again looking at the country as a whole. Although the period studied was similar to that covered by Durie, the content is very different as she was primarily concerned with English tourists' changing perceptions of Scotland. Durie (2006) has also made a detailed study of The Hydropathic Movement in Scotland in *Water is Best: The Hydro's and Health Tourism in Scotland, 1840–1940,* a subject which had not previously been studied in any depth.

In his most recent publication about Scotland, Simpson (2013) *Wish You Were Still Here. The Scottish Seaside Holiday*, traced the rise and decline of selected Scottish seaside resorts from the Victorian era to the present day. The main focus of this book is the east coast resorts but there are some references to those located on the Ayrshire and Clyde coast. Although the book devotes a whole chapter to Rothesay, Oban only receives a passing mention. Simpson (1997) has also written popular works such as

Going on Holiday which provides an interesting social history of many Scottish resorts and accounts of excursions and the Victorians' search for health.

Whereas the majority of publications have concentrated on Scotland as a whole, there are several local histories written about Scotland's towns and villages. Often commissioned by local authorities, they provided limited information and were designed more as guides to an area. Examples of these include Campbell (1975) *Millport and the Cumbraes, a history and guide*, Davey and Perkins (1976) *Broughty Ferry Village to Suburb* and Noble, Roberts and Crawford (2002) *200 Years of Helensburgh*. A more academic guide is Simpson (1988) *Aberdour: the Evolution of a Seaside Resort.*

Although the amount of literature regarding tourism in Scotland's resorts is somewhat limited, the history of transport and tourism has been a popular subject for studies. The railway and steamer services have been particularly well researched as have canals and the early road systems.

2.6 Transport and tourism

Within Britain, tourism was transformed in the nineteenth century through innovations in transport and communication. The effect of the improved services, especially the railways, has attracted interest from many authors. Scotland benefitted from improved steamer and rail services and the history of rail transport within Scotland is a subject which has been widely covered. One of the most comprehensive accounts is Simmons (2009) *The Victorian Railway*, which highlights the effect the railways had on the development of many resorts including those in Scotland. The Highlands are well represented with Thomas (1990) and Fryer (1989) both providing an in depth study of the development of the Callander and Oban Railway. In *The West Highland Extension*, MacGregor (2005) examines the construction and impact which the extension of the West Coast Line from Fort William to Mallaig had on the area. The east coast is also represented by McKean (2006) in *The Battle for the North,* which recounts the conflict between The Caledonian and North British railway companies through their desire to connect Glasgow and Edinburgh with Dundee and Aberdeen.

The steamships have received attention from several authors. In his chapter *Leisure and Recreation*, Lambert (1998) discusses the development of tourism in the nineteenth century, especially the excursions by steamer from Glasgow to the Clyde coast resorts. McCrorie (2001) *Road to the Isles: 150 Years of MacBrayne Shipping* gives a history of the company and their fleet of ships. Robins and Meek (2006) *The Kingdom of MacBrayne From Steamships to Car-ferries in the West Highlands and Hebrides, 1820-2005,* provides the most detailed study of the development of steamships in the West Highlands. They considered both the individual vessels and the impact which they had on tourism and communities on the west coast mainland and islands.

Another area which has been well researched is the history and impact which canals had on the development of tourism in Scotland. Lindsay (1976) *The Canals of Scotland* includes a great deal of detail regarding their construction and statistical information relating to passenger numbers. More recently, Paterson (2006) *From Sea to Sea, A History of the Scottish Lowland and Highland Canals* examines the Caledonian, Crinan, Forth and Clyde, Monkland and Union Canals although much of his research concentrated in particular on the last 40 years.

The development of the road network, especially the drove roads and the building of the military roads, has been examined by Haldane (1951, 1973) and Taylor (1976). Although these publications are not concerned with tourism, both authors highlight the impact which these roads had on opening up the west of Scotland and the Highlands to prospective travellers at the end of the eighteenth and start of the nineteenth centuries.

An examination of the literature relating to the history of tourism in Scotland has identified that, although the history of transport in Scotland has attracted a great deal of interest, detailed academic studies of individual Scottish resorts are less popular. The reason behind the apparent lack of interest is unclear. Industry and industrial centres have received attention and there are many publications regarding the history of Scotland's cities. Smaller communities do not appear to attract the same amount of interest from authors as large conurbations. A review of the existing literature has highlighted that, although there have been many studies relating to the history of tourism especially in England and Wales and to a lesser extent Scotland, there are definite gaps, some of which this study will address. One of the first themes which has

not received a great deal of attention, especially in relation to tourism in Scotland, is the impact which landowners and local government played in the development of resorts.

2.7 The role played by the landowner and local government

The role which landowners played in the development of many resorts is a factor which has been lacking in many publications. Walvin (1978) did not refer to the role of the landowners in *Beside the Seaside*, although Walton (1983) dedicated a chapter to the subject in *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750-1914*. In *Lords and Landlords: The Aristocracy and the Towns, 1774-1967* Cannadine (1980) stated that the relationship between the aristocracy and the resort could be somewhat ambivalent. In the early days of a resort's development, the aristocracy had great power and often had to provide the necessary infrastructure and facilities to attract visitors. In his two case studies of Edgbaston and Eastbourne he claimed that the landowners at the seaside were not of the same calibre as those in the towns and cities. This is something which this study has disputed as two of Oban's main landowners, the Duke of Argyll and the Marquis of Breadalbane, were both major landowners in Scotland. Hassan (2003) commented on the often conflicting relationship between the landowners and local councils at the end of the nineteenth century especially in relation to the environmental impact tourism has had on coastal resorts, in particular relating to sewage disposal. Although local landowners were often the initial drivers behind the establishment and growth of many resorts, over time their powers diminished and the local government became responsible for the continued improvement of the resort.

The role played by local government was fundamental in the shaping and developing of many seaside resorts and this is a theme which until recently had not received much attention. Walton and Walvin (1983, p.182) state that the most significant influence on the growth of resorts at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries was the increased powers of the local authorities. In his chapter *The Corporation as impresario*, Roberts (1983) provides an insight into the role played by local government in Bournemouth during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. His study focused on the local authorities' contribution to improving facilities in the resort through the introduction of a series of byelaws. Bournemouth's clientele were mainly prosperous visitors and, to ensure that the resort was able to remain competitive, the local authority

took control to support the local business community although their motive was purely commercial. In *Blackpool*, Walton (1998) also examined the relationship between Blackpool's holiday trade and its municipal government between 1876 and 1914. He highlighted how Blackpool's council, dominated by councillors involved in the building and holiday trades, made Blackpool Britain's most successful working class resort of its time. Morgan and Pritchard (1999) also looked at the role played by local government in *Power and Politics at the Seaside: The Development of Devon's Resorts in the twentieth century*, although their study had limited geographical scope. In *England's Seaside Resorts* (Brodie and Winter 2007) referred to the influence of local government in resort development but individual resorts were not covered in any detail. The impact of local government has most recently been highlighted in Borsay and Walton eds. (2011) *Resorts and Ports* which examined their influence on selected European resorts.

Research into the role played by the landowners and local government in Scottish resorts has been particularly limited. The subject has not been covered by any of the major publications about Scottish tourism. Gold & Gold (1995), Durie (2003) nor Haldane-Grenier (2005) made any specific reference to their role. Simpson (2013) did comment briefly on the influence which Rothesay's landowner, the Marquis of Bute, had on limiting aspects of tourism within the island of Bute, especially the proposed tramway to Ettrick Bay. The lack of research into the impact of local government in Scotland's seaside resorts is surprising considering the influence they had especially in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Overall, the role played by local landowners and later local government in the development of Scottish resorts is a neglected theme and one which this study will endeavour to correct.

Another theme which has not received a great deal of attention especially in Scotland is the employment opportunities which tourism brought to the local and migrant population.

2.8 Changing employment opportunities

The history of employment in nineteenth century tourist resorts in Scotland is again a subject which has not attracted a great deal of research but one which this study will address. The effect which tourism had on women's employment has also received little

attention. The reason for the lack of research on this subject is unclear. As Ladkin (2011) stated:

> "There are no obvious reasons why research into tourism labour is still relatively limited but a lack of reliable employment data, problems of definition and the cost of empirical data collection may have some bearing" (Ladkin, 2011, p.1136).

Even though Ladkin was referring to the lack of research in the twenty first century, her comments are relevant in the nineteenth century. Few historical studies have been undertaken regarding the employment opportunities available to those living in coastal resorts. Despite acknowledging the limitations of the available information regarding tourism employment, (Walton 1983) examined specific tourism related occupations within selected English resorts. His analysis of lodging-house keepers, servants, annuitants and professionals was based primarily on census enumerators' returns although he also made use of local trade directories. Walton again warned that the information contained within these sources can be inaccurate. Virtually no studies have been carried out regarding the changing occupations of the population of Scottish seaside resorts. Morris (2000) carried out some research in relation to occupations by calculating the percentage of domestic servants and professional men in selected Scottish resorts in 1901. Apart from this study, no detailed analysis has been undertaken regarding the employment opportunities which tourism brought to a Scottish resort. This is a neglected theme and this thesis will begin to fill this gap by undertaking a detailed study of Oban's changing population between 1841 and 1901.

The number and size of hotels in eighteenth and nineteenth century resorts have been recorded by several authors including Gilbert (1954), Walvin (1978) and Walton (1983). However, until very recently little information had been gathered regarding those who owned or managed them. Walton (1978) was one of the first to address this in his study of the *Blackpool Landlady*, which provided a comprehensive account of the role of women within seaside resorts. Before this publication, the role of landladies had often been overlooked or ridiculed. Beckerson (2007) also examined the changing accommodation sector in *Holiday Isle - The Golden Era of the Manx Boarding House from 1870 to 1970*, concentrating again on the seaside landlady on the Isle of Man. Simpson (2013) devoted a chapter to the seaside landlady in *Wish you were still here*,

although focused primarily on the first half of the twentieth century. Apart from these studies, little research had been undertaken regarding those who owned and managed the hotels. Getz et al (2004, p.1) commented that although tourism is dominated by small owner- operated businesses, little has been written specifically about the family dimension. This study will help to address this missing theme by studying in detail a selection of Oban's hoteliers to trace their careers over a period of time. Another theme which has not been covered in any detail is an analysis of the visiting population. In order to be successful resorts required visitors but a study of the place of origin and demographics of the visitors is again a subject which has not received much attention.

2.9 The visiting population

Durie (2003, p.7) suggested that the lack of quantitative information available from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries regarding the numbers of people travelling, staying and visiting sites may be partly responsible for the shortage of research on the history of tourism in Scotland. Simmons (1984, p.216) also commented on the dearth of statistics for British tourism in the nineteenth century, stating that this lack of information is in part due to there being no governmental role in tourism. There are also no police records to refer to, as there was no requirement for visitors to register with them. Although many hotels, historic houses and attractions kept a register of guests, very few survive although there are some exceptions. Sir Walter Scott's home, Abbotsford House, and David Dale's mill at New Lanark both kept visitors' books, which recorded the names and addresses of those who came to view the properties.

A valuable source of information is available in the journals and diaries of visitors. These accounts provide a great deal of information about the early days of travel in all parts of Britain, including Scotland. Several authors have made use of these sources to endeavour to understand the reasons why people travelled throughout the British Isles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Moir (1964) *The Discovery of Britain* provided a major account of travels in Britain by English visitors although she was primarily concerned with those visiting England and Wales. Scotland was omitted from the book, which she stated was due to constraints of space within her publication. Ousby (1990) *The Englishman's England* made use of

travellers' accounts to illustrate the interests which these early visitors had, especially in relation to literary shrines, landscapes and the country house, although again his study related only to England. *In Travel Writing 1700–1830: An Anthology* Bohls and Duncan eds. (2005) provided a comprehensive account of travels throughout the world. Divided into six sections, the book devotes a section to Scotland and includes accounts by Martin Martin, Mary Ann Hanway, James Hogg, Samuel Johnston and Dorothy Wordsworth. However much of this material has been published previously and the book does not really provide any new information about travellers to Scotland. In *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland*, Benjamin Colbert ed. (2011) brings together a collection of writings from several authors, primarily covering the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The publication includes three chapters about travel in Scotland, where the contributors examined a variety of sources including travellers' diaries and journals. One of the authors, Haldane-Grenier provides an insight into the difficulties faced by travellers visiting Iona but her account contains errors, especially in relation to travel to the island. She wrote that "Most tourists reached the islands by means of a tour run by the MacBrayne Shipping Company, beginning as early as the 1820s" (Haldane Grenier 2011, p.115). Steamboats did operate to Iona from Oban in the 1820s but MacBrayne's shipping company did not exist until the 1870s when David MacBrayne took over the company following the retirement of the Hutcheson brothers. The accounts of primarily affluent British visitors to Ireland have been examined in *Creating Irish Tourism, The First Century 1750–1850,* Williams (2010). The accounts he cites include information about journeys from Britain to Ireland, which could be eventful prior to the advent of steamships in the 1820s.

Some publications have been based exclusively on accounts written by travellers to Scotland. In *The High Road, Romantic Tourism Scotland and Literature 1720-1820* (Glendening 1997) focused on accounts written by English visitors as they journeyed through Scotland. He included journals and letters written by Daniel Defoe, Samuel Johnson, William and Dorothy Wordsworth and the poems of John Keats. Glendening differed from other authors as he also considered the impact which fictional literature by Tobias Smollett and Sir Walter Scott had on tourism. In *Tourists and travellers: Women's non-fictional writing about Scotland, 1770-1830,* Betty Hagglund (2010) concentrated on the writings of five female English travellers who journeyed throughout

the country. Although the period covered is relatively short, the writings illustrated how travellers changed from being 'explorers' and 'discoverers' of new things to becoming more reliant on guide books for information.

Durie's most recent publication *Travels in Scotland 1788–1881: A Selection from Contemporary Tourist Journals* (2012), recounts the journeys through Scotland by six travellers from both Scotland and England reproduced from their original manuscripts. Durie made extensive use of letters and diaries from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to illustrate travel throughout Scotland although he treats these sources with caution. Throughout he constantly asks who the author's intended audience was and what influenced the writer's perception of events. One of the most interesting accounts is a series of illustrated letters written by a working class woman from Glasgow who spent a short holiday in Argyll in 1881. Her letters highlight that travellers' accounts were not always written by the most affluent in society with time and money to enjoy long holidays

Although these accounts provide information about individual travellers, few detailed surveys have been carried out regarding the number of visitors to particular resorts. As the decennial census was taken too early in the year to capture the summer visitors, resorts occasionally compiled their own records of visitor numbers. In Stonehaven a census of visitors was taken in August 1898, at the height of the season (Simpson, 2013, p.13). However, such one-off reports do not enable comparisons to be made either within the resort over a period of time or with other resorts. The visitor numbers at Crieff Hydro were recorded from 1874 to 1886 (Durie 2006, p.62) and Moffat Hydro kept a census of visitors and also a record of those staying during the middle of August from 1866 to 1878 (Durie 2003, p.91). A note of those visiting the Wallace Monument was also kept between 1876 and 1905 (Durie 2003, p.8). However, for the majority of places there are no surviving records to indicate the numbers of those who visited or stayed, as most resorts did not keep a record of visitors during the summer months.

There is also a lack of information regarding the number of passengers carried by the railway and steamship companies. Although The National Archive of Scotland holds records relating to the railway companies, there is insufficient detail to determine how many people travelled to particular destinations. Railway records only show the total

number of passengers booked from a particular station and there was no indication of the numbers which arrived at individual resorts. In many Scottish towns, the local newspaper often reported on the numbers carried on the excursion trains but again the figures were estimated. Steamship records are equally lacking in information relating to the number of passenger carried on individual vessels.

Sources of information, which do still exist, are the visitors' lists published in local newspapers. Although (Durie 2003, p.14) stated that such lists have limitations in their use as they only recorded adults and rarely mention children or servants. In addition, they generally only recorded visitors who stayed for a week or longer and those staying with friends and relatives were not included. The lists do at least provide some information about those staying in individual resorts. If the newspaper published the details on a regular basis, these can be used to enable a comparison to be made over a period of time. Until now the information contained in these lists has not previously been examined in any detail to establish the changing population in a resort. This study has made extensive use of these lists to trace the changing composition of Oban's visiting population from 1868 to 1901.

This literature review has highlighted that, although the history of tourism is now receiving serious attention, the majority of work has focused on English resorts. Although Scotland as a whole has attracted some interest from researchers, within the historiography of travel and tourism, Argyll has been rather neglected with almost no research having been carried out. Publications have either concentrated on specific English towns or, in the case of Scotland, the country as a whole. This thesis will go some way to address this lack of information about individual resorts by focusing on one Scottish resort, Oban, examining its development from earliest known records until the start of the twentieth century. A study of the existing resort histories has identified that Oban was very different from other resorts in the United Kingdom. Whereas the majority of resorts were destinations - places people went to and stayed - Oban was primarily not a destination for visitors but a gateway for onward travel to the islands. This thesis has attempted to fill some of the gaps which currently exist and contribute to the existing knowledge regarding the history of tourism in Scotland since the eighteenth century.The sources on which this study will draw and the research methodology employed is outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Although this study concentrated on the development of a Scottish resort, a combination of research methods used by a variety of branches of history were adopted to provide a more comprehensive study of Oban. To begin with, techniques used in English and Scottish local history were employed primarily to have a starting point from which the thesis would develop. In *The Making of the English Landscape*, Hoskins (1969, p.14) stated that historians cannot rely on documents or books written by others to carry out research. Instead a combination of documentary research and field work are necessary. There is a need to go out and walk around whether in a town or countryside to observe the landscape, street patterns and buildings (Hoskins 1969, p.230). In *Approaches to Local History*, Rogers (1972) agreed that the setting, geographical features, landscape and resources have all influenced the development of any settlement. In *Scottish Local History an Introductory Guide*, Moody (1986, p.8) suggested a similar approach. He stated that, when undertaking a local history study, there are three categories of interest: fieldwork, collection of information and written research. Before beginning any written research on Oban, some field work was undertaken especially in relation to the layout of the streets and the location of the hotels and shops which were built during the Victorian era. This was done to identify whether Oban conformed to any of the recognised patterns of resort development and also to identify how the town changed over time. In order to actually see how Oban looked during the Victorian era a large collection of old prints, postcards and photographs from local historians were amassed. Although the town still retains much of its Victorian heritage the photographs were especially valuable as they dated back to the 1860s and showed how the town changed over time. A large amount of written research was also undertaken in the local library, university libraries and archives throughout Scotland and newspapers both local and national were also studied extensively.

The thesis also drew on aspects of urban history although defining what is meant by urban can be problematic. Developed in the 1960s and 1970s this interest in urban

history was pioneered by Dyos who stated that the city must be examined as a whole, not in separate parts (1982). Although Oban could not have been termed a 'city' a similar approach was undertaken in this thesis which examined the development of the whole town in relation to tourism. In particular, it looked at land use, housing, local politics, population and the impact of transport on the town. Although Cannadine (1982, p.208) claimed that, unlike other branches of history, urban historians were concerned only with the city, they did not view themselves as committed to a particular methodology.

Methodologies employed by economic history which generated much of the major tourism history studies (e.g. Walton 1983) were also employed, as a major part of this study involved studying large amounts of data. This thesis examined how Oban changed over time from the earliest records in the mid eighteenth century to 1901. Data from the census returns and the Visitors' Lists were analysed at appropriate cross sections at specific points in time to study continuity and change, where information was available. Similar to many historical studies, data about the town is incomplete, therefore the approach is only a partial one based on the available documentary evidence to reconstruct the evolution of Oban.

To create a focus and direction for this study, a number of key research questions were developed as follows:

1. Why did Oban not develop as a resort until the middle of the nineteenth century?
2. What role did local landowners and local government play in Oban's development?
3. Why were people coming to Oban and what attracted them?
4. How was the resident population affected by tourism? Did the developing tourist industry create jobs and prosperity for all or did tourism also have a negative impact especially for those not involved in the industry?
5. What was Oban's tourist market? Where did they originate? Was it primarily from the local area or were visitors coming from outside the immediate area? What were the demographics of the visiting population? Did this change over time?
6. Was the town only a gateway for onward travel or was it a destination in its own right?

Reconstructing the history of resort development posed many problems as it relied on a variety of fragmentary sources which may not always have a degree of congruence and which may contain different levels of accuracy. In order to determine how Oban developed from a rural settlement in the eighteenth century into a tourist resort by the end of the nineteenth century this study began by sourcing the earliest accounts relating to the village. Maps of the area were consulted, the earliest of which was Roy's military map drawn in 1747. His plan clearly confirmed the travellers accounts regarding the layout of the town and the location of the first buildings (see Appendix 1). There were very few maps of Oban in the early part of the nineteenth century although a map of Oban drawn in 1848 revealed the location of the first feus along George Street (see Appendix 2). The development of the town can be viewed in two further maps, the Ordnance Survey Map of Oban 1871 (see Appendix 3) and the Ordnance Survey Map of Oban 1899 (see Appendix 4). The earliest known photograph of Oban was taken around 1860 and shows George Street, the main street and Shore Street before it was demolished to accommodate the railway. The first signs of building on the surrounding hills are also evident (see Appendix 5).

3.2 Landowners' archives

Many of the earliest records were provided by the estate papers of Oban's landowners, especially those from one of the original major landowners in the town, the Duke of Argyll. One of the key questions posed by this study regarded the impact which local landowners and later the local council played in Oban's development. Estate papers of major landowners provided details regarding the early expansion and development of facilities in the village and highlighted some of the difficulties faced in establishing the town. The Duke of Argyll's papers also included some of the earliest accounts regarding the layout of the village, the occupations of its inhabitants and those of the tenants of another of Oban's landlords, the Captain of Dunstaffnage. However the original documents were no longer accessible and the information was taken from typed copies in Argyll and Bute's Council archives, so there may be discrepancies from the original material.

Original estate papers from Oban's other major landowner, the Captain of Dunstaffnage, also provided information regarding the early layout of the town.

Detailed accounts of commercial activity in Oban is recorded in correspondence between local landlords and entrepreneurs including David Dale of New Lanark and Richard Paley, a Lancashire soap manufacturer. Their letters highlighted the problems faced by a rural community, especially with regard to transport, when endeavouring to develop trade.

The landowners were also instrumental in the development of transport links between Oban and the rest of the country. They were influential in building the quays and providing land for road and rail routes. Correspondence between landowners and transport operators, held in the National Archives in Edinburgh, highlights especially the negative impact which some landowners had on the route of the impending railway. The Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane, held in the National Archive of Scotland was another valuable source, which contains an extensive quantity of estate papers and correspondence of John Campbell, the 2nd Marquis of Breadalbane. He was a major landowner and investor in Oban from 1836 until his death in 1862. His archive was particularly valuable in researching transport to Oban, especially the planning of the proposed railway. The Campbell of Breadalbane papers also include the estate papers of Charles Combie who purchased a large part of Oban in 1808. These documents also provide information about the village in the early years, especially in relation to drainage and the provision of water supplies.

The Statistical Accounts provided by the local minister for the village of Oban in the Parish of Kilmore and Kilbride in 1791 and 1843 provided additional details about the town, the buildings, industry and its inhabitants at the end of the eighteenth century and again in the middle of the nineteenth century.

In addition to documents held in various archives, papers owned by local historians relating to the landowners' endeavours to develop industry in the 1700s were also consulted, which have previously not been used in any other studies of tourism. These include accounts of trade which took place between Oban, Europe and America which reveal that the town at this time was not a provincial backwater but an established trading centre.

3.3 Letters and diaries

In order to understand why visitors chose to visit Oban in the eighteenth and nineteenth century this study began by searching through online catalogues of university and council archives. This uncovered information regarding journals, letters and diaries of travellers who had visited Oban from the 1770s onwards. Although Oban is generally regarded as a Victorian resort, these journals highlight that the village of Oban was attracting visitors before the end of the eighteenth century. The motivation behind the travellers' visits can be difficult to establish at this time. In contemporary studies, surveys and questionnaires can be undertaken to find out what motivates visitors to choose certain destinations. Many researchers, including Hills (1965), Plog (1973), Crompton (1979), Murphy et al. (2008) and Lohmann and Pearce (2010) have used such methods. As this was a historical study, an alternative source was required and the journals and diaries of the first visitors at least provided some information regarding their motives to visit the Oban area.

The number of travel journals and letters available to study was limited, which suggested that the number of people visiting Oban at the end of the eighteenth century was low. Not all accounts were written by those on holiday; some of the archives contain reports written by Government officials sent to Oban to assess its suitability as a fishing station or naval port. In addition to their general observations, many visitors provided relatively detailed descriptions of the number and type of buildings in the village and also commented on the local people and industry. As there was little printed information about Oban during the eighteenth century, the surviving accounts provided some of the only information relating to Oban at this time. There were issues with some of the accounts as the writing was not always easy to read; some were faded and others written in foreign languages which required translation. Towner (1995, p.340) warned that, as travel journals were written by the wealthiest individuals in society, they were likely to have a social bias. Hagglund (2010) agreed and stated that the accounts which survived are likely to have been written by the more affluent travellers. However, this can be disputed as stated previously, Durie (2012) uncovered illustrated letters written by a working class woman from Glasgow who spent a short break around Inveraray in 1881. Towner (1988, p.48) also stated that a degree of caution needs to be exercised when using historical data as there are questions concerning the authenticity, purpose

and representativeness of the material. He also warned that some journals were rewritten and edited before publication and both plagiarism and the creation of fictitious travel accounts were common. As the majority of diaries and letters accessed for this research were the original unpublished manuscripts held in archives throughout Scotland, their authenticity may be less questionable. Without such information it would be almost impossible to establish when Oban first began to attract visitors albeit on a very small scale.

3.4 Census enumerators' books

One of the most detailed pieces of research undertaken by this study was the impact which tourism had on the local population, especially with regard to employment. In order to assess the changing employment opportunities which tourism provided, one of the largest collections of data studied were microfiche copies of the original census enumerators' books from 1841 to 1901. As Oban was relatively small, with a population ranging from 1,398 in 1841 to 5,427 in 1901, all addresses in the town were included rather than just a sample area. Oban's expansion was most rapid after the 1860s so if only the addresses listed in the 1841 Census was compared with subsequent censuses this would have excluded a large part of the town by 1901. For each address the name, occupation and place of birth were recorded on a spreadsheet for each year (See Appendix 6). This information was used for several purposes but specifically to examine the effect which tourism may have had on the changing employment opportunities for selected occupations within the town over a 60 year period. Unless children were working, they were not recorded separately as the number of children living in Oban was not relevant for this piece of research.

The census enumerators' books, rather than census tables, were chosen for a variety of reasons. Throughout the nineteenth century there were inconsistencies in the way employment was classified in the census tables. For example, until 1881 women were recorded under their husband's occupation. Higgs (1996, p.154) commented that the quality of the information in the tables depended on the original data collected and on the accuracy of those transferring the information from the census returns to the tables. In addition, the information contained in the tables was not as detailed as that recorded in the enumerators' books. The enumerators included all occupations whereas the

published tables grouped certain occupations together. For example servant, farm servant and hotel servant may all appear in the tables under the term ‘servant’ whereas the enumerators recorded each classification of ‘servant’. As the purpose of Chapter 7 was to examine the changing employment prospects, by examining particular occupations and making comparisons over time, it was deemed necessary to consult the microfiche copies of the enumerators’ books. This enabled those working as e.g. ‘hotel servants’ to be distinguished from ‘domestic servants’ and ‘farm servants’.

Due to the substantial quantity of information available in the enumerators’ books, once all the occupations were recorded a sample of occupations was studied over a 60 year period from 1841 to 1901. The occupations chosen related both directly and indirectly to tourism. Direct employment included those working in hotels, in shops which catered for tourists, badge porters, boatmen, carriage hirers and drivers, railway clerks, train drivers and lodging-house keepers. Indirect employment included joiners, masons, builders and carpenters, who were employed to construct the new streets, villas and hotels. The number and percentage of professional people working in Oban was also recorded to determine whether the town was attracting professional or unskilled workers. Professionals were classified as doctors, lawyers, accountants, bank managers, engineers and head teachers, which corresponded to those selected by Morgan and Trainor (2000, p.108).

Where possible the census was used to compare Oban’s employment structure with other resorts in Scotland, England and Wales. However, opportunities to enable comparisons between occupations in Oban and other resorts were limited by the lack of published information available for other places especially seaside towns in Scotland. Fortunately Walton (1983) had recorded the percentages of the population employed in certain occupations including servant, lodging-house keepers, hoteliers and those of independent means in selected English and Welsh resorts. This enabled a comparison to be made with Oban in selected years.

Although the census enumerators’ returns provide the most comprehensive account of the population, they also have limitations. Higgs (1989) warned that there is a question regarding the reliability of the information contained in them and the comparability of the data between censuses. Anderson (2001) stated that the census returns required

public understanding, support, and cooperation to be successful. Concerns regarding government interference with their private life could deter people from cooperating with what was an essentially voluntary counting process. Individuals may have been suspicious of providing information to a government agency, or may have felt that particular census questions were an invasion of privacy. Duke-Williams (2011) argued that the level of mistrust in any form of official data-gathering is affected not just by known risks, but by perceived risk or potential risk. What might the authorities be doing with this data?

Gregory (2002, p.294) commented that although individual censuses have been analysed in detail, comparing censuses with each other has proved highly problematic because every census has been published using different administrative units. As the census returns did not all include the same information and were not taken at the same time, there will be some degree of inaccuracy when comparisons are made between them. For example, the 1841 census undertaken in June did not record the individual's place of birth nor did it indicate if they spoke Gaelic, although these questions were included in subsequent censuses. From 1851 onwards the census was taken in April; too early to capture those employed in the tourist trade during the summer months. It is likely that, had the censuses been undertaken in July, the numbers of those employed in the hotel and lodging house trade, as badge porters and boat hirers or in ancillary services would have been considerably higher, resulting in a more accurate representation of Oban's employment structure. However in the absence of any other data the census returns do at least allow a comparison to be made over a period of time.

The census enumerators' returns were also examined to establish whether Oban was attracting migrant workers especially into tourism-related employment. Oban's population grew from 1,398 in 1841 to 5,427 in 1901 which suggested that the census enumerators' returns were likely to record a large number of migrant workers. In order to determine how far people were travelling to Oban in search of work, the place of birth of all those listed in each census was recorded under three headings:

1. Those born in Oban
2. Those born outside Oban but within Argyll
3. Those born outside Argyll

As Oban was one of the largest towns in Argyll it seemed probable that people would have moved to the town from the surrounding area, including the islands, in search of employment? The category 'born outside Argyll' was selected to establish whether the town was attracting people from further afield.

This study also examined whether or not tourism had an impact on job opportunities for women. Higgs (1989, p.81) suggested that some enumerators were less willing than others to regard the work of women as an 'occupation' therefore many women who did have some type of employment in the home were not included in the working population. Determining how many women in Oban were employed in tourism-related occupations was difficult to calculate. The census returns did not always include all women's occupations, especially those of married women. For example some women in Oban, who provided accommodation for paying guests throughout the summer season, were not recorded as having any occupation in their census returns. Therefore, in order to obtain a more accurate assessment of the number of women taking in paying guests, this study cross-checked the addresses of those listed in the census returns as lodging house-keepers against the addresses of those listed in *The Oban Times* visitors' lists and *The Oban Visitors Register*. The purpose of this was to determine how many women who did not call themselves lodging-house keepers were actually providing accommodation for summer guests.

Although the census records provide a vast amount of detail about the residents of Oban after 1841, information relating to the employment opportunities prior to 1841 was more difficult to obtain as there was limited information regarding occupations of the population. Fortunately four sources were available which, between them, provided a relatively comprehensive account of the population around the turn of the century.

1. A list of Members of the Masonic Lodge 1791
2. The Statistical Account of 1791
3. The Duke of Argyll's Factor's report of 1792
4. Men of Military Age 1804

The occupations listed for each of these sources was recorded on a spreadsheet, which enabled them to be easily compared. One of the most detailed lists was accessed from

the report written by the Duke of Argyll's Factor in 1792. This provided an extensive breakdown of the occupations of the local population of those on the Duke's property and the adjacent lands belonging to the Captain of Dunstaffnage. The list of Men of Military Age in 1804 only provided information relating to male employment and only for those aged between 18 and 24 years. Further details were accessed from the list of members of Oban's Masonic Lodge in 1791 and the Reverend Patrick MacDonald's Statistical Account of 1791. Between them these reports provide a relatively comprehensive guide to the types of employment available to the local residents. However, there were limitations with comparing these four sources as actual dates of information collection were not recorded so the details may have been gathered at different times of the year. Female employment was not mentioned in these documents and there were no other available sources providing information regarding female employment in the town at the end of the eighteenth century.

3.5 Oban's hoteliers

This thesis was also concerned with examining those who owned and managed Oban's hotels. This is an aspect of tourism which had not previously been examined in detail in Scotland. A combination of different sources was studied to trace the progress of selected owners and managers of Oban's hotels over time. By the end of the nineteenth century several of Oban's hotels were substantial purpose-built establishments and the owners and managers of some of the larger ones left detailed wills and inventories which are available through the government website Scotland's People. By combining the information held in the census with reports in the local and national newspapers a relatively comprehensive picture can be constructed about the changing fortunes of selected hotel owners and managers.

3.6 Newspapers

Throughout this study, newspapers, both local and national, were one of the major sources consulted; the online nineteenth century British Library Newspapers being an especially valuable resource. Accessing an online archive enabled a search of several hundred publications from all over the country to be carried out at one time and allowed a comparison to be made between articles. Due to the large number of newspapers

available online the same event can, on occasion, be reported in different ways in different publications resulting in variety of viewpoints and descriptions. In addition to searching articles, the online resource also enabled a search of advertisements. This was a valuable tool for the purpose of this study as it identified the areas of the country where Oban's hoteliers and boarding house owners advertised their accommodation. Oban was apparently perceived as being an expensive place to visit so newspaper advertisements were also searched to find the cost of accommodation in Oban and other west coast resorts. Information regarding the cost of accommodation in Oban was not always easily come by. Although most newspapers carried advertisements for all types of accommodation, the prices for lodgings were not always published. Prospective customers generally had to write to the proprietors for details. Therefore it was difficult to compare the costs of accommodation in Oban with other towns.

Accessing newspapers online for historical research can have major advantages but there are also disadvantages. Not all newspapers have been digitised so the information accessed was only available from selected publications. Therefore the accounts contained in them may be biased towards a particular viewpoint. An electronic search will also only uncover articles containing the specific words or phrases keyed in. By reading an original newspaper, additional information may be uncovered which may not have been found by conducting an electronic search. The local newspaper *The Oban Times* was consulted extensively throughout this thesis but, as it was not digitised, each individual original copy was studied in the newspaper's archives for any information which may be relevant to this study. However as an electronic search could not be carried out of *The Oban Times* it is possible that some relevant articles were missed.

One of the key research aims in this thesis was to determine Oban's tourist market. Who was actually staying in the hotels and lodging houses? Where did visitors originate? Was it primarily from the local area or did others come from outside the immediate area? What type of visitor was the town attracting - families, couples or single visitors and how long did they stay? As the census was undertaken in March and April (apart from the 1841 Census taken in June) they did not include many, if any, visitors to the town. Therefore, the information contained in the census records could not be used to compare the number and place of origin of visitors staying in the hotels and lodging

houses. In order to discover where Oban's visiting population originated and determine how long they stayed, an alternative source was required.

As there are no surviving hotel registers, the visitors' lists printed in original copies of *The Oban Times* were examined to study the changing composition of the visiting population. The newspaper printed visitors' lists between 1868 and 1890 and *The Oban Visitors Register* from 1895 to 1901 and these two sources provided the main body of information. Although some visitors' lists were available after 1901, most of the hotels and private houses had stopped submitting detailed lists and the newspaper only printed information sporadically.

The Oban Times printed lists of visitors staying in Oban from June to the beginning of September with over 1,000 guests regularly listed in one week. Therefore recording the names and addresses of everyone who stayed in Oban each year would have been a huge undertaking. A sample period was selected covering the final week of July and the first two weeks of August, which was regarded as the height of the season. The first visitors' list was published in 1868 and it was intended that, for this study, a comparison would be made at five-year intervals. However it soon became apparent that such lists were not always published each week, or indeed each year. Therefore it was impossible to make comparisons every five years as originally planned, so only the years when complete lists were available were analysed, which were 1868, 1876, 1884, 1890, 1895 and 1901.

For each of the three weeks selected, the name and address of the accommodation establishment and the name, address and number of guests staying in each was recorded on a spreadsheet (see Appendix 7). The size and composition of the visitor party was also noted to determine whether Oban attracted predominantly family groups, single people, couples, parties or a mix of all types. However as Walton and McGloin (1979, p.326) highlighted there are problems with the newspaper's visitor lists. Whereas some small resorts, such as Hornsea, recorded particulars of each family member, other newspapers, including *The Oban Times*, rarely provided this level of detail. *The Oban Times* did not usually note the number of people in a family or party but instead recorded them as e.g. Mr and Mrs Smith and family or Mr Brown and party with no

indication of how many were in the family or party. To ensure consistency a party was taken to be five people and a family six.

In addition to recording the number of families and parties staying in the town, the number of couples and single visitors was also noted to determine whether Oban had a definite market. Single visitors were classified as either those holidaying alone or two or more friends travelling together of the same gender but not listed as a party. Single visitors were also grouped into males and females to establish whether Oban was attracting primarily males or females and to determine whether this changed over time.

Where listed, the occupation of guests was noted although this was generally not printed unless the visitor was a minister, a doctor, military personnel or titled. However, as the occupation of most guests was not recorded, it was not possible to determine the type of visitor the town was attracting. The number of servants staying with them, if recorded by the accommodation establishment, did provide an indication of their social class. Servants were generally not listed by name although sometimes the name of a governess or butler was provided. As the ages of individual guests were not printed it was not possible to determine which age group Oban was attracting.

Once the spreadsheets for each year selected were completed the number originating from Glasgow, Edinburgh, other parts of Scotland, other parts of England, Ireland and overseas were identified. Visitors from Glasgow and Edinburgh were recorded separately from those of the rest of Scotland, as it seemed likely that a large percentage of visitors would come from these cities. It soon became apparent that London addresses appeared regularly so those originating in London were listed separately from the rest of England. Irish visitors were also recorded separately to establish whether the steamship service, which operated between Port Rush and Oban, attracted many visitors.

Recording details of Oban's visitors on a spreadsheet also easily identified those visitors who stayed three weeks or longer. The purpose of this was to verify whether Victorian Oban was just a gateway or an actual destination. Alexander Smith visited Oban on his way to Skye in 1865 and described it as a place people passed through but did not stay. This may well have been true in 1865 as that time as there are no visitors' lists from this

period to confirm or deny the numbers staying in the town. Identifying the length of stay for each year selected, indicated whether patterns changed over the 33 year period studied.

Although *The Oban Times* printed the visitors' lists fairly regularly throughout the summer there were some drawbacks. Many provincial newspapers including *The Oban Times* were weekly publications, so only the names of those staying on the day the information was collected were recorded. Anyone who stayed in one of the accommodation establishments not submitting details of their guests was not included. An example of which was the Reverend Paton and his party who visited Oban in 1871. In his diary he wrote that he and his two companions pitched a tent on one of the hills overlooking the town and spent the morning writing letters home. At 12 noon they took down their tent and waited for the next steamer to take them north to Fort William. These visitors do not appear in the visitors' lists as they only stayed in town for one day and had his diary not survived his visit would have gone unrecorded. In addition, *The Oban Times* did not actively collect details of guests from the hotels and private houses but relied on the accommodation establishments to provide them with information. Not all establishments provided the newspaper with details of their visitors on a regular basis and others only provided the guests names with no addresses so the information printed was not always consistent.

3.7 Transport records

Although newspaper reports stated that Oban was attracting large numbers of visitors there was little firm evidence of numbers. In order to assess the popularity of the different modes of transport available an analysis of the numbers of passengers carried by the coaches, railway and steamer companies would have been very valuable. However obtaining such information proved challenging as there was a distinct lack of detailed records relating to most methods of transport. The lack of statistics therefore made it difficult to assess the competiveness of different methods of transportation. In order to determine whether there was competition between steamship operators, advertisements relating to steamer fares and articles regarding competition between the operators were sourced from several newspapers. The *Glasgow Herald*, the Edinburgh based *Caledonian Mercury*, and the London newspapers the *Morning Chronicle* and

Daily Mail all printed details of sailings to Oban. The minutes of the meetings of Oban town council were particularly useful in relation to road transport. Fortunately during the 1880s, Oban town council commissioned surveys to be carried out to calculate the volume of carriages and passengers using the roads around Oban which at least provided some indication of the number of visitors which travelled to and through the area.

Although no passenger numbers existed for those carried on the steamships some information was gathered from other sources, including the annual records of passenger numbers transported through the Crinan Canal. Information regarding railway passenger numbers was also limited although some records were available pertaining to passengers and freight carried on the Callander and Oban Railway between 1883 and 1896.

The thesis begins by looking at the experiences and impact which the first travellers had on Oban between 1770 and 1817. Oban at this time was little more than a fishing village although some trade had been established with England, Europe and America. The village had apparently very little of offer visitors so this chapter will also endeavour to discover why they came.

Chapter 4

Early explorers, the first travellers and the beginning of tourism in Oban 1770-1817

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to provide commentary and investigation into the reasons why travel to and through Argyll became popular in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It looked at the reasons why visitors came to this relatively isolated area of Scotland when there were so many practical difficulties to be faced, especially with regard to limited transport options and a lack of accommodation. The impact which transport and communications throughout the Scottish Highlands had on tourism at the end of the eighteenth and start of the nineteenth centuries is significant and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. The reasons why people travelled were of prime importance. If there was no motivation to travel, tourism would not exist. Understanding the reasons behind an individual's desire to travel can help to explain why some places became popular and remained so and why others declined in popularity. Page (2005, p.50) argued that if we understand what prompted people to leave their home area to travel to other places then we may be able to develop approaches that will help us to manage these visitors and their impacts. Although this statement applies to present day tourism and the more recent past, the reasons people travelled may have been the same in past centuries.

This chapter covered the period between 1770 and 1817. The start date of 1770 was selected, as prior to 1770 there were no accounts written by visitors to Oban. Only after the 'discovery' of Staffa in 1772 by Joseph Banks did the first visitors arrive usually en-route to visit the island. The end date of 1817 was chosen as the following year Henry Bell's paddle steamer *The Comet* began the first commercial service between Glasgow and Oban. With the introduction of *The Comet*, travelling to Oban became much easier and it opened up the west coast and the islands for the first time to a greater number of visitors.

Although travelling in rural Scotland was a relatively new undertaking, travelling for

pleasure was not a new experience. The more affluent in society had toured extensively throughout Europe on the Grand Tours motivated by a desire to experience art, music, history and culture. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, European countries continued to attract visitors, although travelling to and throughout the Highlands and islands of Scotland was gradually becoming more popular.

By the start of the nineteenth century, the Scottish Highlands was becoming a fashionable destination for the upper classes partly because travel became more difficult in Europe during the wars in France (Devine 1999, p.243). As the century progressed the growth and success of the middle classes brought travel to a much wider sector. A combination of higher incomes, increased leisure time and improved education encouraged not just the aristocracy but also the middle classes to read about and visit more remote parts of Britain (Glendening 1997, p.2). There was a greater appetite for travel and the Highlands of Scotland became an attractive destination for travellers. However, these visitors were not coming to Scotland for the traditional sea bathing available in many resorts around the English coast. Although bathing was available in many coastal villages Durie (2012, p.4) commented, "The general perception of the quality of Scottish waters was offset by the dullness of the company." Visitors were instead attracted to the Highlands and islands by a combination of factors especially the rise in Romanticism and the poetry of the romantic writers especially James MacPherson, William Wordsworth, John Keats and later the novels of Sir Walter Scott. The increasing popularity of James MacPherson's Ossianic poetry in the 1760s and 1770s combined with the burgeoning Romantic Movement and the new theories relating to the sublime and picturesque influenced the way visitors' viewed the Scottish landscape, its people and their culture. The Highlands and islands of Scotland attracted the picturesque tourist as the rugged untamed landscape made it entirely plausible as the home of Ossian which travellers nostalgic for the simple lifestyle of the past were inspired to visit (Devine 1999, p.242).

The limited number of travellers' accounts suggested that very few people visited Argyll at the end of the eighteenth century. Prior to the 1770s there was no evidence of tourism in Oban and there were no travellers' accounts relating to the town before this time. The ships which sailed to and from the village were carrying cargo not tourists. The only accommodation available was in the inn known as Tigh-clach-a-gheodha or

the House of the Creek Stone or in the Staffa Inn on Shore Street which both provided basic facilities and were used primarily by the drovers (Shedden 1938, p.202).

Throughout this chapter the travellers' journals were used to assist in understanding the difficulties faced by those early visitors especially in relation to transport and accommodation. They also provided details about the layout of the town and the character of the residents of Oban at the end of the eighteenth century, which was especially valuable as written accounts were very limited. Many of the journals also provided details regarding the impact and influence, which the increasing network of military roads had for prospective travellers to the more rural parts of western and Highland Scotland. Although they were not designed to enable visitors to reach remote areas, the construction of these roads opened up much of the area to travellers before the start of the commercial steamer services from Glasgow.

4.2 The value of travellers' journals and diaries

In the eighteenth century, writing a travel account was an important undertaking for the well-educated man or woman. On their return home from their travels they wished to tell friends and family about their adventures in an artistically pleasing fashion and the journals provided them with a means of doing this (Batten, 1978, p.3). Before the introduction of guide books, the travel diaries and journals of the early visitors provided the only source of information to inspire potential visitors to explore a country.

In order to be able to travel in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, people had to meet certain criteria. They had to be sufficiently affluent to afford to travel and have ample leisure time as journey times could be lengthy. Those visiting the Highlands during this period also had to be healthy and fit enough to travel either alone or with a companion as the climate could be harsh and the terrain often rugged. For those who had the means and the opportunity for travel, European countries especially Italy, France and Switzerland were the preferred destinations with their art, music, history and cultural heritage.

One of the earliest published guides to the Scottish islands was written by Martin Martin, who travelled through the Western Isles by boat in around 1695. His

publication provided a comprehensive account of his tour of the islands and the people and cultures he encountered. Martin's guide was still considered a valuable publication almost 80 years later as it was consulted by Johnston and Boswell during their tour of the Western Isles in 1773 (Chapman 1970, p.273). Another influential writer was Thomas Pennant a Welsh naturalist and traveller who journeyed through the Highlands and islands of Scotland in 1769 and again in 1792 and whose observations were published shortly afterwards. Subsequent visitors added to these accounts thereby constantly updating and improving the available information about the Highlands and islands. These sources also provided an indispensable picture of life in communities at a time when few official records survive. The value of these diaries and journals is considerable as without such accounts little would be known about tourism in pre-modern Scotland (Durie 2012, p.11). Although they have limitations as by their very nature, they are subjective being a personal account of the individual visitor's experience. Therefore in order to build up a more accurate picture a range of different accounts should be consulted.

The accounts written by the early travellers highlighted their desire to explore new places, new people and different cultures. Johnson and Boswell's interest lay in the people their history and language and for them the remoteness of the north and west of Scotland was the main attraction. They saw themselves as explorers involved in serious scientific studies of the north west of Scotland. Johnson hoped to view the Highlands and islands before the area became too anglicised and the Highlanders' identity lost (Glendening, 1997, p.78).

Mrs Sarah Murray of Kensington, who travelled extensively throughout Scotland in the late 1790s and early 1800s, provided a somewhat different description of her journey than those provided by her predecessors. Rather than merely provide information to fellow travellers of places to visit, she produced a form of early guidebook, *A Companion and Useful Guide to the Beauties of Scotland* which was first published in 1799. In it she gave practical information about places to stay, the cost of accommodation, hire of horses, boatmen and carriages and she also commented on the condition of the roads. In addition, she provided information particularly for female visitors about the suitability of accommodation in the various inns she had stayed in as she considered that the requirements of female travellers was somewhat different from

those of her male counterparts. Her accounts often commented on the appropriateness of accommodation especially for ladies. She recommended inns, which she deemed suitable and highlighted those to avoid such as the Clachan Inn 14 miles south of Oban, which she pronounced was:

> "Not a very good sleeping place for ladies. Gentlemen may remain a night or two very well" (Murray, 1805, p.13).

Travelling for personal fulfilment was not the only reason for visiting the Highlands. Both John Knox who arrived in Oban in 1787 and Thomas Newte, who came in 1791, visited the town on business. Faujas St Fond a geologist from Paris, arrived in 1799 with the prime objective of studying the unusual Brecchia rock formations found around Oban. Fortunately they too recorded their observations about the village which added to the information about Oban during its early development.

The journals written by the early travellers provided an assessment of many of the roads around Oban and highlighted the difficulties faced by visitors. One of the earliest was written in 1785 by William Thomson who travelled to Oban via Dalmally on the old military road high above Loch Awe. This was one of the most mountainous areas in Argyll with steep sided hills rising from the loch-side making road building extremely difficult. Writing in his journal Thomson noted:

> "The road is 1,000 feet above the loch and there is no parapet wall, which was very dangerous for carriages and horses unless they were quiet" (Thomson 1788, p.127).

In 1799, Sarah Murray wrote that the road from Tarbet to Tyndrum was "So out of repair, that it is barely passable for a carriage, without risk" (Murray 1805, p.407). She was more complimentary regarding the road between Dalmally, Taynuilt and Oban, which followed the line of the drove to be: "Very good, but runs up and down sharp ascents and descents almost the whole distance" (Murray 1805, p.17). However, valuable as these roads were they were not built to the highest standards and did not always follow the most direct route. Sarah Murray commented that:

> "Even so late as in General Wade's time, they knew not the art of road making so well as they do now; for his military roads generally go up and down mountains, never dreaming that he could wind round the bases of them" Murray (1805, p.293).

At the end of the eighteenth century, there were few public coaches or post horses available in much of Highland Scotland. Hiring horses was especially difficult in rural areas. An unnamed Frenchman who stayed in Oban in 1786 before travelling north wrote in his journal of the difficulty he faced in hiring transport in Oban for his onward journey:

> "Neither a horse nor a boat was available to go to Loch Etive so was obliged to walk on foot for 10 miles to get a carriage" (Anon 1786).

In 1805, an anonymous visitor commented on the problems he had in securing horses and carriages and remarked that there were none available for hire between Oban and Inverness. His party were eventually able to acquire horses in Oban but at a price. In his diary he wrote:

> "We were provided with three decent looking brutes, far from handsome. We were to pay 4d for each mile, an extravagant price" (Anon 1806).

The travellers' accounts indicated that many of them were not just written as a day to day account of their visits but actually provided valuable information about the area which in many cases was used by subsequent visitors. In addition they provided an insight behind their reasons for visiting the Highlands and islands which in the eighteenth century were not always perceived to be the most desirable places to visit.

4.3 Reasons for travel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

In the eighteenth century people were motivated to visit parts of the country for several reasons, one of the most popular being for the sake of their health. Even before the publication of Dr Richard Russell's book in 1750 extolling the virtues of sea water as a cure for many ills, the curative properties of the sea were already popular. Sea water was believed to be a cure for a variety of diseases and drinking, bathing or simply being beside the sea was thought to be beneficial to health (Brodie and Winter 2007, p.93).

In the eighteenth century those resorts which were within close proximity to London attracted the most visitors. The geography of Britain is such that most of the population lived within 80 miles from the sea and the perceived health benefits associated with sea bathing and breathing in the ozone laden air promoted by the medical profession attracted those who had the time and money to travel to the coast. Towns situated on the

south coast of England within relatively close proximity to London including Margate, Ramsgate and Brighton were some of the first to benefit from visitors in search of sea air although Scarborough too had attracted visitors since the 1730s (Brodie and Winter 2007, p.11).

Health was not the only reason people visited the seaside; royal patronage of a resort could also be a major attraction. In Brighton the regular visits of The Prince Regent turned the town into a fashionable resort and Weymouth too benefitted from Royal connections. King George III was a regular visitor between 1789 and 1805, which encouraged other members of the aristocracy to visit the town (Walton 1983, p.12).

At the end of the eighteenth century coastal villages in Scotland were only just beginning to attract visitors to the seaside. On Scotland's east coast Elie and Broughty Ferry were attracting visitors especially from Edinburgh. Sailings from Portobello and Leith brought visitors to the sandy beaches of Fife for sea bathing and to inhale the fresh air (Simpson 2013, p.17). Along the Ayrshire coast the towns of Ayr, Largs and Girvan also began to attract visitors as did Rothesay on the Isle of Bute but generally these towns developed later as they were further from major population centres and very dependent on the steamers to bring visitors.

The Highlands of Scotland remained one of the last parts of Scotland to be visited. With the popularity of the Grand Tour travellers often knew more about Europe than they did about the north and west of Scotland. Scotland was very much divided into the Highlands and the Lowlands. Whereas Lowland Scotland bore some resemblance to England in its culture and language, the Highlands and islands were viewed as very different and almost nothing was known about the area. In addition the two unsuccessful Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745 may have discouraged potential travellers from visiting. This part of Scotland was perceived as almost a foreign country to the English and certainly not somewhere which merited travel or investigation. This was undoubtedly due in part to the unflattering accounts written about the area primarily by the Whigs, who had a greater affinity with the accessible and restrained Scottish Lowlands (Glendening 1997, p.10). The Highlands and islands were often portrayed as a place occupied by unruly marauding Highlanders who had little, if anything in common with the rest of the country. The people were regarded somewhat disdainfully

as supporters of the house of Stuart and perceived by the state as uncivilised and unruly (Haldane-Grenier 2005, p.2). The majority of the population spoke only Gaelic and were ruled by the clans dominated by a feudal system of land ownership rather than the laws of the country (Gold and Gold 1995, p.39). The Highlands were believed to be lacking in cultural or educational resources and not considered worthy of exploration and was of little interest to anyone but the most intrepid explorers. The area was viewed as inhospitable and threatening, a dangerous and untamed wilderness occupied by wild Highlanders, a land where no one would choose to visit (Devine 1999, p.232).

Reports about the Highlands were generally unfavourable and largely incorrect with many assumptions based on supposition and conjecture rather than actual experience. Smout (1983, p.99) stated that the perception of the Highlands was that:

> "From London they were as remote as the moon, from Edinburgh known mainly as the source of deviant religious and political behaviour and suspect social habits."

With such negative reviews, it is surprising that anyone visited the Highlands of Scotland. Reisinger and Turner (2003) commented that for any traveller their perception of an area was a strong motivation for their visit. If an area was believed to be culturally familiar, positive feelings would develop, however, if perceived as unfamiliar this would result in negative feelings. They also stated that these perceptions could be based on biased sources of information which even if not necessary factual can be difficult to change. Throughout the eighteenth century for the majority of the population of England and lowland Scotland, the reality of the landscape, the people and life in general in the north and west Highlands of Scotland remained virtually unknown. Returning from his travels in the Scottish Highlands in 1783, Samuel Johnson commented: "Parts of one's nation were as unknown as Borneo or Sumatra" (Haldane-Grenier 2005, p.3). There was also the perception by some English nationalists that the Union had resulted in the Scots becoming a drain on England's resources and the Scots were "aliens who would never be part of the English nation" (Haldane-Grenier 2005, p.2). Writing in the 1720s Edward Burt, an officer of the English army, involved in General Wade's road building scheme wrote:

> "To the people of England excepting some few in the soldiery, the Highlands are hardly known at all. For there has been less than I know of written upon the subject than either of the Indies" (Simmonds 1978, p.5).

Statements such as these reinforce the hypothesis of Reisinger and Turner (2003) that perceptions about an area can be based on biased and inaccurate sources of information, which although not always factual can be difficult to change. Although Ousby (1990, p.133) argued that negative comments made by one author may not necessarily detract visitors from viewing an area for themselves. With so many negative views of Scotland in the eighteenth century, only those who had a particular interest or reason to travel for leisure or business were motivated to visit the Highlands. However, despite the negative perceptions of the country the fortunes of the Highlands of Scotland were about to change.

Measures were taken to integrate the Highlands into the national economy and to destroy the strength of the clan chiefs through confiscation of their lands (Gold and Gold, 1995, p.39). Following the Jacobite defeat at Culloden and the gradual taming of the Highlands through road building and improved mapping, the north and west of Scotland gradually began to be viewed more favourably as a potential destination. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century much of the Highlands of Scotland remained largely shrouded in mystery although this began to change as accessibility and knowledge improved.

4.4 Changing attitudes to Scotland

Although attitudes were beginning to change, the Highlands and islands were clearly still viewed by the state and some Lowlanders as hostile and unwelcoming (Devine 1999, p.231). Therefore with limited transport, accommodation and knowledge of rural Scotland available why were visitors travelling to these remote areas?

Contemporary travellers have a vast amount of information available to enable them to choose their destinations. Mansfield (1992, p.401) argued that despite this, other conditions, such as the weather, the real quality of service, accommodation and the attitude of the hosts, were sometimes unknown at the time decisions were being made. Although this view refers to modern day travel such a statement could easily be applied

to those travelling two hundred years ago when very little information was available.
By the middle of the eighteenth century there was still a distinct lack of knowledge about the Highland landscape. There were few maps and little was known about the geography of the area. In the absence of maps Lieutenant Colonel David Watson, the Deputy Quartermaster General for North Britain planned a military survey of Scotland between 1747 and 1755. Another Scot, William Roy, who undertook an extensive detailed assessment of the country, completed the majority of the survey. The resulting maps with a scale of two miles to the inch provided information which had previously been unknown about the country (Gold and Gold 1995, p.40). However, as it was undertaken as a military exercise and not designed for the benefit of tourists Roy's cartographic skills were not immediately accessible to travellers. In 1750, James Dorret published a four-sheet map of Scotland, which included details from Roy's survey and also estate and marine surveys from his employer the Duke of Argyll's estate (Dorret 1750). The information contained was used for most Scottish maps for the next 40 years and provided early travellers with detailed maps showing hitherto unknown information about the Highland landscape (Gold and Gold 1995, p.40).

One of the Highlands and islands main pull factors was due to the growth of new ideologies relating to the arts and literature. In particular the sublime and the picturesque and the rise of Romanticism provided visitors with a new way of seeing and understanding the landscape. The Romantic Movement provided an alternative way of looking at the world, emphasising emotion over reason and saw a shift from the objective to the subjective. This was a contrast to the way the world was viewed earlier in the century, characterised by reason and a compulsion to explain everything from a scientific viewpoint. Out of the Romantic Movement grew the new ideas of the sublime and picturesque. Reverend William Gilpin and later Sir Uvedale Price promoted the idea of the picturesque which stressed seeing above feeling. The picturesque was achieved when the landscape was carefully studied in order to provide a background for attractive and appealing paintings. Texture and composition were essential for the picturesque to be achieved in a painting and scenes generally included ruined buildings, old rough bridges and groups of cattle grazing freely by a loch side. The Romantic Movement changed visitors' perceptions of Highland Scotland and encouraged the more affluent to visit. Glendening (1997, p.8) claimed:

> "Romanticism did much to promote the Highlands as the real thing, a genuine, exotic and commodifiable otherness that writing had already rendered familiar."

As more visitors came to the Highlands and islands, transport and communication improved which in turn unlocked latent demand as the area became a more attractive and accessible destination. By the middle of the eighteenth century the area began to be viewed somewhat differently. New ways of viewing the landscape became popular. There was a shift away from the ideal classical Italianate styled landscapes of Claude and Poussin to a more rugged Highland landscape (Gold & Gold 1996, p.43). Instead of being a place to be avoided the Scottish Highlands became firstly a place of interest and gradually a fashionable destination. The perception of the Highland landscape changed from that of a barren wilderness into a place of natural beauty (Devine 1999, p.243). It was observed not as a gloomy and depressing landscape but instead as exotic and different and full of economic potential and poetry (Corbin 1995, p.131). The dramatic scenery was still viewed as frightening and dangerous but with study, travellers could learn to appreciate its beauty.

But not all landscapes were naturally picturesque and the artist would occasionally enhance the scene by adding in additional details of their own. Gilpin who travelled extensively throughout Scotland and England in the 1760s and 1770s commented:

> "It is true, the Scotch landscape boasts of nobler effects, than these trivial services of art can produce but even the grand scenery of nature may sometimes be improved by the addition of a good foreground" (Gilpin 1776).

The idea of the sublime had its roots in the emotions of fear and terror, pleasure and pain. It was popularised by the English poet, editor and politician Joseph Addison and philosopher Edmund Burke. Burke associated the fear of death, pain and horror with feelings of astonishment and delight (Craske 1997, p.26). Scotland's dark mist covered mountains, vast glens and rushing waterfalls combined with its ruined castles and bloody history all evoked such feelings. Any scene perceived as menacing was deemed to be sublime as it acted on the subconscious and senses and aroused overwhelming feelings and emotions. The Highland's popularity was undeniably influenced by these new ideas. However, any situation perceived as dangerous or uncomfortable to the traveller could not bring about the feeling of the sublime. In order to appreciate and feel

the sublime the observer had to be safe and not be in any danger. A torrential river could not provoke the same feeling of terror if the spectator was in danger of being swept away.

Although still viewed as an untamed wilderness, the mountainous Highland landscape provided the ideal framework for these new ideas of the sublime and the picturesque. Deciding what was picturesque was extremely subjective with the same view being perceived quite differently by different people. Gilpin visited Argyll in 1776 but did not find that the area corresponded to his idea of the picturesque. Following a visit to Loch Awe, 20 miles east of Oban he wrote the loch had:

> "Rather an unpicturesque appearance. The islands are formally stationed, and many of the mountain screens, which are unadorned with wood, are tame and unbroken" (Gilpin 1776, p.177).

Writing in 1786 an unnamed French visitor travelling to Oban described the same loch in the following way:

> "An old castle situated a little further on, on the edge of the sea in an attractive inlet of which effect was picturesque" (Anon 1786).

Such differing accounts of the same scene reinforce the fact that travellers' diaries were very subjective and different authors viewed the same scene in very different ways.

While Romanticism blossomed, the industrial revolution began and social and economic changes took place in central Scotland and throughout much of England. People left the Highlands and islands in large numbers and relocated to the towns in search of work in the new industries. Therefore for many travellers the unspoiled Highland landscape where people lived in harmony with nature was potentially about to disappear. The Highlands were looked upon with a feeling of nostalgia as they provided a direct contrast to the changing industrial landscape associated with much of Britain (Gardener, 1987, p.11). Dr Johnson in particular believed that the culture and lifestyle especially in the Western islands was about to be lost and there was only a limited amount of time available for visitors to view this way of life before it was lost forever (Gold and Gold, 1995, p.45).

Opportunities for change in the west coast were already being sought out with

government officials seeking to identify sites for fishing stations. John Knox who visited Oban in 1787 as part of his tour on behalf of the British Society for Extending the Fisheries, reported that there were already around 26 families in the town employed in fishing. He commented that the town was ideally situated to be a major fishing station and might also be a suitable venue for a naval dockyard (Knox 1787). Thomas Newte who arrived in Oban four years later was also of the same opinion as he noted that trading ships from the Baltic, Norway and Ireland passed close by (Newte 1791).

The Highlands and islands of Scotland with their isolated rural glens, rugged mountains and lochs were especially able to accommodate the traveller's desire for unspoiled natural landscapes. Romanticism promoted the Highlands as a genuine and exotic landscape but also somewhere familiar where visitors could feel safe. Durie (2003, p.36) claimed that a further advantage the Highlands had over other destinations was the lack of crime and the honesty of its inhabitants. Highway robbery was almost unknown and visitors could travel around safely without fear of being robbed. Johnson was assured by Boswell that pistols were not required as Highland roads were not patrolled by robbers (Bennet 1996, p.2).

During the second half of the eighteenth century writers began to portray the Highlands in a more romantic way. Travellers began to view the Scottish Highlands in a different light and relate the landscape to events in history or places popularised by the literature written about the area.

4.5 Scottish literature

Herbert (2001, p.314, 315) claimed that tourists visit literary places for a variety of reasons. They are attracted to locations that have connections with the lives of writers including their homes, locations for the novels and nostalgic associations. This was also true in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as travellers' diaries highlighted that many were attracted to the Highlands and islands by their literary associations.

A major factor which enticed travellers into the west coast of Scotland was undoubtedly the poetry of James MacPherson. During the 1760s he travelled throughout the Highlands and islands collecting previously unknown manuscripts of early Scottish poems. These epic works purportedly of the ancient Celtic poet Ossian awakened an

interest in Highland culture. They did much to change the perception of the Highlands and islands from that of an uncivilised land inhabited by lawless, irreligious and uncivilised natives to that of a progressive society whose ancient manuscripts rivalled the best Classical works (Haldane-Grenier, 2005, p.51). His most famous text, published in 1762 entitled *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* recounted the story of Fingal, a third century Scottish King, supposedly written by his son Ossian. MacPherson described the poems as a translation of an original ancient Gaelic manuscript which had been written over a thousand years earlier. The "Ossianic Poems", as they became known caused a sensation in Edinburgh, which was at the centre of the Scottish Enlightenment. Academics and literary scholars were delighted at the discovery of a Scottish poet to rival the great classical writers such as Homer.

These Gaelic poems greatly changed the public perception of the Highlanders and instead of being regarded as barbarians they were now seen as a mystical society. After Culloden there was a great interest in Highland culture. Highland dress, customs, folklore and the Gaelic language were all a great curiosity to travellers. With the awakening interest in nature and the environment, the Highland landscape began to be viewed as attractive and exotic instead of a barren wilderness (Devine 1999, p.243).

The Highlands of Scotland were not the only areas of Britain, which could provide the visitor with wild and mountainous scenery. The Lake District and Snowdonia in Wales also offered a similar landscape but James MacPherson did much to increase the popularity of the Highlands. Although their authenticity was doubted by some, the poems were a literary sensation and translated into many languages (Durie, 2003, p.39). MacPherson's credibility increased when the manuscripts were pronounced authentic by Hugh Blair, Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at Edinburgh University, who provided the following preface to the Fragments:

> "The public may depend on the following fragments as genuine remains of ancient Scottish poetry" (MacPherson 1760, p.iii).

Tourists from England and Europe came to see the locations of the poems for themselves and be associated with the Highlands and their traditions. The poet's description of the dramatic and melancholic Scottish scenery infused with tales of suffering and loss corresponded with the idea of the sublime, and travellers' diaries

highlight that the unearthing of these works attracted visitors to the Highlands. In 1780, Jacob Pattison an Edinburgh physician visited Oban and discussed the Ossianic poetry with local inhabitants in Kilmore a small village just south of Oban. He wrote in his journal:

> "I had the good fortune to ride with a sensible old fellow whose belief in the works of Ossian were only equalled by the simplicity and candour with which he spoke of them" (Pattison 1780).

Writing in 1805, Sarah Murray also said that she had spoken to a resident of the island of Lismore opposite Oban, who had heard sections of the poetry prior to James MacPherson's publication. She further commented that she had met with many people in the islands who could not read nor write but could repeat fragments of the poems although they had never heard of James MacPherson (Murray, 1805, p.29). Dr Thomas Garnett, Professor of Chemistry and Natural Philosophy at Anderson's Institution in Glasgow and the first professor of the London Royal Institution who visited Oban in 1800, also believed the poems to be genuine and wrote the following in defence of MacPherson:

> "It seems to me wonderful that any person who has travelled in the Highlands should doubt the authenticity of the Celtic poetry which has been given to the English reader by MacPherson" (Garnett 1800).

Although MacPherson's poems undoubtedly drew visitors to the Highlands not everyone was convinced of the authenticity of the Ossianic poems. Both David Hume, the highly regarded Scottish philosopher and Dr Samuel Johnson, English author and noted critic doubted MacPherson's claims. They were sceptical as to their origin as MacPherson seemed unwilling or unable to provide copies of the original Gaelic manuscripts. Dr Samuel Johnson who had long been one of MacPherson's greatest adversaries visited the Highlands and islands in 1773 accompanied by his friend James Boswell. Their intentions were not just to view the scenery but to challenge the provenance of the poems and prove them to be fraudulent (Chapman 1970).

Johnson did not believe that the west Highlands and islands, which he viewed as a backward illiterate society could have produced such great literary works and set out to prove the poems to be faked. His views were further reinforced as while travelling in the islands he found the islanders' history was not written but passed from one generation to

another orally. Johnson believed that the almost total lack of written history and verse provided sufficient evidence to prove that MacPherson had written the Ossianic poems himself and he had not discovered a long lost manuscript. In his journal he wrote:

> "The nation was wholly illiterate. Neither Bards nor Senachies[1] could read or write. Where the Chiefs of the Highlands have found the histories of their descent is difficult to tell; for no Earse[2] genealogy was ever written" (Chapman 1970, p.102).

The controversy over the legitimacy of the poetry prompted keen debate throughout the country, with many believing that it was possible for Scotland to have produced a rival to Homer. The lack of written evidence of the poems did not necessarily mean that they were not genuine. In many rural communities much of the population were illiterate therefore no written records existed. In the Highlands and islands, stories, songs and poems depicting the history of the land and the culture of its people were passed down from one generation to the next orally. The fact that they were not written down did not mean they did not provide factual accounts of past events.

However, Dr Johnson remained convinced that the lack of written history in the Highlands and islands further pointed to the Ossianic poetry as being fictitious. Whether or not the poems were authentic, they were widely read in Britain and throughout Europe. The descriptions of the Highland landscape undoubtedly helped to promote the Ossianic poems as people were ready to believe in the possibility that these poems were genuine. His poem *Fingal* became a huge literary success and was translated into Italian, German, French, Spanish, Danish, Dutch, Czech, Hungarian and Polish (Bray 1996, p.95). Many of James MacPherson's Ossianic poems did not specifically name places and visitors to the Highlands and islands were able to relate to the landscape and associate the area with their Ossianic heroes. Although their authenticity remained questionable the interest they generated provided landowners with a lucrative business when they provided attractions for tourists based on Ossian (Gold and Gold 1996, p.56). As the popularity of Ossian spread, the fourth Duke of Atholl transformed his summer

[1] Traditional Gaelic storyteller
[2] Scots Gaelic

house, the Hermitage at Dunkeld into 'Ossian's Hall' although some visitors found its artificiality distasteful (Haldane-Grenier, 2005, p.36).

At the start of the nineteenth century, Scottish literature continued to attract visitors. One of the most popular novelists and poets at the time was Sir Walter Scott. Although he had trained as a lawyer, Scott was passionate about Scotland and its history and traditions. His love of Scotland had begun when he was sent as a child to his grand-parents' home in the Borders to recover from polio. There he heard the tales about the Border Reivers which fired his imagination and led to a long lasting love of his country and its heritage. His poem *The Lady of the Lake* set in the Trossachs was published in 1810 and sold over 20,000 copies in that year (Durie 2003, p.45). The romantic storyline combined with his description of the countryside especially around Loch Katrine, the 'Lake' in the title, attracted visitors to view the scenery for themselves. The poem clearly attracted visitors to the area as shortly after the novel's publication Sir John Sinclair wrote to Scott commenting that his was the 297th carriage at Loch Katrine whereas before there had never been more than 100 (Durie 2003, p.46). Scott more than anyone else made Scotland somewhere tourists wished to visit. The popularity of the novel endured as fifty years after it was published it was still being promoted in Stirling hotels (Simpson, p.25, 1997).

Following his visit to Oban and Mull in 1814, Scott published his poem *The Lord of the Isles.* This combined history and romance and made reference to the two castles close to Oban Dunolly and Dunstaffnage. He commented:

> "Nothing can be more wildly beautiful than the situation of Dunolly. The ruins are situated upon a bold and precipitous promontory overhanging Loch Etive and distant about a mile from the village and port of Oban" (Scott, 1838, p.290).

Unfortunately, there were no accounts regarding the effect, which this poem had on the Oban area although the publication sold out within one month, which is testament to its popularity. Scott's novels continued to attract visitors and during his visit to Oban in 1840, Lord Cockburn was apparently surprised at the number of visitors, mainly English but also foreign who had been drawn to the village by Scott's work (Durie 2003, p.46). Scott's novels and poems changed the way that much of the Highlands were perceived. As Durie (2006, p.4) stated:

> "Scott helped create a fictional and poetic framework for both cultural and landscape tourism and rendered the Scottish landscape as different and minimized its bad points."

Durie (2003, p.47) also suggested that, "without Scott, or perhaps a lesser literary light a locality could struggle to attract visitors." Towns which Scott had not included in his novels could feel disadvantaged. St Andrews was thought to have been overlooked by visitors in the 1820s as no major author had included it in a publication. However being named in a novel was no guarantee that tourists would visit. Following the publication of Scott's *The Pirate* set in Orkney and Shetland neither island experienced a flood of visitors (Durie 2006a, p.316). However, for the area around Oban and in the islands of Argyll the literary associations with the Ossianic poems and later the novels and poems of Sir Walter Scott continued to attract visitors well into the nineteenth century.

4.6 The lure of the islands

The attractions of the west coast and especially the Oban area became more widely known after 1772, following the 'discovery', of the west coast island of Staffa by Joseph Banks the English naturalist on his return from an expedition to Iceland. His account of the island and the dramatic rock formations found in its caves was printed in newspapers throughout the country where the island was described as:

> "Surrounded by a row of pillars of different shapes such as pentagons, octagons etc. There is a cave on this island which the natives call the cave of Fingal. The Giants Causey (sic) in Ireland and Stonehenge in England are but trifles when compared to this island" (London Chronicle 24 November 1772).

For those who came in search of Fingal and Ossian the Argyll mainland and the island of Staffa in particular provided them with the perfect landscape. The island's popularity was further enhanced when Joseph Banks wrote that a local guide had informed him that the largest cave on Staffa was named after Finn McCool. Known in Scotland as Fingal, he was the central figure in James MacPherson's translation of the epic poem apparently written by Ossian the son of Fingal (Devine 1999, p.242). In his journey through Scotland between 1820 and 1824 Krystyn Lach-Szyrma a young Polish tutor clearly looked for evidence of Ossian throughout his travels in Argyll. He had read the poetry in Poland and although unsure as to their authenticity looked for signs on his travels that the poems could be genuine (Kedslie-MacLeod 2004, p.169). The cave's

popularity continued into the nineteenth century following the première in London in 1832 of Mendelssohn's Hebridean Overture also known as Fingal's Cave and in the same year Joseph Turner's atmospheric painting of Staffa was first exhibited.

The Hebrides also provided perfect examples of the sublime especially the towering vaulted caves on Staffa, which provided visitors with a mixture of fear and excitement. The high cliffs and the basalt columns of "Fingal's Cave", and the crashing waves around the island's shores fitted perfectly into the idea of the sublime where the power of nature aroused the emotions of fear and danger. The island's residents too were perceived initially as frightening although visitors quickly realised that they were hospitable to travellers and the caves were not as dangerous as they imagined (Corbin 1994, p.134).

As accounts of Staffa and its unusual caves spread, Oban's fortunes began to change. In order to reach the island of Staffa, travellers had to cross from the mainland two miles south of Oban to the island of Kerrera. They then had to walk or ride across Kerrera to Bar-nam-Boc Bay on the west of the island before taking another ferry from there to Grasspoint on Mull. Although these were two relatively short stretches of water totalling nine miles, the journey could be hazardous due to the strong currents and exposed stretches of water.

One of the earliest records of the journey to Staffa was written by Jacob Pattison whilst visiting Oban in 1780. His journey to Mull which involved four oarsmen and occasionally one oarswoman, took five hours. His return journey was far more hazardous as he reported that he and his companions endured heavy seas and because of the language barrier they could not ask for reassurance that their journey would be completed in safety. His journey was further complicated as he and his companions had to take their horses on the boat as hiring animals on the island of Mull was almost impossible. His account of the journey to Mull outlined the difficulties encountered:

> "Only one of the boatmen could speak a little English and as the others spoke often to one another in Erse the tones of which were by no means soothing, we were not the less anxious to be satisfied of our state. We asked him if there was any danger, as the wind seemed to increase. He said the sea was rough. Was there any danger? Not if the horses stood still" (Pattison 1780).

Jacob Pattison's account highlighted the added difficulties faced by the first travellers to the Highlands and islands. Not only did visitors have to contend with poor transportation and basic accommodation, there was the problem of the language barrier as the majority of the population spoke only Gaelic. Only local businessmen and merchants trading with other parts of the country or those who found work in the lowlands during the winter months had an understanding of English. Butler (1985, p.375) commented that the use of Gaelic made communication with locals near impossible, although most of the chiefs and gentlemen could speak French.

Staffa continued to be a popular attraction for visitors and as its popularity increased ferrying passengers became a profitable business for local boatmen. In the Statistical Account of 1791, the local minister stated that the wages for labourers in Oban at that time were 10d to 14d per day and skilled masons earned two shillings (Withrington and Grant 1983, p.282). Providing boats to take visitors to Staffa was one of the most lucrative ways of making money and competition for their business resulted in local disputes. In 1792 Patrick MacDougall, of Dunolly, by Oban, a local landowner, had sole control of the ferry from Oban to Kerrera for onward travel to Mull. Local boatmen realising the opportunities available to them began an alternative service. MacDougall complained to the Commissioners of Supply that the Oban men were depriving him of an income and asked that the Commissioners curtail this other service (Minutes of the Commissioners of Supply 1792). An enquiry was held at Aros, Isle of Mull, on the third day of July 1792 where the Justice of the Peace and Commissioners of Supply for the District of Mull stated that as the departure point at Oban was not part of MacDougall's property he could not prevent local boatmen from carrying passengers and furthermore commented:

> "We are of the opinion that the establishment of a passage boat from Oban to Mull is a matter connected to the progressive improvement of the County and necessary to a convenient communication from the mainland to the island and the counties around it" (Minutes of the Commissioners of Supply 1792).

Staffa continued to be a popular attraction for visitors and a profitable business for local boatmen. Sarah Murray stated that the cost of travelling from Oban to Grasspoint on Mull was six shillings (Murray 1805, p.32). However the boats and their owners were not always of the highest calibre. The French naturalist Faujas St Fond who arrived in

Oban in 1794 with the intention of visiting Staffa wrote in his journal that in addition to it being too windy to travel to Staffa he decided against the journey due to the "exorbitant demands of the boatmen" (Geikie, 1907, p.311).

John Leyden who arrived in Oban in 1800 engaged a boat to take him to Iona and wrote:

> "Our boat was only a clumsy open coble rowed by four unskilled fishermen with very awkward oars over a space which none of them had travelled. But the most disagreeable circumstance was there was no room to lie and hardly any to sit or stand" (Leyden 1800).

Philip Homer, who travelled to Oban in 1803 with the intention of travelling to the island of Staffa, commented on the enterprise of the local inhabitants who realised their maritime skills were in demand:

> "It has become so much the custom among the nobility and gentry of England to include Staffa in their northern excursions that the boatmen consider it as a very good market and have consequently raised considerably the price of their commodity. To show their impartiality they have levied the same tax upon their own countrymen" (Homer 1803).

When they arrived on Mull, visitors hired the services of a guide to take them across the island to the departure point for Staffa at Torloisk, for around four or five shillings. The services of local boatmen could then be procured to convey them across the water to Staffa, at a cost of around one guinea for four oarsmen (Murray 1805, p.32). Murray also suggested that additional provisions should be taken to Staffa as the changeable weather and tides could result in parties being marooned on the island for several days.

By 1817 a new sailing between Oban and Grasspoint on Mull was advertised in the *Caledonian Mercury*. Travellers could now travel in greater comfort on a packet boat which left Oban every Tuesday and Friday between June and October. The demand was such that a new inn was built at Auchnacraig close to Grasspoint where arrangements could be made for onward overland travel to Aros for the ferry to Staffa (Caledonian Mercury 12 June 1817).

Travelling to the west of Scotland was not the only difficulty encountered by the early visitors. A lack of accommodation was yet another deterrent with many parts of the country having either no lodgings available or only the occasional basic inn providing

rudimentary facilities (Durie 2003, p.28). Inns were widely scattered and not considered to be up to English standards (Withey 1996, p.52). Many inns in Scotland were described as mean hovels with dirty rooms, dirty food and dirty attendants (Graham 1909, p.44).

At the end of the eighteenth century it was Oban's proximity to the islands of Staffa and Iona which originally attracted visitors, not the town itself. In order to get to the islands any visitors who did not have their own boat had to travel via Oban. This provided an additional problem for the early travellers as the Statistical Report of 1791 stated that only one inn in the town provided lodgings.

4.7 Accommodation

Dr Johnson who arrived in Oban on 22 October 1783 with his companion James Johnson, on their journey to the Western Isles wrote that they found "a tolerable inn at Oban although it did afford him a good night's rest" (Chapman 1970, p.392). Writing in July 1791 Thomas Newte commented on his accommodation in Oban stating: "We put up at the only public house there which is one of the very worst kind" (Newte 1791).

Such accounts were clearly very subjective. In 1861, the *Glasgow Herald* printed an account of an unnamed visitor who had stayed in presumably the same inn during his tour of the Highlands in May 1802. He had reported that, "The inn at Oban was very good and everything was as comfortable as could be expected" (Glasgow Herald 15 August 1861).

The need for an inn at Oban was first highlighted in 1787 by the Duke of Argyll's factor who wrote to the Duke stating:

> "A Public House was absolutely necessary without which the Publick (sic) will be greatly discommodated (sic). I cannot see any method unless your Grace lays out the money for building a house and stables there. The least expense of Building a house and offices will be about £300" (Cregeen 1964).

No such inn was built and journals of the first travellers highlighted that they were almost totally reliant on the local population for information, transport and lodgings. Following his visit to Oban in 1800 Thomas Garnett commented upon the local

population and stated: “Their attention to strangers is very pleasing and I have myself to thank them for several marks of civility” (Garnett 1800).

The local merchants and local landowners perhaps unwittingly, provided the basis for the infant tourism industry, as it was in their homes that the early travellers were accommodated. Oban at this time only had the one inn and Sarah Murray stated that many visitors carried letters of introduction, which enabled them to find lodgings before journeying on to the islands (Murray 1805, p.132). This was forwarded to the recipient, usually one of the local landowners on arrival with a request that they provide them with accommodation. In return for their board and lodgings the host would be provided with news from other parts of the country. Such an arrangement was not uncommon and Durie (2003, p.28) commented that guests could “sing for their supper in exchange for news and gossip”. In addition to providing accommodation, local landowners played a major role in the development of Oban especially at the end of the eighteenth and start of the nineteenth century and their role will be examined in greater detail in the following chapters.

Although there were no records of the numbers of visitors to Oban at the end of the eighteenth century, Mrs Sarah Murray, who travelled extensively throughout the west Highlands advised potential travellers that the inn in Oban was too small to cater for the volume of travellers and was extremely busy in July (Murray 1805, p.20). No records exist as to the location of this establishment although it is likely to be either the Staffa Inn or ‘Tigh-clach-a-gheodha’, ‘The House of the Creek Stone’. The list of members of the Masonic Lodge in 1791 included one innkeeper who employed five male waiters but does not name the establishment. Although Staffa was attracting visitors the actual numbers visiting Oban was likely to have been very low. Therefore there was no incentive for innkeepers to provide a better standard of facilities.

Providing accommodation for visitors could be expensive and tiring as Lord Breadalbane stated that on many occasions more than 16 people had dined with him each night (Durie 2003, p.28). Sir Walter Scott’s wife also complained that life at Abbotsford was “like a hotel without the money” (Durie 2012, p.3).

Between Glasgow and Oban, there were some posting establishments but their standards

varied considerably. Inns situated on popular routes were able to charge more as the Wordsworths found at Dalmally. They paid more at the Dalmally inn as it was situated on the tourist route than they did at the inn at Bonawe, which was not (Durie 2003, p.31). Arriving early at an inn provided no guarantee of securing a bed for the night as Sarah Murray discovered in 1799. She arrived at the inn in the village of Tyndrum situated between Killin and Oban, in the early afternoon before a violent storm. Her stay coincided with the end of the Falkirk fair and by midnight the inn was full with drovers returning to the islands from the fair, and with weary travellers caught in the storm. Conditions became so bad that she wrote in her diary:

> "My servants could not get a place to put their heads in. My man took his sleep in the carriage and the poor horses were almost crushed to death in the stables" (Murray, 1805, p.364).

Philip Homer, who visited Oban in June 1803 with the prime objective of visiting Staffa, changed his mind because of the poor accommodation the Inn provided for his horses.

> "The accommodation for horses is so very infamous at Oban. There was no bed for the animals to lie down upon; the stable so crowded with horses, the place as dark as a dungeon, no separation of mangers and the most ignorant and lazy of all boys who had to take care of the whole stud neglected every one of them" (Homer 1803).

Regardless of the lack of accommodation and poor transport links, travellers' diaries highlighted that Oban clearly attracted visitors albeit in small numbers. The towns continued development will be examined in the following chapters.

4.8 Conclusions

The changing attitudes to nature and the environment had a definite impact on the popularity of the Highlands and islands in the late eighteenth and early years of the nineteenth centuries. The new ideas of the sublime and picturesque undoubtedly affected how the landscape was viewed and this transformed the Highlands and islands from being perceived as a place of wilderness into a place of beauty. The influence of the works of Gilpin and Price were evident in the journals of the early travellers' in their descriptions of the landscape. The travellers' diaries also highlighted the effect which MacPherson's Ossianic poetry and Scott's novels and poems had in attracting visitors to

the Oban area, although there are no records of the number of visitors who came to Oban at this time. The varying accounts in diaries of the same scenes or the same roads highlighted that these were very personal accounts and in order to gain a more accurate understanding a variety of these need to be consulted.

As there are no known surviving accounts of tourism written by any of Oban's residents all the information gathered in this chapter was from the visitor's point of view. As Durie (2012 p.14) commented:

> "It would have been valuable to have accounts written by the hosts not just the visitors. Perhaps an innkeepers or early hoteliers diary but to date none have come to light".

Until the publication of the *Steamboat Companion and Strangers Guide to the Western Islands and Highlands of Scotland*, in 1820 there was no mention of Oban in any guidebook. Even this publication provided travellers with minimal information which suggested that in the early nineteenth century there was little demand for information about the Oban area. However, by the 1820s the days of the traveller as the discoverer of Scotland was disappearing (Corbin 1994, p134). Guidebooks were recommending places to see and travel became more organised. As the next chapter will highlight, it became easier for travellers wishing to visit Oban as a more regular steam boat service became established between the town and Glasgow.

Oban's proximity to Staffa was clearly instrumental in its early development. Oban was portrayed as a gateway, a stopping off point for onward travel not a destination. Oban's early development had similarities with Pirie's (2009) concept of 'incidental tourism' where he argued that destinations can develop as a consequence of tourists arriving due to the transport infrastructure. Pirie's study of British Imperial Airways in the 1930s highlighted that passengers frequently had to stop off on their journeys as aeroplanes had a limited range and stopped to refuel. This gave them the opportunity to visit local attractions and experience the culture of these communities. If the airlines had not been required to refuel these places were unlikely to have developed as they were not the final destination. Although Pirie was writing about the 1930s this notion of 'incidental tourism' was very similar to Oban in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The diaries and letters indicated that the first visitors to Argyll and the islands were

motivated to visit due to their sense of adventure, a desire to encounter new cultures and experiences and for literary reasons. This corresponded closely with Butler's 'Exploration' stage. Those visitors who came were similar to Butler's explorers. They were attracted to the area through its unique natural and cultural attractions, but were hampered by poor transportation, lack of facilities especially accommodation and had limited knowledge of the area. Very little infrastructure was in place and they were very reliant on the local population for information, transport and accommodation. Despite limited transport options, visitors came to the area although the diaries also suggest that the village of Oban was itself not the main attraction. There were also some similarities with the first two stages of Butler's model of development in the Scottish Highlands. Butler called the period before 1745 'The Age of the Explorer' and between 1746 to 1810 'The First Tourists'. As Oban developed later than some resorts, those who came before 1810 were more akin to his 'explorers'. The first tourists did not really start to arrive in Oban until after 1810.

In the next chapter the social, environmental and economic development of Oban from the earliest records until 1901 was examined looking in particular at how the village grew and developed from a rural settlement into a busy resort. It considered in particular the role played initially by the landowners and later the town council in transforming Oban from a gateway to the Highlands and islands into a destination in its own right.

Chapter 5

The social, environmental and economic development of Oban 1700-1901

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examined the development of Oban from the first known records to the end of the nineteenth century. It looked at the reasons why Oban developed, how it developed and the impact tourism had on its layout, its economy and on the lives of its inhabitants. Throughout this chapter the influence which the local landowners and later the town council had on Oban's development between 1700 and 1901 was also considered. Although many studies have looked at the growth of resorts in Scotland, the influence of the local landowners is a subject that has received little attention. For any resort to develop successfully the input and co-operation of landowners was essential. In many villages, the land was owned by several landowners and co-operation, agreement on house styles was not always possible. Houses on the same street could be built without any uniformity with owners making the most of their plot. In addition little consideration was sometimes made to practicalities such as sewage disposal (Walton 1983, p.113). Throughout England, Wales and Scotland landowners had a major input into the layout and building styles and many seaside towns were built on land owned by the aristocracy long before they were established as resorts (Cannadine 1980, p.80). This chapter has also examined the influence which Oban's town council had on the town's development especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. Walton (1983, p.160) commented that the role played by councils regarding the growth of tourism was again particularly important in seaside resorts. However to date their influence on Scottish resorts has not been examined in any detail.

As this chapter covered an extensive period, it was divided into four sections:

1. 1700-1771 Oban prior to the arrival of the first tourists
2. 1772-1817 The arrival of the first tourists and early influence of the local landowners
3. 1818-1850 Transport and early development
4. 1851-1901 Gateway to destination

Although this thesis covered the period from 1770 to 1901, the chapter began by looking at Oban from the start of the eighteenth century before the arrival of the first visitors. Despite Oban's geographical isolation with poor overland communication to the main industrial towns, this chapter has highlighted that the town's development was initially influenced by the wider economy of Scotland and overseas. Its coastal situation enabled trade to flourish albeit on a relatively small scale with Europe and America and this section examined the effect trade had on the town's initial growth. The second part of the chapter covered the period from 1772 when Joseph Banks discovered the island of Staffa which led to the arrival of the first visitors. During the period from 1772 to 1817 those wishing to travel to Oban had to plan and organise their journeys as there was no public transport to the town either overland or by sea. This section also examined the role which the landowners especially the Duke of Argyll and the Captain of Dunstaffnage had on the early layout of the town.

As the majority of Oban's development took place during the nineteenth century, the third and fourth sections were divided into sub sections. Section three covered Oban's development between 1818 and 1850. This time scale was chosen as 1818 was the year the first paddle steamer arrived in Oban, greatly improving access to the town. During the first half of the century Oban began to develop albeit slowly as communication improved with the rest of Scotland and it was during this time that the first large hotel was built. The final section looked at Oban's development between 1851 and 1901. In 1851, David Hutcheson's new company began operating a faster service and more frequent service between Glasgow and Oban and by 1880 the railway linked Oban with Stirling and Glasgow. This period also saw the greatest changes in Oban as the majority of villas, hotels, public buildings and roads were constructed. It was during this time that Oban began to become a destination in its own right and not just a stopping off place. Both sections three and four examined accommodation, the provision of water and looked at how the religious requirements of the resident and visiting population were met. Although many authors have examined the development of resorts, there has been very little written about the provision of churches at the seaside, which is somewhat surprising considering the importance of religion in the Victorian era. Brodie and Winter (2007) included a short section on religion but apart from this, there is limited information about the religious requirements of those residing and visiting the

seaside. As most of Oban's development took place after 1851, a final section entitled "further improvements" was included.

5.2 1700 to 1771 - Oban before the arrival of the first tourists

Prior to the start of the eighteenth century, the village of Oban by the sea did not exist although there were small settlements in the surrounding glens. At this time Oban had four landowners, the main landowner the Duke of Argyll owned the majority of the village and the land around it. His estate in Oban extended south from the river, the Black Lynn which divided the town in two and included the areas known as the Wintertown of Glenshellach and Glencruitten both predominantly occupied by weavers (Papers of Campbell of Argyll 1792). The area to the south of the Duke's estates was owned by MacDougall of Gallanach and was sparsely populated being primarily agricultural land. The area north of the Duke's estates from the Black Lynn to the Tannery Burn was owned by the Captain of Dunstaffnage, whose castle was located to the north east of the village. The fourth landowner, MacDougall of Dunollie owned the land to the north of the Tannery Burn (see Appendix 8).

The commercial advantage of the anchorage at Oban Bay was first recognised by a Renfrew company, which established a trading station there in the early eighteenth century although the exact date is unknown (Shedden, 1938, p.201). Throughout the eighteenth century, merchants and entrepreneurs exploited the coastal location of the village to their advantage, with both lawful and unlawful trade. However, the isolated location of the village and its poor overland links to the south hindered legitimate economic expansion. Oban's coastal situation meant its economic development was influenced by the wider economy of Scotland also Europe and America especially the trade routes to Virginia. Trade was somewhat inhibited due to the absence of a quay so boats had to either discharge their cargoes straight onto the shore or transfer them to smaller vessels to transport ashore.

Despite the lack of a quay, in 1734 the Oban Trading Company was established in Glasgow by William Fogo of Killearn and his brother Henry, both tobacco merchants with premises in the city. They were joined by Coline Campbell of Argyll who had previously been involved in national and international trade with Europe and more

extensively America (Hunter, 2004, p.57). The company was primarily engaged in the import of tobacco from Virginia to Oban where a tobacco mill and cellars were built and four tobacco spinners employed. The company prospered and in 1736, six new partners including four from Oban and one each from the Isle of Colonsay and Fort William joined the business each investing £300 sterling (Hunter 2004, p.5).

In addition to legitimate trade, it became apparent that many merchants including those from the Oban Trading Company were involved in the very lucrative business of smuggling. Customs officials in Fort William became aware that some goods, mainly tobacco were being discharged from ships onto the island of Kerrera opposite Oban to avoid paying duty at Fort William. The ship's records reported that the goods were lost in transit (Hunter 2004, p.68). From Kerrera the tobacco was brought across to Oban by boat and then sent overland to the Lowlands. This practice became so rife that the government planned to move the Customs house from Fort William to Oban. In May 1758, they commissioned Daniel Paterson, a land surveyor to prepare a plan of the Bay and harbour in order to find a suitable location to site the Customs house, and for this, he was paid six pounds and five shillings (Minutes of the Commissioners of Supply 1758). A new location in Oban was identified and in 1760, the Customs house was transferred to Oban. Prior to Paterson's map the area was virtually uncharted apart from a less detailed map of the lands around Oban which had been drawn ten years earlier by William Roy as part of his military survey of Scotland which he carried out between 1747 and 1755. Roy's map (see Appendix 1) clearly indicated buildings on each side of the mouth of the river, which divided Oban in two. Other small hamlets were shown near the miln loch to the south of the village and in the areas of Glencruitten and Glenshellach to the west and south. Paterson's map also indicated a scattering of houses on each side of the river and evidence of a coastal settlement was captured in Lieutenant John Pierie's etching of Oban circa 1770 entitled "This View of the Town and Port of Oban". Two rows of whitewashed cottages on opposite sides of the river are shown with a further few houses including the Customs House situated along the shoreline (see Appendix 9).

Oban at this time did not appear to have held any interest for visitors. There were no records of anyone visiting the area for the purposes of leisure, although this was about to change.

5.3 1772 to 1817 - The laying out of the planned town

At the end of the eighteenth century the village of Oban had no formal layout. Whereas Inveraray, the main administrative centre of Argyll and home of the Duke of Argyll, had been designed as a planned town in 1772, in Oban houses of varying sizes and designs had been erected in a piecemeal fashion around the mouth of the river and facing the bay. Oban was not unique in having this type of random development. The expansion of many centres was often not done to any particular plan, as most villages were owned by several landowners, so co-operation and agreement on uniformity of styles was not always possible. Throughout the country other villages were following their own pattern of resort development. Gilbert (1954, p.17) stated that in Brighton, Margate and Blackpool the original old houses were demolished and developers and private owners built a variety of sizes and styles of housing without any thought to the layout of the towns.

However, not all resorts were developed from existing settlements. The Clyde resort of Helensburgh founded in 1776 by James Colquhoun of Luss, was planned specifically as a spa resort and designed to emulate the formal layout of Edinburgh's new town (Haig 2013). The Fife village of Lundin Links was also planned as a resort by the Standard Insurance Company which hoped that the East Fife Railway which opened in 1857 would attract visitors to the town (Simpson 2013, p.26).

The Statistical Report of 1791 recorded that the first phase of building took place in Oban in 1778 on the Duke of Argyll's estate. During the 1780s Donald Campbell, the Captain of Dunstaffnage began feuing much of his land to the north of the river around Oban bay. By the mid-1780s houses had been built along the shoreline and an unnamed Frenchman who visited Oban in 1786 described the village as consisting of "single storey houses and two storey houses made of stone along the sea" (Anon 1786). At the end of the 1780s, the village developed more quickly mainly due to the enterprise of two brothers Hugh and John Stevenson who were tenants of Dunstaffnage. They established a brewery, which in 1794 became the Oban distillery and a tannery. They also owned a ship building business, which provided employment for 12 ship's carpenters, 10 coopers and 2 brewers (Withrington and Grant 1983, p.282).

In 1792 Dunstaffnage placed an advertisement in the Edinburgh newspaper the *Caledonian Mercury* for ground to be feued in Oban, Argyleshire (sic). No prices were given and interested parties were invited to apply to Donald Campbell or to Mr J Grant, writer in Glasgow (Caledonian Mercury 5 March 1792). By the end of 1792, the Duke of Argyll's factor reported that almost 30 stances had been taken on Dunstaffnage's land. Eight two-storey houses were already constructed and more were being built with several of the large houses valued at £400 to £500. For a house on the street facing the sea with 40 feet of land in front and 170 feet behind, feuars provided an input of grassum[3] of £20 along with 5 shillings of yearly feu duty. Feuars in the back streets had 40 feet of land in front and 70 feet behind each house for 5 guineas plus 5 shillings of yearly feu duty. Each of the feuars on the front street also received two acres of land one mile from the houses at 15 shillings for each acre for 19 years. The feu holders were also entitled to grazing for two cows on the common adjacent to Oban at 20 shillings each. Feuars in the Back Street could graze one cow on the common at the same rent. On the Duke of Argyll's land 12 two-storey houses, seven single storey and 25 thatched houses were built to the south and west of the Black Lynn River on Shore Street and High Street. The total population of the town at this time was 734. Of these 659 lived on the south side of the river on the Duke of Argyll's lands and 75 resided on the Captain of Dunstaffnage's lands to the north of the river (Papers of Campbell of Argyll 1792). Oban's two other landowners the MacDougall's of Dunollie and the MacDougall's of Gallanach played little part in the town's development at this time. Dunollie estates did not feu lands until the early 1860s when they granted their first feus along the shore following the extension of the esplanade. MacDougall of Gallanach's lands remained primarily agricultural and remained unbuilt upon until the 1920s.

Oban also grew as a result of agricultural improvement. To ensure maximum efficiency, productivity and profitability, landowners throughout Scotland most notoriously in Sutherland consolidated many of their smaller farms into larger units, which resulted in many former crofters losing their livelihoods. The widespread introduction of sheep to the Highlands changed farming completely with much of the Highlands and islands of

[3] A single payment often made in addition to a periodic payment such as rent

Scotland becoming depopulated as tenant farmers were forcibly removed from the land. The farms in Argyll did not escape from this improvement process and from the 1770s many of the small farm steadings in Argyll were combined to become larger units. This led to an influx of people into the villages of Campbeltown, Tobermory and Oban, which all became swollen, with the dispossessed (McGeachy, 2006, p.57). The Reverend Patrick MacDonald noted in his Statistical Account of 1791 that prior to improvement the rents around Oban had been very moderate. However, following improvements, rents had doubled and sometimes trebled. Many tenants and cottagers were removed from their homes, as they were unable to pay the increased rents, which led to the abandonment of many farm villages around Oban (Withrington and Grant, 1983, p.283).

The economies of the west of Argyll and Sutherland were similar, as both areas were isolated from much of the rest of Scotland. However, the breakup of the old farm towns in Argyll differed from that of the Sutherland estates. In Sutherland displaced farm workers were removed by force to the new coastal villages of Helmsdale, Brora and Dornoch to try to make a living from herring fishing. As Oban was already an established fishing and trading community, many of those who left the surrounding farm steadings moved into the village in search of alternative employment. In 1791, Reverend MacDonald wrote that over the past 50 years the population in Oban had increased by over a third, which suggested that some of those who had left the crofts had remained in the area. However, he noted that many of the younger and fitter tenants had left the area in search of employment whereas the old and infirm became dependent on poor relief (Withrington and Grant, 1983, p.284).

In the absence of any major industrial development, Oban continued to grow slowly and there was very little documentation regarding the town at this time. Apart from the few houses located around Oban bay, there were no reports of any public buildings other than the Customs house. The attendance records from the Oban Masonic Lodge from 1790 to 1805 included the names of ships' Captains from the Baltic, which confirmed that trading was taking place with Europe (Members of Oban's Masonic Lodge, 1790-1805). The adjacent villages of Kilmore and Kilbride lying a few miles to the south were more developed with a combined population double that of Oban with around

1,300 inhabitants in 1791. Each had a church and Kilmore also had an inn and a distillery (Withrington and Grant 1983, p.279).

In common with many other rural Scottish towns, Oban attracted entrepreneurs who sought to utilise the resident labour pool. David Dale the Lanarkshire cotton merchant and founder of New Lanark Mill employed weavers in their homes in Oban and Glenshellach and in 1791, he planned to expand his business and establish a cotton mill in Oban. His intention was to give employment to the local population thus providing an alternative to emigration and at the same time supplying him with a source of cheap labour. However, due to the high cost of bringing in fuel, and the town's relative inaccessibility, the enterprise did not go ahead. Dale commented that until transport links between Oban and Glasgow were vastly improved he would not consider Oban as a situation for a mill as it was currently not a viable enterprise (Maclaine of Lochbuie Papers 1792). Weaving still remained one of the main occupations in Oban and in 1792 there were 25 weavers in the village which accounted for more than 10% of the total working population (Papers of Campbell of Argyll 1792).

In the early 1790s another entrepreneur Richard Paley, a major Leeds industrialist, considered the possibility of establishing a soap works in Oban. He also planned to export the local kelp to use in his soap factories in England. In addition to sourcing a large labour force, he may have been motivated by the increasing price of kelp, which trebled between 1770 and 1810 (Richards 2005). However, the prohibitive cost of transporting the kelp to Leeds resulted in the project being abandoned. Paley's enterprise did not go ahead, although Oban merchants exported kelp by ship from Oban to Liverpool (Papers of Campbell of Argyll 1792).

The sea played a major role in Oban's economy and in 1792 the Duke of Argyll's Factor reported that there were:

> "28 vessels registered, 12 of which belong to Hugh and John Stevenson. Tonnage of these 12 is 720t, one of them employed in foreign trade, the rest in the coasting and fishing business. They were built at Oban by Hugh and John Stevenson. The other 16 vessels belong to people in the neighbourhood and are employed in the boating and fishing trade. Their tonnage is about 600t and the total tonnage of 28 vessels belonging to Oban is 1320 tonnes" (Papers of Campbell of Argyll 1792).

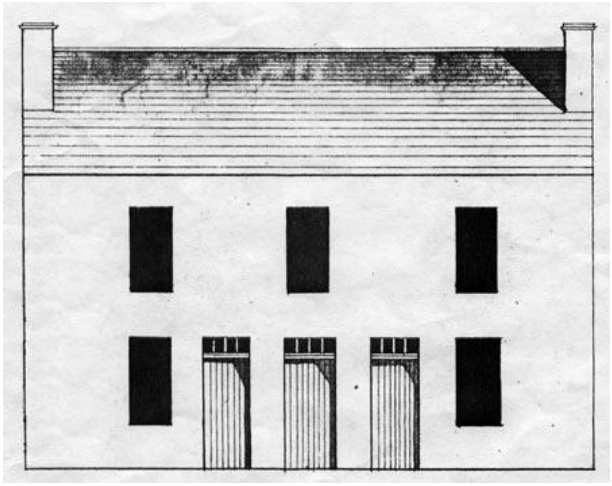
Although Oban merchants traded with the Baltic States and Virginia, the lack of a proper quay continued to be a major hindrance to expansion. In 1792, the Duke of Argyll's factor recommended that in order to load and unload vessels with ease, a quay of about 300 feet in length and a breast wall 300 to 500 feet was required along with a purpose built harbour. The cost of construction was estimated at £2,367 17s.8d. From this sum £1,200 15s, was required for the quay and £1,167 2s 8d for the breast wall (Papers of Campbell of Argyll 1792). The new quay did not go ahead, however the old village of Oban was about to be transformed when in 1800 the 5th Duke of Argyll commissioned Campbeltown architect George Langlands to design and plan a new town at Oban on his land to the south of the river. The old thatched properties in the Balure[4] were demolished and replaced by a row of uniform white-painted one and two storey dwellings as illustrated in Figure 5.1. These properties were built alongside the bay and a new road was constructed between the houses and the sea. A similar style was adopted in his other coastal towns of Inveraray, Campbeltown, Lochgilphead and Bowmore on the island of Islay. The Reverend Crutwell who visited Oban during his tour through Great Britain described Oban as "a small seaport with a customs house and a Post Office" (Crutwell 1801). By 1803, the changes being made to Oban were noted by Groome's Gazetteer of Scotland which stated:

> "The town has risen rapidly from a small beginning. Following the building of the customs house in 1760 trade increased and the two landowners granted building leases."

In 1804, The Captain of Dunstaffnage granted feus to ten residents on his land adjacent to the shore along what became George Street and Argyll Street. The following year an additional 13 feus were granted to wrights, masons, merchants, a tailor and a gardener. The feus were along the extended George Street, Stafford Street and Charles Street which led from George Street to the harbour area (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1846a).

[4] The old village

Figure 5.1: Elevation of small Oban tenement described as 'Plan and Elevation of a house intended to be Built on His Grace the Duke of Argyll's property in the Village of Oban by Duncan Livingstone, Tradesman and Alexander Livingstone, joiner, both in Oban'.



Source: (SCRAN Elevation of small Oban tenement).

The pattern of feus granted indicated that the plan was originally designed to follow the gridiron pattern as found in many other Scottish coastal villages. In Oban this traditional layout was initially limited because of the steep cliffs behind the bay, which restricted building to a narrow strip of land along the shore. The early layout is still visible in both the map of Oban in 1848 (see Appendix 2) and also in the photograph of Oban in 1860 (see Appendix 5).

Some of the properties built by the feu holders were substantial buildings. In 1805, the *Caledonian Mercury* advertised the sale of No.5 George Street, which had a street frontage of 40 feet and extended to 120 feet in depth. The accommodation comprised a principal house described as able to accommodate a large family having 12 rooms with fires plus additional closets. In addition, to the rear of the house was a slated property suitable as a dwelling house and a thatched cottage (Caledonian Mercury 21 September 1805).

By 1806 several buildings had already been constructed and in 1806 an anonymous visitor commented that:

> "Oban is a flourishing village the houses are comfortable and neatly built. It has however but lately become of any consequence for within these twenty years it consisted only of 4 or 5 mean houses" (Anon 1806).

In 1806, The Captain of Dunstaffnage sold his lands in Oban including the distillery to Mr Hay Smith of Haddington who already owned distilleries and wineries in other parts of Scotland and England (Saville 1996, p.867). Following the sequestration of Hay Smith's estate in 1808, Charles Campbell of Combie from Loch Awe bought his lands. He extended George Street northwards and continued to feu land on which two and three storey properties were constructed (Shedden 1938, p.218).

The land to the south of the river remained the property of the Duke of Argyll who continued to have an input into Oban's development. In 1812, he commissioned the construction of Oban's first inn and posting establishment the New Inn, built at the end of Shore Street near the mouth of the river. Two years later, he paid for a quay to be built beside the inn (Shedden 1938, p.226). The Duke's reasons for constructing the inn and quay may not have been purely altruistic. Henry Bells paddle steamer *The Comet* had just began operating between Glasgow and Helensburgh and was soon to extend its sailings to Oban bringing more visitors in search of accommodation.

5.4 1818 to 1851- The early development of the resort of Oban

In 1818, Henry Bell's paddle steamer *The Comet* sailed from Glasgow and Oban. This was the first time a commercial service had linked the two towns. *The Comet's* speed was just five miles an hour and the fare from Glasgow to Oban was 16s for a cabin and 12s steerage (MacRae 1908, p.83). Its impact on the town was immediate. Miller's Royal Tourist Complete Handbook (1877, p.166) stated:

> "From its introduction Oban began to increase in size and importance in proportion as the means of communication with the south were opened up."

In 1820, the Duke of Argyll sold his lands on the south side of Oban to his cousin Robert Campbell of Sonachan. Robert Campbell continued to make improvements to Oban and extended the quay. Even with the improved quay, the paddle steamers were only able to dock at high tide. When the tide was low goods and passengers were transferred ashore by rowing boat (Shedden 1938, p.230). If Oban was to compete with the Clyde resorts a new pier was required. Rothesay already had a new harbour built in

1822 for £600 with a slip and dock added in 1840. Dunoon's pier was extended in 1828 to deal with the increased steamer traffic (Groome 1882a). The harbour at Largs was constructed in 1834 at a cost of £4,275 and was accessible to the steamers even at low tide (Groome 1882b).

In 1830, the problem caused by the lack of a proper quay at Oban was brought to a head. The *Maid of Morvern*, which had sailed from Inverness, anchored off Oban's quay to allow her passengers to disembark. As the tide receded, the boat overbalanced with the weight of its cargo. The goods on deck floated away and passengers' luggage became soaked with salt water (The Aberdeen Journal 24 May 1830). Although no injuries were sustained by passengers this incident highlighted a new quay was urgently required. However no such quay was built until 1837 when John Campbell, 2nd Marquis of Breadalbane, who resided at Taymouth Castle, purchased Charles Combie's lands in Oban from his executors (Shedden 1938, p.218). The estate included Glencruitten, George Street, Stafford Street and the surrounding hills. Perhaps realizing the town's potential for trade, in 1837 the Marquis arranged for a new pier to be constructed at the end of Stafford Street. This was a more central location and was opposite the recently opened Caledonian Hotel. The pier was enlarged and extended again in 1847 when a large American ship sank off the island of Lismore. After her cargo had been removed, she was towed to Oban and laid alongside the current pier. After filling the hold with stones and securing the wreck to the seabed, the remains of the ship were built upon and used to extend the pier (Shedden 1938, p.234). The Marquis of Breadalbane further improved the facilities by providing a slipway and in July 1848 the town magistrates regulated the porterage to ensure that "only respectable persons could convey luggage at a fixed and moderate rate" (Oban Town Council Minute Book 1822-1849).

5.4.1 Accommodating the visitors

Although a regular steamer service had linked Oban to Glasgow since 1818, there was a lack of accommodation available in the town for visitors. Their only options were the New Inn built by the Duke of Argyll in 1812, the Staffa Inn or Tigh-clach-a-gheodha, both of which were basic drovers' inns. In 1829, local merchant John Stevenson financed the building of The Caledonian Hotel on George Street, designed to cater for the increased number of steamer passengers. In November 1829, the unfinished hotel

was advertised for sale with an upset price of £400 (The Scotsman 14 November 1829). The Caledonian finally opened in 1832 with the owner advertising extensively in Scottish newspapers, notifying prospective customers that the hotel provided:

> "Every possible accommodation for travellers - the want of which has hitherto been a subject of general complaint by strangers visiting this place" (The Scotsman 20 June 1832).

The construction of the Caledonian Hotel suggested that Oban's visiting population were in search of better accommodation than that provided by the traditional inns. This correlated with the research undertaken by Humair (2011, p.240). In his study of Geneva he found that during the 1830s and 1840s the traditional inn found itself in competition with a new type of hotel that was better suited to the comfort of travellers. Although there is no record of the numbers of travellers arriving in Oban at this time, the construction of the Caledonian Hotel suggested that there were sufficient visitors to make the project viable. In 1836 the *Caledonian Mercury* reported that:

> "The number of strangers here is increasing rapidly. Lodgings can hardly be obtained at advanced prices" (Caledonian Mercury 4 August 1836).

During the 1840s, the first major period of development took place when the Marquis of Breadalabane feued land on the hills surrounding the bay for new villas. The land was not advertised locally but instead in Glasgow and Edinburgh newspapers. As the feudal superior, the Marquis had the final say as to how his land was developed. However, his factor wrote to him suggesting prospective purchasers should be allowed to choose the style of house they wished to build and not be bound to a particular design. The only stipulation being that they:

> "Shall in some measure harmonise with other houses and considered not offensive to good taste and for the satisfaction of the superior, the said building designs are to be submitted to him" (Papers of the Campbell Family Earls of Breadalbane 1844).

The Marquis continued to feu land on his estate for villas throughout the 1840s with most of the villas built on the hill overlooking the sea. The area along the shore north of the pier owned by MacDougall of Dunollie remained undeveloped which suggested there was little demand for property at this time. The census returns show that the

population only grew slightly during this period rising from 1,398 in 1841 to 1,742 by 1851.

5.4.2 Meeting the religious needs of the resident population

Although the new planned town of Oban was expanding, there was no provision made for the religious needs of the village population. The Duke of Argyll's other planned towns of Inveraray, Bowmore, Campbeltown and Lochgilphead all included a church situated at the head of the main street. No church was included in the new planned town at Oban; the closest churches available to the inhabitants were in the villages of Kilmore or Kilbride five miles to the south. Over 50 years earlier in 1738, one of Oban's main landowners, Angus Campbell of Dunstaffnage had petitioned the Kirk Presbytery asking them to consider transferring the church from Kilbride to Oban. He estimated the cost of building a new church at Oban would be less than building a new church at Kilbride. Timber could be brought into Oban by sea and lime shipped from the nearby island of Lismore (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1738). The presbytery rejected his request and instead spent money improving Kilbride Church.

In 1820, Oban's first church, the Congregational, was built on Tweedale Street in the centre of the town. Prior to the building of their church the members faced persecution and sermons were conducted on the shore at low tide. Due to their unpopularity, the land purchased for the church was acquired on their behalf by a third party. The local congregation raised £100 and the minister collected the additional £300 from church members in Glasgow, Edinburgh and London (MacRae 1901, p.112).

Between 1821 and 1822, the Presbyterian Chapel of Ease was built at the end of Combie Street on land provided by Charles Combie. The chapel accommodated 530 and was built at a cost of £1,143 (Shedden 1938, p.245). It too was funded through collections obtained from churches throughout Scotland, as Oban's protestant population of just over 1,300 could not meet the cost. Church notices in newspapers notified congregations of forthcoming collections for the Oban church:

> "The object of the collection is to allow the managers to finish and open the chapel which is in connection with the Established Church, and absolutely necessary for the religious instruction of the inhabitants of the place who are quite incapable of securing this valuable blessing without the aid of friends of religion in other parts of the country" (Caledonian Mercury 9 February 1822).

The Marquis of Breadalbane also supported the religious needs of the population. In November 1843, following the Disruption, which split the town, Duncan MacArthur the Chief Magistrate of Oban, wrote to the Marquis asking him to gift land to construct a Free Church. MacArthur stated that if the Marquis provided the land the General Trust would provide a grant and other resources, which would enable them to build a church capable of accommodating 400-500 of a congregation (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1843).

There was a great deal of ill feeling towards the proposed new church especially from wealthier town merchants and landowners in Oban and owners of adjacent estates who supported the established church. In a letter to the Marquis in December 1843, the chairman of the Free Church committee stated he was aware that wealthy merchant Thomas Stevenson had tried to dissuade the Marquis from granting land for the church but again appealed to him for help. He stated that a church was desperately needed to fulfil the spiritual needs of the town's people especially as for every two members of the established church there were five in support of the Free Church (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1843a). The Marquis provided the land for the church and commissioned Edinburgh architect David Cousin to design the building. The Free Church was opened in 1847 at a cost of £1,624 (Murray, 1984, p.6). Services were usually conducted in Gaelic although in order to accommodate English speaking visitors to the town, during the summer two separate sermons were preached, Gaelic in the morning and English in the afternoon (Murray, 1984, p11).

These early churches were built to serve the needs of the local population but as the town increased in popularity, there was also a requirement to serve the religious needs of its visiting summer population, which will be examined later in the chapter.

5.4.3 The provision of a water supply

As Oban developed there was a demand for better services, with the first and most urgent being the provision of a good clean water supply. As Cannadine (1980, p.273) stated, the first requirement of any aspiring watering place was that it should be well drained, have no sewage problems and an uninterrupted supply of pure water. Oban's residents had formerly obtained their water from various springs but as the village expanded, a more reliable source was required. On 18 July 1828, the town council which comprised Charles Combie, Provost; three shopkeepers, two merchants and a surgeon, met to discuss the cheapest way of supplying the village with water. The cost was to be met by the Burgh funds and was not to exceed twenty pounds (Hunter 1993, p.23). A cistern was built on Charles Combie's land just south of the river and lead pipes laid from there to a pump at the east end of Combie's quay. To ensure additional water was available, the current spring on the quay was repaired. These two supplies were sufficient to supply the town until the 1860s when the increased number of visitors meant a new system became necessary to meet their demands.

The second half of the century saw the major period of development for Oban and much of its growth was attributed to the newly introduced steamer service between Glasgow and Oban.

5.5 1851 to 1901 – Gateway to destination

In 1851, David Hutcheson began operating an improved steamer service between Glasgow and Oban. The sailings were advertised as the "Royal Route" following Queen Victoria's visit to Oban on 19 August 1847. Although she did not land in the town details of her travels were published daily in the national newspapers in Scotland and England with detailed descriptions about Oban portraying it in a very favourable light.

Following the introduction of the "Royal Route", the *Glasgow Herald* estimated that 15-20,000 visitors had arrived in Oban in 1851 (Glasgow Herald 3 September 1852). Four steamers operated between Crinan and Oban and but there was insufficient space available at the quay for them to dock (Shedden, 1938, p.233). Following the death of the Marquis of Breadalbane in 1862, his trustees lodged a proposal with the Sheriff

Clerk at Inveraray and at the Admiralty Office to enlarge Oban's pier as the present one was considered inadequate for the volume of traffic using it. The estimated cost was £1,340 and sanction was given for work to proceed under the Oban Harbour Order 1862 (Oban Town Council Minute Book 1844-1864). In 1863 the quay was enlarged at a cost of £1,500 paid for by the Breadalbane estates to allow larger steamers to dock thus enabling more tourists to visit Oban. The pier at Rothesay was also extended in 1863, when a large extension of the harbour was constructed at a cost of £3,800 paid for by the town council and harbour trust (Groome 1885).

However the trustees of the Breadalabane estates wished to receive a return from the pier. In 1864 they gained an order from the Board of Trade for a Bill to be presented at Parliament, to permit the Breadalbane estates to levy a rate on all goods and passengers arriving or departing from either the quay or the esplanade at Oban. It was proposed that all passengers would pay 2d when disembarking from the steamers and any passenger visiting the town would have to pay another 2d to re-join the ship. In addition, all visitors hiring a boat would be subject to an additional charge of 4d to launch the boat from the shore and a levy of 4d would be imposed on their return (Glasgow Herald 8 June 1864).

Oban town councillors were against the proposal. Many of them owned shops and licensed premises so had a vested interest in the tourist trade. Around half of the revenue taken by Oban's shops was estimated to be from passengers coming ashore to visit while the steamers unloaded and reloaded cargo. In response, the town councillors sent a deputation to London to oppose the Bill (Oban Town Council Minute Book 1844-1864). They argued that such a charge would have a huge impact on the town traders who already had a relatively short season and were reliant on the revenue obtained from the steamer passengers. Following the visit of the group from Oban, the Committee of the House of Commons ruled that the Trustees of the Breadalbane estates would not be allowed to impose levies on passengers arriving or departing from Oban (Glasgow Herald 15 June 1864).

In 1864, Robert Campbell of Sonachan sold the southern parts of Oban to Robert McFie of Airds who came from a wealthy family of sugar refiners in Greenock (Miller, 1877,

p.172). He clearly saw the potential the town offered as he wrote in a letter to Alexander Maclean of Ardgour:

> "Oban may turn out a good purchase, but it will take time to develop its fortunes. I am glad you think well of it, but as you remark there is a great deal to be done and you must give me time" (The John MacGregor Collection 1864).

Oban was a profitable purchase for McFie as he owned the land on which the Callander and Oban railway would later build their terminus and Station. In addition he provided access to the south of the town and feued lands on the hill overlooking the south bay. In 1866 George Grant MacKay, a landowner from Letterfinlay, purchased The Marquis of Breadalbanes Estates from his trustees for £38,000. He continued to feu the land on the hills to the north of Oban for villas and built new roads throughout his property. The extent of his improvements was such that *The Oban Times* reported that a large work force had been attracted to Oban to carry out the work. New roads and villas were constructed and a quarter of a million trees planted on the hills of his Ardconnel and Soroba estates (The Oban Times 14 December 1866). In 1876, George MacKay sold his lands at Glencruitten to Mr Houldsworth of Coltness for £36,000 and the other half to Mr MacDougall of Battlefields, Bath (Shedden, 1938, p.218). Being further from the town centre, Glencruitten remained primarily agricultural although MacDougall continued to feu Ardconnel and Soroba estates for villas (Shedden 1938, p.226).

5.5.1 Accommodating the visiting population

By 1851, Oban had 15 lodging houses and eight hotels. The largest hotel was the Caledonian which had 85 rooms. The other hotels were considerably smaller each with only a few rooms and visitors arriving in the town without booking ahead could have difficulty in finding accommodation. In an attempt to alleviate the problem, the owner of the Caledonian Hotel introduced a system whereby anyone in the town with a spare bed was asked to provide accommodation for visitors. Even this proved insufficient and the following year a party of 26 visitors had to sit up all night in the public room of the newly built Kings Arms Hotel, as they could not find any beds in the town (Caledonian Mercury 2 September 1852). To meet the increased demand the Caledonian Hotel added additional floors and demolished the stable block to the rear of the hotel which increased the number of rooms to 120 (Glasgow Herald 22 December 1856). The next

largest hotel the recently built Kings Arms had 56 rooms (Oban Burgh Valuation Rolls 1856-60). In November 1857 an article in the *Glasgow Herald*, entitled "Tourists in the Highlands" estimated that during the summer season 40,000 people had stayed in Oban. With their estimated daily spend of 10s not including additional sums spent on steamers, eating and drinking they estimated that around £20,000 was spent in the town by visitors in four months although no evidence was provided as to how these figures were calculated (Glasgow Herald 2 November 1857).

In 1859, the fashionable northern quarter of Oban, known as the 'Corran,' was feued from MacDougall of Dunolly. During the next four years, the northern esplanade and Columba Terrace, including the 120 room Great Western Hotel, were built. Situated on the new esplanade the Great Western was designed to appeal to the more affluent and had a dining room capable of accommodating over 300 guests (The Oban Times 25 August 1866).

In 1871, two additional hotels were built on the seafront. The 100 room Regent Temperance Hotel opposite the steamboat pier was owned by local businessman and town councillor John Stuart McCaig. At the far end of the newly extended esplanade, Lindsay Grandison MacArthur built the Alexandra Hotel. These hotels raised the amount contributed by Oban's hotels to 14% of the total rateable value of the town. Following the completion of the Callander and Oban Railway in June 1880, the 120 bedroomed Station Hotel was built directly opposite the railway station and many others increased in size to meet the demand for accommodation. By 1881, there were 16 hotels in Oban providing accommodation for 1,250 guests and their servants (Oban Burgh Bill House of Commons. 1881). Groome's Gazetteer commented that the town had more hotels in proportion to its size than Edinburgh (Groome 1882c). These large properties were paying substantial rates with the Great Western alone contributing £1,659 which amounted to almost 7% of the whole rateable value of Oban.

Although Oban had large hotels offering every comfort, the town did not have a Hydropathic establishment. Oban's two nearest competitors Rothesay and Dunoon already had Hydropathics. Rothesay's opened in 1843 and Dunoon's in 1846. With the Victorians' increasing interest in health, such an establishment was considered essential to Oban maintaining its status as a health resort. In 1876, a Hydropathic establishment

was planned for Oban to accommodate the increasing number of visitors, which the Callander and Oban railway would bring. The proposed hotel would provide rooms for 1,600 guests and their servants. Plans for the hotel did not progress until 1880 with an estimated cost of £75,000 raised by 7,500 shares at £10 each. However, the project proved too costly and plans were abandoned (Glasgow Herald 15 September 1880).

In 1881, the plans were resurrected when a group of businessmen and prospective shareholders met in the offices of the Oban Hills Hydropathic and Sanatorium Company Limited at 58 Bath Street, Glasgow. The company prospectus stated that following the opening of the Callander and Oban railway in 1880, the number of tourists to Oban had increased beyond expectations. Visitors were often forced to sleep on the steamers and there was a requirement for accommodation of a high standard. Oban was ideally situated for both a summer and winter resort for invalids and therefore any shareholders would realise a profit of 12-16%. The cost to build the hotel was estimated to be £33,000. The built costs would be £20,000 and the remaining £13,000 would pay for furnishing and fitting out the establishment. This was much less than the newly completed Athole Hydropathic in Pitlochry, which had cost upwards of £100,000 (Shaw 1982, p.182). The chairman assured the board that local tenders had been received and the hotel could be built within budget. Savings would be made by using local stone quarried on site and the cost of wages was low. The hotel would have 137 bedrooms for guests and additional accommodation for their servants and horses. As it was to be located 100 feet above sea level hydraulic lifts would connect the building to the town below. The opening date was planned for the summer of 1882 (Glasgow Herald 20 May 1881). The Oban Hydropathic attracted 146 subscribers (Durie 2006, p.51) and work began on the hotel in 1881. Initially rapid progress was made but costs rose quickly. The local stone proved unsuitable and a different type of stone had to be brought in from quarries outside the town. By June 1882 the external walls were completed and the roof partly finished. However, in December 1882 the funds had ran out and the contractors abandoned the site taking anything of value with them (Shaw 1982, p.187).

In 1896, a final attempt was made to resurrect the Hydropathic and advertisements appeared in many Scottish and English papers in an effort to attract investors. The company advertised subscriptions for 60,000 preference shares at £1 and 90,000

ordinary shares at £1 on which there was a premium of 5s. The revised prospectus stated the hotel would have 600 bedrooms in total and seating for over 2,000 guests. Recreational facilities were to include a golf course and a lawn tennis court for guests. In addition, an all-weather cycle track was to be constructed in the grounds and bicycles supplied (The Times 3 December 1896). However, there was little interest in the proposal and the building was finally abandoned in 1897.

Between 1880 and 1890, the majority of Oban's large hotels were constructed and others refurbished and added additional rooms and facilities. In 1885, an editorial in the Daily Mail commented:

> "Oban has been justly termed a town of hotels and these are of a kind you don't meet with every day except in metropolitan centres. The Great Western, The Station and the Alexandra are palatial structures. The dining hall of the Great Western can seat 3-400 people comfortably" (Daily Mail 4 July 1885).

In comparison to the top class hotels in other resorts Oban's hotels although grand for its size were small. Brighton's Grand Hotel, built in 1864 had cost £160,000 (Walton, 1983, p.92) whereas the Station Hotel in Oban was built in 1880 for £20,000 (The Oban Times 13 May 1882). However, even without the Hydropathic, by 1889, the rate bills for Oban's hotels totalled £6,162; more than 22% of the town's rateable value of £28,509 (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Rateable value of Oban 1856 to 1900 highlighting the contribution made by the hotels

Year	Hotel Rates	Town Rates	Hotel rates as a % of total
1856	£531	£4,800	11%
1865	£744	£7,514	10%
1870	£1,571	£8,972	18%
1875	£1,857	£11,874	16%
1884	£5,203	£24,658	21%
1889	£6,162	£28,509	22%
1895	£7,067	£39,145	18%
1900	£7,160	£42,733	17%

Source: (Adapted from Oban Town Council Minute Books 1856-1875 and Oban Burgh Valuation Rolls 1856-1900).

The percentage contribution of the hotels to the rates bill fell after 1890 due to the extensive building program of other properties in the town especially the new municipal buildings, hospitals and court house.

Although new hotels were constructed to accommodate visitors, the increasing popularity of the temperance movement allegedly affected trade in Oban. In 1881 a meeting of the Scottish Temperance League listed 11,532 adult members in Scotland (The Dundee Courier and Argus 28 April 1881). This was an increase of 59% on the 6,787 adult members in 1872 (Glasgow Herald 8 May 1872). Oban hoteliers' stated that many visitors were staying in their premises for several weeks and not drinking any alcohol so their profits were considerably reduced. In July the following quote appeared in *The Oban Times*:

> "Visitors have been known to stop for weeks at hotels here lately and were totally unacquainted with the landlord's wine cellar" (The Oban Times 1 July 1882).

By 1887, Oban had 14 licensed hotels, eight public houses and eight shops licensed for the sale of excisable liquor and some residents were concerned that alcohol was becoming too freely available. In 1887, members of the Oban Abstainers' Union distributed a questionnaire to the ratepayers in the town asking for their views on the number of licenses held within the town. There were now 29 hotels in Oban and although 15 were temperance the majority of those were smaller establishments. The majority of the large hotels along the seafront, which contributed the most to the rates bill, were licensed premises.

The questions asked were as follows:

1. Are you in favour of reducing the existing number of licenses in Oban?
2. Are you in favour of the number of licenses remaining as it is at present?
3. Are you in favour of increasing the number of licenses?

694 papers were returned and the results given by the burgh assessor are recorded in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Oban Abstainers' Union questionnaire results

Reduction in the number of licenses	431
Numbers of licenses remaining as at present	91
For increasing the number of licenses	79
Blank papers returned	76
Spoiled papers	17
Total	**694**

Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* 12 March 1887).

Although a clear majority voted in favour of reducing the number of licenses, no changes were made. The following year the town magistrates received a deputation representing the Oban Abstainers' Union and the Oban Women's Temperance Prayer Union. They presented a petition, which stated that many inhabitants of Oban believed that much of the drunkenness, which prevailed in Scotland, took place throughout the year between 10 and 11pm. This would be largely be prevented by the earlier closing of licensed houses. They requested that the council only licence premises until 10pm

during the summer months and this would not interfere with the requirements of the tourist. Members of the Abstainers' Union in Oban were not alone in campaigning for a reduction in the opening hours of licensed premises. Out of 50 burghs in Scotland, 48 had agreed to close licensed premises at 10pm the two exceptions being Oban and Dunbar where it had been arranged to keep them open in the summer months until 11pm. In addition to these burghs 31 counties or districts of counties including Inverness, Nairn, St Andrews, Rothesay and Perth had already agreed to early closing (The Oban Times 24 March 1888).

Oban's councillors consistently voted against reducing the opening hours of licensed establishments, which may in part have been due to the large numbers of councillors who were also hoteliers and businessmen. In 1889 the town council members included seven shop owners, four of which were licenced premises, three hoteliers, three bankers, a steamer agent and a builder who was a major employer (Shedden 1938, p.224). With over 25% of the councillors being directly involved in tourism plus the shopkeepers also very reliant on visitors the council was very much dominated by those with a vested interest in the holiday industry. Oban was not unique in this respect; the majority of Blackpool's council at this time was also dominated by those with an interest in tourism (Walton 1992, p.25).

Throughout the 1890s much heated debate took place in the columns of *The Oban Times* with regard to reducing opening hours. However, the town council whose members were still predominantly connected with the tourist trade constantly voted against a reduction. In 1904 the subject arose again with those in favour of licensed premises remaining open until 11pm stating that this was necessary to attract tourists. Those against argued that visitors did not come to the town to drink but to enjoy the scenery and attractions on offer (The Oban Times 15 April 1905). The town magistrates of Oban finally voted for licensed premises to close at 10pm. However members of the Oban and Lorn Licensed Trade Association regarded the decision as unreasonable and appealed against the decision, although they were overturned.

As Oban continued to develop and attract visitors the religious needs of both the local population and the summer visitors had to be met. From the weekly visitors' lists which were examined in more detail in Chapter 8, it was clear that the majority of Oban's

visitors came from England. Although there were three churches in the town the Presbyterian, the Free Church and the Congregational, services were predominantly conducted in Gaelic. By the middle of the nineteenth century it was felt by some that there was a need for an Episcopal church to meet the needs of the visiting population.

5.5.2 Meeting the religious needs of the resident and visiting population

In 1847 Bishop Ewing and the Synod of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles, considered that there was a requirement for an Episcopal church to be built at Oban as "It was much resorted to by small reading parties with tutors from the English Universities" (Craven 1907, p.375). Argyll and the Isles synod recognised the difficulty in obtaining funds to construct a church in Oban as those who visited during the summer were only resident for a short time. The local population were mainly either Church of Scotland or Free Church of Scotland and were therefore unwilling to contribute towards the cost of building an Episcopal church. In 1848, the Bishop wrote to the Marquis of Breadalbane asking for land to construct an Episcopal church. He argued:

> "The very large concourse of visitors to Oban and its vicinity from England who are members of the Church of England and considerable numbers of Episcopalians visiting the town and neighbourhood render it very desirable to provide a place of worship for their accommodation" (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1848).

In 1853, *The Morning Chronicle* highlighted the need for an Episcopal church and reported:

> "At Oban there is a great necessity for an Episcopal place of worship. Not so much for the native population as for the great numbers who visit the place in the summer season who are chiefly members of the Church of England. But who being there for a few days at a time, do not feel themselves called upon to contribute for such an erection" (Morning Chronicle 24 March 1853).

The Marquis provided the land at the north end of the town but not the money to construct the church and no further progress was made until 1864. Two local lairds who had long Episcopalian connections, MacDougall of Dunollie and Campbell of Dunstaffnage donated a portion of the cost. In September 1864, the new church, which cost £1,400 was finished and consecrated by Archbishop Archibald Tait, the Lord Bishop of London (Glasgow Herald 28 September 1864). Due to overcrowding during

the summer months it was extended in 1882 to provide additional seating (Hunter 1993, p.45).

In 1868, the United Presbyterians built a church at the top end of George Street and in 1874 the Church of Scotland built a second church 'St Columba's' also on George Street. This was built to meet the needs of the visitors who stayed in the north of Oban as the original Chapel of Ease was situated in the poorer part of town (Hunter 1993, p.45). In 1888, the Free Church of Scotland built another much larger church in Argyll Square to accommodate English speaking residents and visitors. The land and £1,000 towards the building costs was provided by local landowner McFie of Airds (Shedden 1938, p.245). Oban was not alone in providing a church for a visiting congregation. As the numbers of Scots visiting Scarborough increased a Church of Scotland was built to meet their needs (Brodie 2013).

5.5.3 Improving the water supply

Although Oban's large hotels were contributing a great deal to the town's economy they were also putting a great deal of pressure on local services especially water and sewage. Hassan (2003) claimed that as coastal tourism in England increased in popularity they also created environmental problems especially in relation to sanitary conditions. The unsanitary state of seaside resorts was highlighted by the cholera epidemic of 1849 where 26 people died at Southport, 65 at Hastings and 124 at Margate (Walton 1983, p.133). There was only one fatality at Oban which was attributed to the lack of cleanliness among the lower classes. With more choices available to them visitors could avoid resorts considered to be unsanitary and unhealthy. The resort of Ilfracombe reputedly suffered a loss of income in the region of £8,000 to £10,000 following the outbreak of cholera (Walton 1983, p.133). The provision of a plentiful supply of clean water was essential to ensure the continuing development of all resorts. In 1850 a board of Health Inspector warned Tenby's civic leaders that "a high class resort should not only be clean but remarkable for cleanliness" (Walton 1983, p.128).

In March 1858, Oban town council employed a surveyor to prepare a plan to enable water to be brought into the town (Oban Town Council Minute Book 1844-1864). Oban was not the only resort which had to provide services to cater for its resident and

visiting population. Throughout the country other resorts were considering methods of receiving a reliable water supply. Blackpool's water shortage was highlighted in 1850 where a meeting was held of major property owners with an Inspector from the Board of Health into the sanitary state of the town. Visitors were very aware at the imperfect supply of water and the installation of water pumps was proposed as providing an effective solution to the problem. In 1851 householders were charged 1s 6d per barrel of water or 5s 6d per year for use of a water pump although the quality of water available was dubious (Walton 1983, p.134). Two years later Blackpool, with a resident population of just over 2,500 first considered a scheme to supply the town with water. Although it was not until ten years later that Blackpool was supplied with water for the first time (The Preston Guardian 9 July 1864). The Clyde resort of Rothesay, on the Isle of Bute also attracted both short and long stay visitors and they too required adequate water to meet the needs of tourists and residents. Rothesay's water supply was paid for by shareholders with an initial outlay of £5,707. In 1862 at a meeting of the Rothesay Water Company Limited, the directors announced that the scheme to supply the town with water was completed (Glasgow Herald 28 March 1862).

No suitable sites were identified in Oban and the town relied on its limited supplies for the next six years. However, the situation regarding Oban's water supply was raised again in 1864, and the town council commissioned a different surveyor to identify the best location for a reservoir. The *Glasgow Herald* (24 August 1866) reported that the need to provide clean water was especially necessary due to the large numbers of English and foreign visitors passing through the town. Land at Glencruitten three miles from the centre of Oban was gifted by landowner George Grant MacKay and an artificial loch constructed in a valley. The reservoir opened in November 1866 and when full held four million gallons enough to supply 100,000 gallons of water per day. The reservoir was built at a cost of £2,000 but unlike Rothesay the money was borrowed from the government at 5% payable in 20 instalments (The Oban Times 24 November 1866). Although they were small rural resorts, Oban and Rothesay were ahead of many English resorts. Bournemouth, Llandudno and Hastings were still without a sufficient water supply in 1879 (Walton, 1983, p.22).

In 1874 there were further discussions regarding the provision of a new water and sewage supply. The council was concerned that visitors would not stay in the town if

they were not able to access clean water. With an increasing number of visitors, Oban continued to have a serious problem in relation to the disposal of sewage. At a council meeting in 1874 the cost of providing an extensive sewage system was discussed but rejected on grounds of cost. Increased rates was not thought by the council to be acceptable to the population as the rates were already considered high at 3s 2d in the pound. An editorial in *The Oban Times* on 17 October 1874 stated that those dependent on tourism were especially concerned as Oban promoted itself as a health resort but if visitors found polluted streets and beaches they would not return. In the poorer areas of town the majority of houses were not connected to the mains and night soil and ashes were thrown straight onto the street or piled up in dung heaps and left. In the more affluent area of the town sewage was discharged straight into the sea. The disposal of sewage was a problem faced by most resorts even the ones which had a sewage system. In Blackpool, Hastings and Worthing sewage was removed from the towns but ended up polluting their beaches. Brighton and Margate only had a system which could deal with surface water and both towns had to enforce drastic measures to protect the sea and beaches. In Margate house holders were banned from removing night soil between February and November although this was difficult to enforce (Walton 1983, p.133). In Oban the visiting yachts added to the problem as they were allowed to drain their waste into the sea at no cost (The Oban Times 14 August 1875).

In 1878, the water levels in Oban's reservoir dropped due to a lack of rain and in order to ensure the visitors had sufficient water the town council decreed that those living outside the town boundary had their water cut off until supplies were restored (The Oban Times 13 April 1878). With the increasing numbers of visitors, the lack of water was becoming a major concern for the council and in July 1881 the Oban Burgh Bill came before the Select Committee on Private Bills at the House of Commons. The council stated that Oban was insufficiently supplied with water, which had often to be carted from house to house to be sold. By 1881 the resident population had increased to 3,991 and the present water supply was not considered adequate to meet both the demands of residents and the summer visitors. It was proposed that the new supply would come from Loch Glenna-na-Bheath or Loch Calagin situated in the hills to the south of the town. The plan was to raise the level of the present dam by six feet, which would then enable the loch to hold 60 million gallons. This would be sufficient to

supply enough water for 170 days giving 30 gallons per head to 10,000 people. The cost of the new scheme was estimated at £4,000 (Oban Town Council Minute Book 1865-1885). Mr Robert Lawrence (RL), solicitor and Town Clerk was questioned by Mr Clerk QC (MC) as to the requirements of the town and its visiting summer population.

MC ‘Besides the resident population you have a large population have you not of tourists to Oban?’

RL ‘Very large’

MC ‘Coming by steamboat and now you have a railway from the central parts of Scotland to Oban?’

RL ‘Yes’

MC ‘And it has become absolutely necessary for the health of the town that there should be an additional supply of water?’

RL ‘Very necessary’

MC ‘And the proprietors of yachts come there and very often you want a supply of water for the yachts and you cannot give it?

RL ‘No we cannot give it’

Mr McDougall of Battlefields, who owned the land at Soroba where the proposed reservoir was to be built, objected to the scheme. He stated that the pipes carrying the water would damage his property and the reservoir would limit the amount of water in his stream leading to a reduction in trout. Regardless of his objections the *Glasgow Herald* reported the passing of “The Oban Burgh Bill” (Glasgow Herald 20 July 1881). The reservoir was finally completed in 1882 at a cost of £10,000 (Groome’s Gazetteer 1882c). An article in *The Oban Times* on 11 May 1882 stated:

> “Thanks to the energies of its water committee we now possess an abundant supply of pure water the quality of which there is no desire to improve upon. The quantity we believe is sufficient to meet the demands of a town twice the size of ours.”

5.5.4 Further improvements to the town

Although situated on the coast, Oban unlike its English and some of its Scottish counterparts had no sandy beach, no indoor attractions, no music hall or theatre, no winter gardens nor a pleasure pier. Pleasure piers were particularly popular and many of

the major English resorts had at least one pier providing amusements and a variety of entertainments.

Visitors frequently commented on the lack of both a sandy beach and a promenade pier in Oban. At the end of the 1869 season in a letter to *The Oban Times* an unnamed visitor suggested that the bay would be greatly enhanced with the provision of a pleasure pier furnished with seating so that visitors could inhale the healthy sea breezes. He stated that 1,200 shares at £5 would cover the cost of building the pier. In order to provide the shareholders with a return an entrance fee of 2d was suggested (The Oban Times 4 September 1869). The interest in the pier at Blackpool was such that the initial proposal of 2,400 shares at £5 was so oversubscribed that 4,700 applications had been sought. Southport's pier was constructed in 1860, Lytham's in 1865 and Morecambe's in 1869. As Oban was a much smaller centre a pier similar in size to the one at Lytham was considered to be sufficient. The idea of a pier was resurrected in 1889 and at a council meeting, local surveyor Mr Wolfe Brenan stated that constructing a pleasure pier would not be feasible at Oban due to the vast difference between high and low tides (The Oban Times 4 July 1889). Regardless of his recommendations the issue was debated in *The Oban Times* for many years with the general consensus being that visitors came to Oban for the town's natural attractions not artificial amusements which could be found in other resorts (The Oban Times 15 April 1905).

Although the idea of building a pier was not taken any further the town council believed that in order to attract bathers' access to a safe, sandy beach was essential. Oban's closest sandy beach was situated at Ganavan two miles north of the town. In January 1889 the town council began negotiations with the Captain of Dunstaffnage who owned Ganavan and MacDougall of Dunollie, who owned the land between Oban and the beach to provide access to the sands. Dunstaffnage was willing to allow bathing on the beach but Dunollie was not prepared to have an access road to be built through his property (The Oban Times 2 February 1889). The situation was temporarily resolved when the council advertised for boatmen to provide a service between Oban pier and Ganavan which removed the need for overland access (The Oban Times 15 February 1890). In 1892, an alternative access route to Ganavan was arranged with Dunollie via Dunolliebeg farmland for £15 per year (Glasgow Herald 12 August 1892). A direct road to road to Ganavan along the shore line was finally opened in 1903.

5.6 Conclusions

This chapter has highlighted that throughout Oban's history the local landowners were instrumental in the development of Oban. Prior to the arrival of the tourists the various landowners all played a part in the town's early development and growth. Although as this chapter has highlighted, some of Oban's landowners were more agreeable to development and improvement than others. Some of those who did make improvements did so for personal financial gain although others especially the 2nd Marquis of Breadalbane provided land for churches and made improvements for the benefit of the residents.

Landowners continued to play an important role in the town's development throughout the nineteenth century although by the end of the century the biggest influence on Oban's development was the town council. The councillors played an important role in developing Oban although much of this appeared to be in their own interest as the majority of the councillors had a vested interest in tourism. They appeared unwilling to sanction anything which would jeopardise their businesses which was particularly evident in the Oban Abstainers' Union questionnaire results. This chapter has also highlighted that many of the improvements made in the town were for the visiting population rather than the residents. An example of this is especially evident in the churches which were primarily constructed to meet the needs of the summer visitors not the resident population.

By the second half of the century Oban was moving from being primarily a gateway into a destination in its own right. Had visitors only been passing through there would have been no need for so many large new hotels to be built. The number of visitors staying in these establishments and the length of time they stayed is examined in greater detail in Chapter 8.

This chapter again highlighted that Oban's development had similarities with Butler's TALC model. The period between 1818 and 1851 corresponded to his 'involvement' stage where some facilities were provided for the visitors albeit on a small scale. Although the numbers who visited was only estimated, improvements in sea transport between Glasgow and Oban would have brought more visitors and the Caledonian Hotel was built to meet their needs. Between 1851 and 1901 Oban could be said to have

reached the ‘development’ stage. Large hotels were built and additional facilities which included a new water supply and new churches were provided. Butler stated that during the ‘development’ stage local people would have less involvement. Decisions would be taken by outsiders, and an increased number of migrant labour employed. In Oban local people continued to have an input in the development of the town although as Chapter 7 will highlight during this period the town did attract a large migrant workforce. There were also similarities with the ‘consolidation’ stage as the number of visitors increased. However Oban differed here as growth and development did not slow down but continued to the end of the century.

The following chapter examined the role transport played in Oban’s development. It looked at the impact which different forms of transport had on the town’s development and again considered the influence which both the landowners and town councillors had in developing a transport network between Oban and central Scotland.

Chapter 6

Transport and tourism

6.1 Introduction

Transport and tourism have always been linked with each influencing the other. For any resort to become established an efficient and reasonably priced transport system was essential to enable visitors to travel to and from their home to their destination. For Oban, such a system was particularly important, especially during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as its isolated situation would have deterred all but the most intrepid travellers.

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the impact, which different methods of transport had on the development of Oban as a tourist resort. It has looked at the influence which overland, sea and later rail transport had on the town's development. Prideaux (2009) stated that in order to attract visitors from greater distances resorts must have a well-structured and efficient transport system otherwise; they will lose out to their competitors. Although Toth and David (2010, p.669) agreed with Prideaux they argued that destinations providing competitive advantages for tourists can still attract a significant number of tourists even with relatively poor accessibility. Therefore, good accessibility itself does not represent a source of competitiveness. However, this viewpoint is rather simplistic as it is dependent on the market the resort is attracting.

The expanding rail network undoubtedly revolutionised travel to many English, Welsh and some Scottish seaside resorts although its importance has been overemphasised by some. Prideaux (2009, p.83) maintained that the development of resorts in the nineteenth century was a direct result of the building of the rail network. This was clearly not the case and such assumptions highlight the weakness of historical understanding by some authors as many resorts in Scotland and England were already established before the arrival of the railway.

Due to a lack of statistical information, relating to passenger numbers it was not possible to compare the number of passengers who travelled to Oban by the various forms of transport. Fortunately the Callander and Oban Railway recorded the number of

passengers who arrived at Oban but only between 1883 and 1896. No records exist for passengers carried on the various coaches and the shipping companies did not keep any note of passengers carried or the numbers of visitors who arrived at Oban Harbour. Confirmation that numbers of those who arrived in Oban was not kept was provided by shipping owner David MacBrayne during the Lorn District Road Trustees dispute in 1881. Giving evidence before the Sheriff of Argyle (sic) he stated:

> "I have no definite means of stating the numbers of passengers carried. E.g. the steamer which leaves Crinan for Oban makes the voyage once a day for 3 months of the year. As the tickets do not terminate at Oban, there is no way of telling how many passengers travelled to Oban. People can stay there or not as they please and so I have no means by which I can definitely state the amount of traffic" (Oban Burgh Act 1881).

An unknown author, known only as "a Gentleman of great practical experience in Railway Traffic and also intimately acquainted with the resources of the Highlands and islands", provided an estimation of the numbers of visitors arriving in Oban before the railway was built. He stated that upwards of 50,000 passengers annually arrived and departed from Oban with the current means of travel. Passengers came either via the four or five large steamers, which rounded the Mull of Kintyre or through the Crinan Canal (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1865). The numbers who travelled through the Crinan Canal were periodically recorded until 1871. However these reports included the numbers who travelled in each direction and did not indicate how many of those passengers actually arrived in Oban. The canal reports also did not include everyone as some steerage passengers preferred to walk the length of the canal rather than pay the fare (House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1840). Following the arrival of the railway in Oban in 1880, MacBrayne employed larger vessels on the Glasgow to Oban route, which were too big for the canal and instead sailed round the Mull of Kintyre (Robins and Meek, 2006, p.43). None of these passengers would have been included in the canal records.

This chapter also continued to examine the influence, which Oban's landowners and town councillors had regarding improving and maintaining transport to the town. Although many landowners appreciated the benefits, which improved transport, could bring not all were in agreement especially if any disruption was likely to be caused to their lands.

Although the effect which transport had on Oban's development was the focus for this chapter, the town cannot be looked at in isolation and the chapter began by examining the impact, which different forms of transport had on other resorts in Britain.

6.2 Coach travel in Britain

During the eighteenth century, those who wished to travel overland could choose going by foot, by horse or by coach. Even those who travelled by coach had to allow sufficient travel time as journeys were slow. Although Ousby (1990, p.10) argued that the image of the coach as slow and uncomfortable was incorrect as improvements to both coaches and roads did not always result in a poor experience for the traveller. Regardless of the time taken, those who could afford it were clearly travelling to the coast. In 1762, it took eight hours to travel the 50 miles from London to Brighton by stagecoach (Simmons 1984, p.207). By 1821 improvements to the roads reduced the journey time to 6 hours and by the mid-1830s, 48 coaches per day travelled between London and Brighton in 4½ hours. However, the cost of travel remained high with coach travel costing 2½ to 3d per mile (Walton 1983, p.76). By 1835, the popularity of the resort was such that the coaches conveyed 117,000 people between the two centres in that year alone (Walvin 1978, p.156). In 1841 Brighton and London were connected by rail which greatly reduced the travel times and fares. The numbers of passengers carried by rail and coach also rose considerably. In 1837, 50,000 passengers were conveyed to Brighton by coach but by 1850, the railway was carrying 73,000 in one week (Walton 1983, p.22). Although coach times had halved between 1770 and 1841 the coach companies could not compete with the railways, which could travel between the two centres in two hours. In an attempt to compete with the trains, the coach operators reduced their fares but gradually all went out of business (Gilbert 1954, p.119). Table 6.1 illustrated how the time travelled and the fares charged differed between 1770 and 1861.

Coach travel in the north of England was also slow. At the end of the eighteenth century, coaches took three days to travel between Birmingham and Blackpool and one day from Manchester to Blackpool. Blackpool did not have a regular stagecoach service until a daily service started from Preston in 1816 (Walton 1998, p.15).

Table 6.1: Transport between London and Brighton

Year	Method of transport	Travel time	Fare inside	Fare outside
1770	Coach	8 hours	14s	
1808	Coach		23s	13s
1814	Coach	6 hours	10s	5s
1833	Coach	5-6 hours	15s	
1835	Coach	4 ½ hours	21s	12s
1841	Coach	4 hours	12s	6s
1841	Train	2 hours	9s 6d*	
1845	Train	2 hours	5s*	
1861	Train	1 ½ hours	2s 6d*	

*First class fares were also available at a higher price

Source: (Adapted from Gilbert 1954).

Travelling to and through Scotland at this time was equally challenging. Visitors from the south of England first had to travel from London to Glasgow by the mail coach, a distance of approximately 405 miles. In 1790, the travel time was 63 hours in and by 1828, 45 hours (The Morning Chronicle 9 September 1828). In 1800 it took visitors another four days to travel from Edinburgh to Inverness as there were no public coaches or post horses (Gold and Gold 1995, p.42). By 1808, the situation had improved and a stagecoach service operated regularly between Edinburgh, Inverness, Perth and Aberdeen and by 1821, seven coaches travelled daily to and from Inverness (Haldane, 1973, p.381).

A bigger challenge was faced by those who wished to travel to and through the Highlands of Scotland. Due to the poor transport network anyone visiting had to have sufficient time, money and resources. The physical geography of the north and west of Scotland with its mountains, sea and inland lochs and large stretches of moorland and bog meant road building was especially difficult. Roads were constructed only where deemed necessary, built for ease of access for the military, not for comfort or

conveyance of tourists and their carriages. At the end of the eighteenth century, the absence of infrastructural support meant overland travel to Oban was virtually impossible for all but the most determined visitors.

6.3 Overland travel to Oban

Before the introduction of the paddle steamer service to Oban in 1818, visitors to the town had a choice of two overland routes. They either began their journey in Perth or Stirling, both approximately 100 miles from Oban. There was no coach service between these towns and Oban, therefore visitors to the west coast travelled in their own carriages or at least brought their own horses. Mrs Murray recommended that prospective travellers to the Highlands should hire horses at Perth, as there were few opportunities to do so in the Highlands (Murray 1799, p.57).

Before the construction of the military roads, Oban was virtually unapproachable by land. Any roads which did exist were little more than tracks used by the drovers who transported cattle from the islands of Mull, Coll, Tiree and Kerrera to Oban. From Oban, they travelled overland on one of two routes. North east through the Pass of Brander then along the side of Loch Awe onto Tyndrum and Killin to the Crieff markets. The alternative route also went as far as Loch Awe which was then crossed by ferry. This route continued overland to Inveraray, then followed the side of Loch Lomond onto Stirling and Falkirk (Haldane, 1997, p.88-89). These tracks generally took the shortest routes across hills and mountains, which formed no difficulty for the men or the cattle. However, they were completely unsuitable for a horse and carriage and were of little use to the early travellers wishing to visit Argyll.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth century, some roads had been constructed in Argyll to facilitate travel between the Duke of Argyll's stronghold at Inveraray on Loch Fyne and his other properties in the region. This road system was initially designed to increase the Campbell's' power in Argyll as ease of access allowed greater control and protection of his lands (Dawson 1992).

With roads throughout the Highlands being virtually non-existent or of extremely poor quality, overland communication throughout the area caused problems not only for travellers but also more importantly for the government. In order to maintain control of

the Highlands and the Highlanders, and to prevent further uprisings, the government stationed large garrisons of troops at strategic points throughout the area including Fort William and Fort George on the mainland and at Duart Castle on the island of Mull. In order to link the forts, a system of road building began throughout the area. This huge undertaking was the first attempt to provide an integrated infrastructure and between 1725 and 1736, 250 miles of road and 40 bridges were constructed by General Wade's troops for the military (Gold and Gold 1995, p.40).

Although they were not built for the convenience of tourists, these roads at least provided access into the more remote areas of the Highlands. General Wade departed from the Highlands in 1740, leaving many roads unfinished and had it not been for the second Jacobite uprising in 1745 road building in the area may not have continued. Following their defeat at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, the Highlanders were finally deemed to have been restrained and there was overall greater control by the government of the northern and western Highlands. However, there was still great concern regarding the inaccessibility of the west coast. In a letter written by the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State to the Earl of Abermarle, Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Scotland in 1746 he stated:

> "It having been reported to his majesty that it would be extremely good for his service that the road from Dumbarton to the Western Isles should be completed as soon as possible" (Taylor 1976, p.27).

In 1746, Major William Cauldfield, formerly a subaltern[5] with General Wade, began work on the roads in Argyllshire. By 1750, the road from Dumbarton to Inveraray was almost completed and following year work began on the road between Tarbet and Crianlarich, which opened in 1753. The Dalmally to Bonawe road was finished in 1754, which provided improved access to the newly opened Bonawe Iron Works (Taylor 1976, p.30-31). By the end of the eighteenth century, around 800 miles of road had been built throughout the Highlands but many were poorly constructed and several were already in need of repair. Very little maintenance work was carried out and by the end of the eighteenth century many had started to deteriorate (Omand 2004, p.58). Mrs

[5] Military term for a junior commissioned officer

Grant of Laggan who followed the route from Inveraray to Taynuilt in 1799, which was one of the main routes to Oban commented: "It was without any road except a small footpath through which our guide conducted the horses with difficulty" (Haldane 1985, p.13).

The diaries of the early travellers indicated that visitors to Oban generally followed a similar route to the drove roads. In addition to the poor quality of some roads, there were also a large number of lochs, inlets and rivers between central Scotland and Oban, which had to be crossed. Travellers therefore had to make use of ferries, which were an integral part of the infrastructure of Argyll. Visitors who wished to travel north from Oban overland into the Highlands crossed Loch Etive at Connel Ferry, 5 miles east of Oban. This crossing was unpopular with visitors due to the strong tides and the behaviour of the ferrymen. In 1799, Sarah Murray crossed Loch Etive at Connel Ferry, five miles east of Oban a stretch of water covering a distance of less than half a mile, which took two hours (Murray 1805, p.56). She commented that the delay was due to a lack of hands available to lift her carriage onto the ferry. Four years later in 1803, Dorothy Wordsworth also had an unpleasant experience of the same ferry. In her journal, she wrote:

> "The boat being on the other shore we had to wait a considerable time, though the water was not wide and our call was heard immediately. Four or five men came over. The boatmen moved with surly tardiness as if glad to make us know that they were not our masters" (De Selincourt 1952, p.153).

Following her return visit to Oban in 1805, Murray (1805, p.58) warned future travellers that the ferrymen were not always reliable and due to the strong tidal currents the crossing, a distance of less than ½ mile could take two hours. However, these accounts cannot always be taken to be accurate as the accounts are very subjective and factors such as the weather and the quality of the transport all have to be taken into consideration as they can affect the travellers' views.

In 1805, the first main road into Oban from the south was completed. This linked Oban to the village of Ardrishaig at the east end of the newly completed Crinan Canal a distance of around 40 miles (Caledonian Mercury 29 July 1805). Although designed to improve communication and trade, not tourism, between Glasgow and the west coast, the road provided visitors with an alternative overland access to Oban. Communication

was further improved in 1827 when a regular light stagecoach service began operating between Inveraray and Oban during the summer months. The stagecoach left McKellar's Hotel, Inveraray on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 10am and departed Menzies Hotel, Oban every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 12 noon. Fares were 14s outside and 10s inside (The Scotsman 1 September 1827). An article in a London newspaper commented on the journey stating: "A gentleman setting out from Oban where nothing but barbarianism would be expected had a delightful ride in an excellent stagecoach" (Morning Chronicle 11 August 1827). Such reports highlighted that the Highlands were still viewed with some scepticism. By providing a coach service between establishments, hoteliers could be sure of regular trade.

Although the roads were not always built to the highest standard, they did at least provide a link between remote communities. In order to assist travellers, in 1828 the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges published a map of roads in the Highlands. This provided travellers with information regarding the location of roads and also informed them which were well maintained and in good repair (Haldane 1973, p.248-249).

The new road from Oban to Connel opened in 1832, but travellers going north still had to cross the loch by ferry. One boat and two men operated the service until 1837 when a large and a small boat were provided. Passenger safety was of little importance and there were reports that the ferries were regularly overcrowded. In order to improve safety new regulations were introduced which stipulated that a large and a small boat with at least two men must be kept at both sides of the loch. All boats had to be at least 16 feet in length and must always be clean. In 1845, fixed fares were introduced and passengers who did not wish to travel on the same boat as animals could be transported on smaller vessels. However, they would have to wait for the return of the large boat so additional men did not have to be employed (Minute Book Lorn District Road Trustees 1843-1864). In an effort to improve the safety of the service, from 10 October to 15 February double fares were charged from 6pm to 6am, as crossing during the hours of darkness was more dangerous (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Connel Ferry Fares 1845

Four wheeled carriage	4s
Two wheeled carriages including carts carrying passengers	2s
Single horse	6d
Single passenger	3d
Additional passenger	½ price
Children under 14	1d
Double fares charged after sunset.	

Source: (Adapted from the Minute Book Lorn District Road Trustees 1843-1864).

Despite the improvements, overland journey times remained slow. In 1835, the Reverend C Lesingham Smith MA, Fellow Christ's College, Cambridge, travelled on the road from Dalmally to Oban. He noted in his diary that although the distance travelled was only 25 miles it took five hours to complete in an open cart with springs to the seat but none to the wheels (Lesingham Smith 1835). In 1847, overland travel finally improved between Glasgow and Oban with the introduction of a regular steamer and coach service. Passengers travelled from Glasgow to Loch Lomond by coach, took the steamer to Tarbet and from there journeyed by stagecoach to Oban. Visitors could travel for 17s 6d outside or 22s 6d inside (Glasgow Herald 19 June 1846). As the traffic on the roads increased they required more maintenance and the responsibility for their upkeep and repair caused much heated debate between the parties concerned.

The lack of signage was also a cause for complaint. Durie (2003, p.30) stated that a further complication for travellers was the lack of signposts as locals (when around) could be vague both as to direction and distance. In a letter to the editor of *The Oban Times* in 1868, a visitor to the town complained about the lack of signposting in the immediate area. He commented that travellers often came to crossroads where there were no signs showing where roads led or the distance to the next village. Often there was no one around to ask for directions and if a traveller came across a shepherd or a

farmhand, they generally only spoke Gaelic so were unable to assist (The Oban Times 29 August 1868).

6.4 Building and maintaining the roads in and around Oban

Lamb and Davidson (1996 cited by Page 2005, p.21) stated that two of the key issues affecting road based tourism was the quality of the infrastructure and good signage. Although writing about the deteriorating roads in the twentieth century some of their observations are also relevant in the nineteenth century. Roads were constantly in need of repair usually due to heavy traffic although a reduction in traffic could also result in roads deteriorating. Following the opening of the London to Brighton railway in 1840, the condition of the main road worsened due to lack of use (Gilbert 1954, p.119).

In Scotland, the repair of roads and bridges came under the jurisdiction of the Justices of the Peace and Commissioners of Supply (Whetstone 1981, p.88). In Argyll, the Argyllshire roads act of 1775 transferred responsibility for roads from the Commissioners of Supply to a new body the Argyllshire Roads Trustees. They were responsible for road maintenance out with the burgh while the town magistrates were liable for the roads within Oban.

In 1818, the Argyllshire Road Trustees resolved to upgrade the route between Dalmally and Oban a distance of 25 miles. This was not to benefit travellers but to facilitate better communication for the exchange of goods and services between Argyll and other parts of the country. However determining the route of this road was not straightforward. The final five miles between Connel and Oban crossed land owned by Campbell of Dunstaffnage who was opposed to a road crossing his property. Instead of following the most direct and level route into the town, the road instead went around the majority of his estate and descended into Oban down a steep incline. In addition Dunstaffnage demanded compensation be paid to him for the damage caused by the new road and the Trustees agreed to pay the sum of £21.12s.3 ½ d. A further sum of £300 was paid to him the following year for damage caused to his crops by the construction of the road (Minutes of the Commissioners of Supply 1810-1842). In 1832, the road finally opened, 14 years after work began. A report in the *Caledonian Mercury* stated that until Road Trustees were able to appoint their own surveyors the routes followed by roads would

always be determined by landowners and a good road system would never be in place (Caledonian Mercury 28 March 1833).

In 1843, The Roads Trustees classified the roads within Argyll into two categories first and second-class. In order to estimate the expenditure required for each road in the district the Trustees classified all the local roads depending on their usage. Table 6.3 lists the first class roads, which covered a total distance of 85 miles. These were the busiest and £6 per mile was required annually for their repair.

The first class roads included the busiest road in Argyll, which ran south from Oban to Cuilfail. In addition to carrying local traffic this road formed part of the main route into Oban from Ardrishaig where passengers from Glasgow alighted from the ships. Due to heavy usage this was one of the most expensive roads to maintain and the cost of repairs annually amounted to around £300 (Minute Book Lorn District Road Trustees 1843-1864). The other first class roads linked Oban to the north, south and east.

Table 6.3: First class roads around Oban in 1843

Oban to Cuilfail	14 miles
Connel to Taynuilt	6 miles
Taynuilt to Portsonachan	19 miles
Inverochy to Bridge of Orchy	3 miles
Oban to Connel	5 miles
Connel to Ballachuillish	24 miles
Taynuilt to Dalmally	14 miles

Source: (Adapted from the Minute Book Lorn District Road Trustees 1843-1864).

Table 6.4 included the roads classified as second-class roads, which were in the more rural areas and linked smaller communities. These covered a total of 41 miles and £3 per mile was needed annually for their repair.

Table 6.4: Second class roads around Oban in 1843

Cleigh to Connel	7 miles
Taynuilt to Bonaw	16 miles
Bonaw to Ichariachan	11 miles
Creagan to Appin	3 miles
Lismore Island	4 miles

Source: (Adapted from the Minute Book Lorn District Road Trustees 1843-1864).

To finance the cost of maintaining the roads in and round Oban, the Argyll Roads Bill of 1843 stated that a property tax of 4d in the £ would be levied on the income raised on the houses, feus and gardens within the boundaries of the town burgh. Oban council received two thirds of the income raised for the upkeep of the roads within the town and the Road Trustees received one third for the maintenance of roads in the surrounding area (Minute Book Lorn District Road Trustees 1843-1864). The councillors of Oban were opposed to the Trustees receiving a share of the rates and believed they should be exempt from providing them with any revenue. In June 1864, 'The Argyllshire Roads Bill', came before a select committee of the House of Lords for consideration. The Oban councillors argued that the town of Campbeltown in Argyll was in a similar situation to Oban but they did not have to pay the Road Trustees to maintain their country roads. The representative for the Trustees stated that Oban's situation was very different from Campbeltown as Oban attracted a large number of summer visitors who regularly used the county roads. As the town benefitted from these visitors the town magistrates should pay towards their repair. The chairman ruled in favour of the Road Trustees and a Roads Act was passed in Argyll called the Argyle (sic) Road Act 1864, which divided Argyllshire into several districts (Minute Book Lorn District Road Trustees 1843-1864).

In November 1881, the Oban councillors applied to Parliament asking for a reduction in the amount they paid to the Road Trustees for maintaining the roads outside the town. The Sheriff of Argyleshire (sic) heard the case in Edinburgh where the Trustees maintained that the contribution paid from Oban be increased from one third to half of the total cost. The Trustees argued that the carriages used by the tourist traffic from Oban caused the greatest damage to the country roads. The councillors disputed the

claim and stated that most of the coaches, which used the roads, did not come from Oban. The majority of these coaches were owned by hoteliers in Tyndrum and Ballachulish (Glasgow Herald 15 November 1881).

The Road Trustees were further concerned that with the recent arrival of the Callander and Oban Railway which opened in June 1880, significantly larger numbers of visitors would take trips and tours into the surrounding areas, which would put greater pressure on the road network. One of the most popular coaching excursions was from Oban to Loch Melfort and in 1880, an estimated 3,500 tourists travelled on that route. The tour to Dunstaffnage, Connel and Lochnell had carried 1,200 visitors and 2,000 passengers had travelled north from Oban to Glencoe (Oban Burgh Bill 1881). The Trustees stated that the cost of maintaining these roads to ensure they were safe for this amount of traffic was substantial. The Melfort and Lochnell roads alone had cost £900 in the last four years to repair and Oban town council had only provided £30 towards the costs of this road. The Trustees estimated that the cost of repairing the damage caused by carriages leaving on pleasure trips from Oban was at least £300 a year and the town council should contribute more to the cost of maintenance. Overall it was estimated that the roads around Oban used by tourists amounted to around 95 miles and cost £13, 3s per mile to keep in good condition. The Trustees stated that the rate of assessment levied to meet the whole expenditure on the roads had increased from 6d in the £ in 1865 to 8d in 1875 and by 1881 it had increased to 9d (Oban Burgh Bill 1881).

William Rodger the surveyor for the Road Trustees stated:

> "The average cost of roads per mile is £6 15s 6d. The average cost within a 5 mile radius of Oban is £15 per mile, the average cost within a 10 mile radius of Oban is £6 per mile and the average cost beyond 15 miles of Oban where there is heavy traffic is £11-12 per mile. If there was no tourist traffic, it would be 15-25% less. Roads are very much cut up by the tourist traffic on the 5 miles to Connel. Expenditure is on preparing material, side drains, cross drains and bridges. The Melfort Road is the most expensive road in the district. There are two regular coaches but I have frequently seen 3 or 4 coaches leaving Oban for Melfort. There are a good many private parties on that road. The number of horses used in Oban for posting is 22 and there are 39 coach horses. The average number of coaches is three per day during the season. On the Loch Nell road there are 7 to 8 carriages a day, this road is not suited to carriages and is becoming dangerous. The number of horses in Oban in summer is: Mr McGregor 40 horses, 17 used for posting. Mr

> Campbell 31 horses, 11 used for posting and 2 are used in mail" (Oban Burgh Bill, 1881).

William Hosack an Oban Solicitor spoke on behalf of Oban's town councillors, and he argued:

> "£4,985 of the assessable rental of the burgh is represented by hotels. These hotels are maintained mainly for tourists and to meet the tourist traffic. During the season when there are no tourists, they do practically nothing. They are only occupied 4 months of the year" (Oban Burgh Bill, 1881).

Over 25% of the town councillors owned hotels in Oban so were against an increase in their rates bill. They claimed that the weather especially the heavy rain, which eroded the road surfaces, was responsible for the damage to the roads not the tourists' horses and carriages. In addition, the increased number of visitors to the town meant more provisions were required. Therefore, a greater number of farm carts were using the roads, which also contributed to their damage. In order to determine the amount of traffic using one of the main roads, Robert Hardie the road surveyor, carried out a survey on 31 August 1881 of the traffic travelling south from Oban on the Melfort Road. He reported that 14 country carts, nine milk carts, four stagecoaches, three hiring machines and four gigs left Oban. Four stagecoaches, three hiring machines, 14 loaded country carts and nine milk carts came into the town. The councillors argued that tourists now travelled more extensively on the railway and steamers for day trips and made less use of the roads than in previous years. Therefore, the contribution made by Oban to the maintenance of the roads should be reduced. Colonel MacDougall for the Road Trustees disputed this claim, and commented that he had observed more tourists visiting the town and there were more carriages and traps on the roads than in previous years. George MacKay a local bookseller and letting agent argued that most tourists stayed for a day and departed on the steamer the following morning. He stated that the people of Oban could just as easily be asked to pay for roads in Skye as the tourists go there from Oban (Oban Burgh Bill 1881). The Oban councillors were unsuccessful in their appeal and the sheriff ruled that as Oban benefitted from the tourists they should pay a larger contribution towards the upkeep of the roads although the exact amount was not stated (Glasgow Herald 15 November 1881).

6.5 The importance of sea routes in resort development

Prior to the growth and expansion of the rail network, large numbers of visitors journeyed to the coast by boat, although the contribution sea travel had on nineteenth century resort development is often overlooked. Simmons (2009, p.272) stated that the role of the steamship in the development of tourism was of much greater importance than has usually been recognised. They carried passengers in their hundreds and first demonstrated the meaning of mass tourism. Armstrong and Williams (2005) also argued that the importance of the railway has been over stated and given too much credit in promoting popular travel to the coast in the nineteenth century.

Travel by boat had long been the main method of travel between central Scotland and the west coast of Scotland. However this was not the only part of the country to utilise sea transport. The villages around the Kent coast were also reached by boat long before the arrival of the railway. In 1757 sailing boats known as hoys, transported Londoners to the towns of Margate for a fare of 2 shillings and returned to the capital with wheat (Armstrong and Williams 2005, p.17). By 1763, four vessels were in operation on this route, increasing to 11 by 1801 (Barton 2005, p.17). In 1793, a new service began running every Saturday and Sunday between London and Margate in a style of "peculiar elegance and convenience". The best cabins were priced at 10s 6d and the smaller ones 6 and 4 shillings (Sun 7 June 1793).

In 1807, around three hoys and nine packets or yachts operated a service from London to Margate. By 1815/16, an estimated 22,000 passengers had travelled on this route (Whyman 1981, p.521). In June 1817, the *Morning Chronicle* advertised a sailing from London to Margate with a journey time of eight to ten hours with cabins costing between 11 to 15 shillings for adults and 10s for children and servants. By 1823/24 the number of passengers carried had risen to 42,000 and by 1830/31 at the height of its popularity, 98,000 passengers were transported. By 1835, the journey time was reduced to 1 hour and 45 minutes and fares had fallen to 7 shillings for the best cabin and 6s for fore cabins. Due to the popularity of the service by the following year, prices for these cabins were further reduced to 4 and 5 shillings (Armstrong and Williams 2005, p.64).

Gravesend was another popular day out from London with three ships operating in the summer of 1825 leaving at 0800 and returning by 1600. Ten years later boats could

leave London at 1400 and be in Gravesend in two hours. The numbers carried on this route were even higher than Margate's with around 292,000 arriving in 1830/31, by 1835/36 this had risen to 700,000 and by 1841/42 the figure had reached 1.1 million (Armstrong and Williams 2005, p.67).

Sea travel was not only available to those living in the south east of England. Southampton's residents could travel to the Isle of Wight, and the population of Bristol were able to enjoy outings by steamer to Wales as were those living close to the Mersey. However, prosperity for many coastal towns was short lived and many including Margate were overtaken in popularity when the expanding rail network offered tourists the opportunity of faster travel to a large choice of towns. In 1849 with a decreasing number of tourists travelling by sea, the *Hampshire Telegraph* reported that the Margate Steam Packet company was in the process of being wound up (Hampshire Telegraph, 27 October 1849). Although some resorts declined when the railway offered alternatives to visitors, sea travel and steam ships continued to be a viable enterprise in the west coast of Scotland.

For the Clyde resorts including Helensburgh, Dunoon, Rothesay and Millport, it was sea transport, which revolutionised travel. Before overland routes became established, much of the west coast of Scotland was only accessible by sea. The numerous sea lochs and rivers and the two canals the Crinan, which opened in 1801, and the Caledonian, which opened in 1822, enabled visitors to access most areas of the west Highlands.

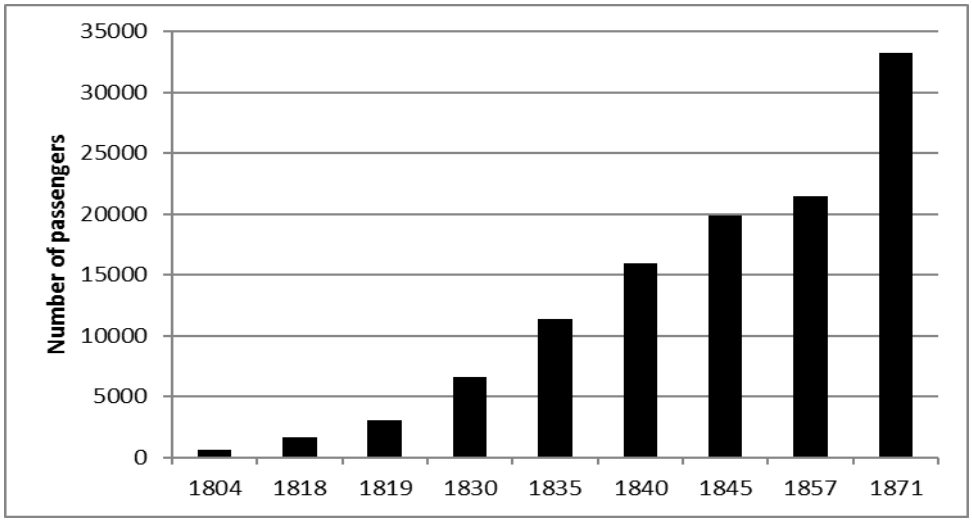
The Crinan Canal linked Ardrishaig on Loch Fyne with Crinan on the Sound of Jura and enabled passengers to sail from Glasgow to Oban without having to travel round the exposed seas of the Mull of Kintyre, a treacherous stretch of water between Scotland and Ireland. In 1792, the Duke of Argyll and the Earl of Breadalbane commissioned the engineer John Rennie to survey the land between Loch Fyne and the Atlantic Ocean with a view to construct a canal to link the two seas, a distance of about 5 miles. Work on the Crinan Canal began in 1793, and although unfinished, opened in July 1801. The canal fulfilled its remit to improve trade to and from the west Highlands as it provided quicker and cheaper transportation of goods and services. In addition, it also afforded travellers easier and safer access to the west coast of Scotland. In 1804, 668 passengers journeyed along the canal and by 1818, this had risen to 1,696. Passenger numbers

continued to increase to 3,028 by 1819 (Lindsay 1968). The increased numbers using the canal was attributed to Henry Bell's paddle steamer *The Comet,* which in 1818 extended its service from Glasgow to Oban. The *Caledonian Mercury* reported on the speed of the service stating that a gentleman had left Oban at 3am on Monday morning travelled via Lochgilphead, Rothesay and Greenock and arrived in Glasgow at 10pm (Caledonian Mercury 25 April 1818).

However, *The Comet's* influence was short lived as it sank on a return journey to Glasgow in December 1820 but with no loss of life. Following the demise of *The Comet*, a new vessel, *The Highland Chieftain*, began service in the summer of 1821. Advertisements in the *Glasgow Herald* informed prospective passengers that the ship would depart from Glasgow every Monday for Skye and Lewis and arrive in Oban on the Tuesday (Glasgow Herald 22 December 1820). In 1825, a second ship the *Ben Nevis*, designed to carry 280 passengers operated a weekly sailing from Glasgow to Inverness via Oban (Caledonian Mercury 16 July 1825).

Ships continued to provide a service to the west coast and the number of passengers passing through the Crinan Canal increased. Figure 6.1 shows the number of passengers travelling through the canal between 1804 and 1871. No records exist of the number of passengers who travelled through the canal after 1871. The accuracy of the numbers is also questionable as the secretary of the Crinan Canal who compiled the figures stated that the numbers given were not a true reflection as many steerage passengers walked the length of the canal rather than pay the boat fare (House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1840).

Figure 6.1: Annual numbers of Passengers travelling through the Crinan Canal between 1804 and 1871



Source: (Lindsay 1968; House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1831, 1836, 1845, 1857; Records of British Railways Boards 1871).

As competition on the Glasgow to Oban route increased, passengers benefitted from a reduction in fares. Throughout the summer, the *Glasgow Herald* printed advertisements for the steamboat *The Highlander*, which sailed from Glasgow to Staffa and Iona via Lochgilphead, Oban and Tobermory throughout the summer for a fare of 3 guineas (Glasgow Herald 2 August 1822). By 1836 competition on the route from Oban to Staffa had led to a reduction in fares. These were reported throughout the county in national and provincial newspapers throughout England including *The Hull Packet* which reported that:

> "The present competition in steam navigation and cheap travelling has spread even to the remote Hebrides. At present passengers are taken from Oban to Staffa and Iona and back again for half a crown whereas the fare the previous year was 30 shillings" (The Hull Packet 29 July 1836).

The excursion from Oban to the islands of Iona and Staffa continued to be extremely popular and an article in *The Scotsman* suggested that the exceptionally cheap fares to Staffa was designed to drive the competition out of business (The Scotsman 23 July 1836). By 1840, the fare from Oban to Staffa had increased to £1.5s (The Scotsman 30 September 1840). Armstrong and Williams (2005, p.64) suggested that there was a price fixing agreement between steamboat proprietors to prevent damaging competition

but no evidence has been uncovered to support this claim on the Glasgow to Oban sailings. By 1847, passengers could depart from Glasgow at 6am and be in Oban by 4pm at a fare of 12s 6d (The Scotsman 22 September 1847). Cheap fares were not of prime importance for everyone, and indeed some passengers preferred to pay slightly more. In 1849, the cost of a return to Staffa was priced at £1. A visitor taking the trip stated that the fare "renders the party select and not too numerous" (Anon 1849).

The steamboat service to the Highlands developed dramatically after 1851 following David Hutcheson's acquisition of the service to the west coast from the operator J & J Burns. In 1851, Hutcheson introduced the 'Royal Route' named after the visit of Queen Victoria in 1847. The following year the *Glasgow Herald* reported that 15-20,000 visitors had arrived in Oban (Glasgow Herald 13 September 1852). Two years later advertisements in the *Glasgow Herald* offered fares from Glasgow to Oban for 10s first class or 5s for steerage (Glasgow Herald 30 September 1853). In 1856 an anonymous visitor commented that the fare for a first class cabin from Glasgow to Oban was 18s 6d, second-class 12s 6d and steerage 6s 6d (Anon 1856).

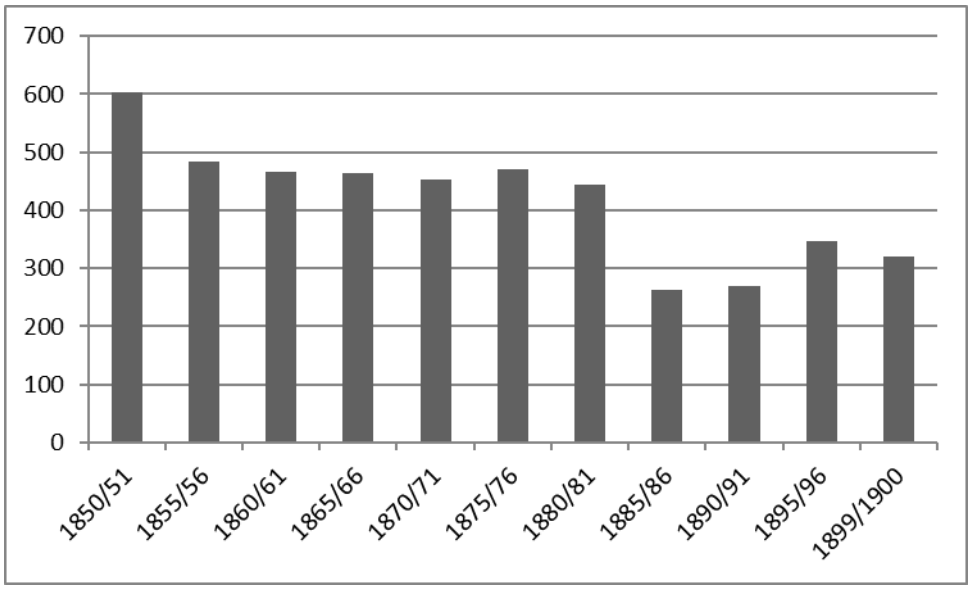
As the numbers of tourists increased, larger ships were built to transport them, which brought new challenges. One of MacBrayne's largest vessels the *Iona*, which operated a service daily from Glasgow to Ardrishaig via Millport and Dunoon, was too large to pass through the Crinan Canal. Passengers had to transfer to a smaller ship at Ardrishaig to travel through the canal before joining another ship to travel on to Oban. However due to the large number of locks, this could take over 2 hours which greatly added to the journey time. Visitors travelling to Rothesay could leave Glasgow at 1000 and arrive at their destination in 2hrs 45 minutes (Glasgow Herald 15 June 1864). In 1882, at a meeting chaired by the Duke of Argyll at the Merchants Hall, George Square, Glasgow a proposal was put forward to construct a new canal to link East and West Loch Tarbert. This new canal, which would be around one mile in length was to be designed to enable the new large steamers to travel direct from Glasgow to Oban (Records of British Railways Board 1882).

The idea to build a canal was not new, as in 1771 a plan to create a canal at Tarbert was first considered. James Watt surveyed the area to compare the merits of a canal at Tarbert with one at Crinan before deciding on the latter. The Tarbert canal plan was

resurrected in 1841 when an application was submitted to Parliament by the local landowners. The building cost was estimated to be £147,000 and it was primarily to be designed to facilitate the transportation of goods and services to and from the west Highlands (Caledonian Mercury 12 August 1847). The idea was abandoned and not considered again until 1859 when the Crinan Canal was partially destroyed after an extensive period of heavy rain. Many reservoirs in the surrounding hills had burst their banks; locks were damaged and canal banks eroded over a two-mile stretch. Although the 1882 proposal for a new canal at Tarbert did not go ahead local landowners still believed that in addition to the Callander and Oban Railway which had opened in 1880 there was still a requirement for a regular steamer service between the town and Glasgow. Although the railway offered a quicker route to Oban from Glasgow the number of steamers passing through the Crinan Canal remained fairly constant even after the railway opened (see Figure 6.2).

The canal superintendent commented that the drop in 1885 was due to maintenance work carried out in the canal and a general slackness in trade (House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1884-85). The much lower volume of ships from 1885 onwards was because the larger ships which had been built, could not travel through the canal but instead passed round the Mull of Kintyre and were therefore not recorded.

Figure 6.2: Number of steamers passing through the Crinan Canal 1850-1900



Source: (House of Commons Parliamentary Papers. 1850-1900).

Glasgow was not the only departure point for passengers wishing to visit Oban. In May 1856, the Belfast and Ballymena Railway Company directors discussed the possibility of linking the recently completed Belfast to Portrush railway with a steamer service to Oban. They planned to transport visitors from Belfast to Oban and attract visitors from Scotland to Belfast and Northern Ireland (Belfast News-Letter 31 May 1856). On the 28 August 1857 the steamer, *Stork* left Portrush at 10 am and arrived in Oban eight hours later. Fares were advertised at 10s single and 15s return but the trip was not widely patronised with only six passengers on the first voyage (The Belfast News-Letter 1 September 1857). In 1860, the Belfast and Northern Counties railways operated an excursion between Belfast and Oban via Portrush on the steamer *Islay*. It departed every Thursday at a cost of 20 shillings for a first class cabin (The Belfast News-Letter, 27 July 1860). On 1 July 1887, J & J Burns operated the first direct service from Belfast to Oban on the Royal Mail steamer *Hare*. Weekly sailings operated throughout July and August. The ship left Oban for Belfast every Saturday at 0730 and departed from Belfast on Fridays at 1100. The departure time was arranged to enable rail passengers from Dublin and Derry to reach Belfast in time for the sailing. However due to the harbour dues charged at Belfast of £8, 9s per voyage, by the end of the month the service was already under threat (Belfast News-letter 20 July 1887).

In June 1896 following a series of meetings of traders and shopkeepers in Oban arrangements were undertaken to reinstate a steamer service between Oban and Portrush sailing via the island of Islay. As Portrush was close to the Giant's Causeway and Belfast it was hoped that this new excursion route would be a great attraction to all visitors coming to Oban and also encourage large numbers of holidaymakers from the north of Ireland to visit the town. The *SS Queen* was chartered for the purpose and the service began on Saturday 4 July. It departed from Oban on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and from Portrush on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The fare was 15 shillings single (The Oban Times 4 July 1896). Passenger numbers on the new route did not meet expectations and by the end of September 1896, the service was withdrawn (The Belfast News-Letter 2 September 1896).

Despite the larger and faster steamers which operated from Glasgow to Oban, the town was still much further from Glasgow than the other Clyde resorts. In order to develop and maintain their position as a successful resort speed of travel was increasingly

important and by the second half of the nineteenth century, many resorts in Scotland were linked to the rail network.

6.6 The impact of the railway on resort development

The railway was often regarded as the initial driver behind tourism in Britain and for many seaside resorts it was undoubtedly the catalyst, which resulted in their unprecedented growth and expansion. The railway was generally regarded as the main contributor to the development and increased popularity of many seaside and spa towns. By connecting industrial centres with the coastal resorts, large numbers of people were able to travel quickly and relatively cheaply. However, some authors have overemphasised the railways importance. Cannadine (1980, p.269) stated, "A necessary precondition for the successful establishment of any seaside resort was that it must be accessible which meant it must be connected by a railway." However, as highlighted earlier in this chapter its dominance has been disputed especially by Armstrong and Williams and Whyman as many resorts especially in Scotland and parts of England had a well-established steamer service before the arrival of the railway.

With regard to rail transport, the Scottish resorts lagged behind many of their English counterparts. The rail network was slower to develop in Scotland than in England and the east and west coast lines from the major English cities only reached Glasgow and Edinburgh in 1848. By the middle of the nineteenth century, many small towns on the east coast of Scotland were connected to large centres of population. In 1846, a rail link was established between Edinburgh and the coastal town of Portobello, although it was already a popular seaside resort due to its close proximity to the capital. North Berwick was connected to Edinburgh in 1859 although it too had long been attracting visitors. In Fife, the railway reached Burnt Island in 1847 and Elie in 1863 although both towns had been accessible by boat from Leith since the start of the nineteenth century. On the west coast, the railway between Glasgow and Ayr opened in 1839 and in 1841 a rail link was established between Glasgow and Greenock, the seaport for Dunoon and Rothesay.

Although the areas around Glasgow and the lowlands were attractive to investors the northern areas of Scotland were less popular due to the higher construction costs and the likelihood that passenger numbers would be smaller (Gold and Gold 1995, p.93). The

railway only reached Aberdeen in 1850 and Inverness in 1855. In 1862, realising the significance of their railways for tourists, Scottish companies joined with the London & North Western railways and provided tourist programmes and tickets for visitors. However, it was not until after the 1880s that the rail network expanded to cover the more rural parts of the northwest coast of Scotland. Although many villages on Scotland's east and west coast had long attracted visitors, the railway enabled much larger numbers and from all classes not just the elite in society to travel (Gold and Gold 1995, p.93). On holidays and special occasions, rail companies offered discounted fares and provided special excursion trains which allowed large numbers of people to travel cheaply. Sunday travel was more controversial in Scotland with non-observance of the Sabbath frowned upon. In order to develop and maintain their position as a successful resort speed of travel became increasingly important and in the middle of the nineteenth century, Oban's businessmen campaigned to have a rail link to central Scotland.

6.7 The Callander and Oban Railway

On 10 July 1845, a meeting to discuss a rail link between central Scotland and Oban was held in the Caledonian Hotel, Oban. The meeting was chaired by Local landowner Dugald MacDougall of Gallanach and those in attendance were Duncan McArthur, Chief Magistrate, Oban; Peter McNab, a local merchant and Campbell Paterson, an Oban banker. Also present were local landowners from the surrounding area which included Mr Campbell, Barcaldine; Mr Popham, Ardchattan; Mr Campbell, Inverawe; Mr Forsyth, Dunach, Sir Alex Campbell Ardkinglass and Mr Cheyne, Lismore, by Appin (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1845).

Oban was already well served by steamers from Glasgow but those attending believed a railway would enable cattle, fish, wool and sheep to be more easily and quickly transported to markets in the south. Oban was viewed as a prime fishing port and those attending the meeting believed a rail connection with Glasgow would result in the town becoming the centre of an extensive fishing trade (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1846).

It was also hoped that a railway would bring increased passenger traffic to the area. Although visitors were already arriving by steamer and coach, a rail link would enable

even greater numbers to visit Oban. At the meeting, several proposals regarding the route was discussed including one from Oban by Loch Etive and the head of Loch Awe to Inveraray. Passengers and freight would then cross Loch Fyne by steamer and proceed to Kilmun by rail. From there they would take another steamboat to the terminus at Helensburgh and then complete their journey to Glasgow by train. This was not considered the optimum route because of the numerous ferries whose timetables would have to be incorporated into the service. Two alternative proposals for the route were put forward. The first was from Oban to Tyndrum and Crianlarich via Loch Awe then to Loch Lomond through Glenfalloch to Glasgow. The alternative route was also to Crianlarich then through Glen Dochart to Stirling via Lochearnhead. The preferred route was the first option, along the west side of Loch Lomond as the scenery was believed to be the finest in the kingdom. Tourists who had journeyed as far as Loch Lomond would proceed by the Grand Junction company line to Oban (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1845).

In January 1846, the Marquis of Breadalbane presided over a meeting of the Scottish Grand Junction Railway Company in Carrick's Hotel, Glasgow to finalise the proposal for the railway (Daily News 31 January 1846). In July 1846, A Bill was presented to parliament, which proposed that the Scottish Grand Junction Railway build a railway between the town of Oban and Crianlarich in Perthshire. The total distance being around 50 miles with a branch line built to Loch Lomond. At an Oban town council meeting held in March 1847 a sketch of the proposed deviation line of the Scottish Grand Junction Railway from Dunolliebeg, four miles east of the town to Oban was produced. The cost of the railway between Callander and Oban was estimated to be £600,000 (Thomas 1990, p. 39). The railway would enter the town from the north east cross the public road within the burgh next to the Farina Mill but in such a manner as not to interfere with the public's convenience (Oban Town Council Minute Book 1822-1849).

No further progress was made until November 1850 when local landowners, which included Mr Campbell, Barcaldine; Mr Popham, Ardchattan; Mr Pitcarn the Marquis's commissioner and Dr Alcorn a local doctor met at the Caledonian Hotel, Oban. The meeting was presided over by the Marquis of Breadalbane who stated that a railway to Oban was essential as it would alleviate the prevailing destitution in the area by providing employment and stem the mass emigration (Glasgow Herald 16 December

1850). Once again there were no further developments although in June 1851 an article taken from the *Glasgow Railway Journal* appeared in the *Caledonian Mercury* entitled "The Railway to Oban the height of absurdity". It disputed the feasibility of the railway and stated that the route could not be commercially viable and visitors would continue to use the steamers rather than a railway (Caledonian Mercury 2 June 1851).

At the House of Commons in March 1852 the proposed railway was discussed where Mr J Stuart MP requested that public money be used to fund the cost of such a venture. Several MPs agreed that in addition to providing a link from the west coast to Glasgow the railway would provide much needed employment for local men in Argyll. Following the potato blight in 1846, many people in Oban faced starvation and many of those who were able to do so had already left the area. A railway to Oban would also improve communication with the Inner and Outer Hebrides and enable fish to be transported to markets much more quickly. Mr Hume MP and Mr Trelawny MP both stated that they believed that public money could be put to better use. Oban was already accessible from Glasgow by sea or coach and there was no requirement for a rail link (Daily News 17 March 1852). However, in 1859 a prospectus was produced for the Oban & Glasgow Railway with the capital estimated at £400,000 (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1859).

Planning the route for the railway to Oban was not straightforward. In the course of its construction, the railway would have to cross several estates. Although the majority of local landowners approved of the railway not all were agreeable to the project. One of the major supporters was the Marquis of Breadalbane who owned the majority of the land, which the railway would cross (Caledonian Mercury 21 June 1851). The proposed route for the railway was to enter the town from the north east and terminate at the current steamer pier half a mile from the proposed new railway pier. However, in September 1859 the Captain of Dunstaffnage, the proprietor of the land between Connel and Oban, withdrew his support for the project. He objected to the railway as the gradient of the land meant that an embankment would have to be built to carry the track and this would destroy the view of the sea and Morvern Hills from his residence at Saulmore House (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane 1859).

On entering Oban a second embankment would need to be constructed on land immediately to the north of the current pier. A tramway was to be built alongside George Street the main thoroughfare of the town, and pass immediately in front of the shops and houses on the seafront. Passengers and freight would be conveyed by tram from the old pier to the new pier. Following the death of the 2nd Marquis of Breadalbane in 1862, the Trustees of his estate strongly opposed the route, as it would intersect the valuable feuing ground on the estate. In addition, the proposed 43 foot high embankment would extend immediately behind several existing feus and destroy the only access to the proposed feus on the south. The tramway was also unpopular with the town councillors. The minutes of a town council meeting held on 12 December 1864 recorded the councillors' disapproval of the plan to construct the tramway. Their main objection being it would destroy Oban's seafront and affect tourism in the town (Oban Town Council Minute Book 1844-1864). Oban had a very short season from June to September and could not afford to lose business. Around 40% of the councillors were shop owners or had connections with the tourist trade so such a proposal was not popular with them. Oban's inhabitants also welcomed the plans for a railway but were not in favour of the proposed tramway. In 1865, 144 residents signed a petition stating their objections to the scheme (Papers of the Campbell Family, Earls of Breadalbane Muniments, 1865a).

Many towns and cities throughout Britain had railway stations situated on the outskirts with visitors being transported to the town by carriage. However, the Oban railway was not originally designed to carry tourists; instead its primary function was to enable the fishing and farming industry in Oban and the islands to transport their products quickly to market. In order to be efficient the railway terminus had to be as close to the pier as possible, so a station on the edge of town was not a viable option.

The dispute over the proposed route into Oban continued. In 1871, John Anderson the secretary of the Callander and Oban Railway wrote to John Campbell, Captain of Dunstaffnage in an attempt to secure the necessary land for the railway.

> "Sir, I write to enquire whether you are favourable to an extension and to what account you would be disposed to subscribe also whether you would be disposed to give the necessary land at a nominal price so far as your property is concerned. I fear that unless landed proprietors give the scheme

> every encouragement such as been given in the North Highlands that it will be difficult to make progress" (Records of British Railways Board 1871a).

However, the response received two days later was not encouraging as John Campbell replied.

> "After the treatment I have received from the Callander & Oban Railway Company, I am rather surprised that I should be asked to subscribe or give any land to it at a nominal figure. However, I have to state that if the Railway be brought from Connel into Oban by the lie of the old road I will give the land and any property required for it at as low a price per acre as the fact of it being entailed will allow. If however it is contemplated to being in a similar direction to the imaginary line of the C. & O. Railway now abandoned the injury I should sustain by having the whole pleasure and comfort of my residence here destroyed from the close proximity of the Railway to the roads almost all the way to Oban. Preventing the ladies of my family and myself ever going out on our daily drives along our only roads without the risk and fear of an accident from frightened horses would be so great that I should infinitely prefer the railway to stop where it does now at Tyndrum" (Records of British Railways Board 1871a).

Terminating the line at Tyndrum was not an option and in 1874 at a meeting before the select committee of the House of Commons, Mr Cumstie Oban's Chief Magistrate and businessman stated the importance of the railway. He stated that 40 to 50,000 visitors currently arrived in Oban (Glasgow Herald 13 May 1874).

The railway company finally secured the necessary land on Glencruitten estate between Connel and Oban, owned by George Grant MacKay. The railway company also required land in Oban for its terminus, station and new pier. They purchased reclaimed land on the south side of Oban bay opposite the steamboat owned by Robert McFie of Airds who was a director of the railway. The Callander and Oban railway finally opened on 29 June 1880. The actual cost was £645,000 which included the esplanade wall, new streets and the pier, which was still under construction (Thomas 1990, p.75).
In November 1881, John Anderson provided details of the numbers of those who had arrived or departed from Oban from June to September that year. He stated:

> "During the last four months ending 30th September last, the number of passengers booked from Oban was 18,030 during the same period the number booked to Oban was 29,363. These figures denote that a very large number of those were tourists from the fact that so many were booked to Oban as compared with those booked from Oban, tourists generally having return tickets. In the winter months the traffic is much smaller. During the

> four months ending 30th April last, the number booked at Oban was 6,443. I have not got the number booked to Oban. The number of passengers booked over the railway for the Glen Etive Circular Tour during the summer months was 1,109, but I know from seeing the books that 1,800 were actually carried by the coach" (Oban Burgh Bill, 1881).

Few records survive relating to the numbers of passengers carried on the Callander and Oban line therefore calculating the numbers of passengers who travelled on the line is almost impossible. Fortunately, the Traffic Book for Oban Station recorded the number of tickets collected between 1883 and 1896, which gives an indication of the numbers arriving in Oban as shown in Table 6.5: Tickets collected at Oban Railway Station 1883 to 1896.

Oban town council minutes reported that between July and September 1881, 26,000 visitors had arrived in Oban by steamer, whereas 37,000 had been transported by rail (Oban Town Council Minute Book 1865-1885). No other surveys were carried out regarding coach and steamer passenger numbers therefore a comparison cannot be made. The number of ships travelling through the Crinan Canal did fall by over 50% between 1801 and 1885 although this may not provide a true picture as many of the larger steamers travelled around the Mull of Kintyre. Much of the continued success of both the steamships and railway was attributed to John Anderson whose collaboration with the steamship and coach companies resulted in timetables being reorganised to connect with the trains, which would benefit all transport operators (Thomas, 1990, p.77). This was not solely for the benefit of tourism as the railway companies were interested in obtaining the lucrative contracts for the transportation of fish from the islands to the markets in the south. The shortness of the tourist season meant transport companies had to find other sources of income out with the summer months.

Table 6.5: Tickets collected at Oban Railway Station 1883 to 1896

Year	No of tickets collected
1883	53,262
1886	62,022
1887	61,363
1888	61,877
1889	68,264
1890	66,903
1891	69,238
1892	67,199
1893	67,640
1894	67,649
1895	73,625
1896	70,938

Source: (Adapted from Oban Railway Station Traffic Book).

6.8 Conclusions

This chapter highlighted that although the railway changed the fortunes of some resorts Oban's success as a resort was undoubtedly initially due to the steam ships, which were of paramount importance in bringing visitors to the town. For some resorts especially those along the south coast of England, the arrival of the railway resulted in the demise of sea transport but this was not the case for Oban. When the Callander and Oban railway reached Oban in 1880, the town was already an established resort. This suggested the importance of the railway was less significant for Oban's development than for other places.

Whether the railway took traffic away from the steamboats or split the market is debatable there are no records of the number of passengers, which arrived in Oban by steamer and only a limited record of passengers arriving by rail. Although the number

of vessels, which travelled through the Crinan Canal, decreased after 1880 this does not necessarily mean that the number of ships or passengers, which arrived in Oban, also decreased. Several of MacBrayne's larger ships were too big to travel through the canal and instead rounded the Mull of Kintyre. The desire by local landowners for a new canal to be constructed between East and West Loch Tarbert after the opening of the railway also confirmed that the railway was not seen as a replacement for steamers.

This chapter has also highlighted the important role the landowners played in improving transport to Oban. In order for a resort to develop, access was required either overland or by sea. Oban's landowners held a great deal of power as they could dictate the routes, which the road and railway followed, which were not necessary the cheapest or most direct. Although most of Oban's landowners were in favour of good transport links with the rest of Scotland they did not want their estates to be adversely affected by the roads and railways. Oban town councillors also played their part in campaigning for Oban's contribution to road maintenance in the area to be reduced. They were also instrumental in determining the final route the railway would take on entering Oban so as to preserve the town's attractiveness as a resort. Although as several councillors had a direct interest in tourism much of this may have been done in their own interest.

Although good access was important, an efficient transport service was not enough to attract visitors to any resort. Throughout Britain there was a huge variety of options to choose from and in order to attract the visitor especially those from without the immediate area Oban had to offer the visitor something unique, which other resorts could not.

Although there was no way of calculating the number of visitors arriving in the town, large numbers of visitors were clearing arriving by rail and sea. The following chapter examined the effect which tourism had on the resident population in particular the employment opportunities which tourism brought to the town.

Chapter 7

Changing Employment Opportunities

7.1 Introduction

"Oban, in my opinion, is a town whose very existence depends on tourists", so wrote a local resident in a letter to the editor of *The Oban Times* on 18 November 1905. The town's dependence on tourism was not a recent phenomenon but one which had gradually evolved from the end of the eighteenth century. By the latter part of the nineteenth century Oban's economy had changed becoming less dependent on the traditional occupations of fishing, weaving and agriculture and more dependent on tourism. In 1871, an editorial in *The Oban Times* stated "Oban is very dependent on its tourist visitors and on those who base themselves there during their tour of the west" (The Oban Times 19 August 1871). Speaking at a meeting of the Lorn District Roads in 1881, local landowner Colonel MacDougall stated "Oban exists simply by tourists." His comments were backed by local businessman John Fraser Sim who agreed commenting "There is no industry whatever in Oban, we live on the tourists" (Oban Burgh Bill 1881).

One of the key research questions posed in this thesis was "How was the resident population affected by tourism? Did the developing tourist industry create jobs and prosperity for all or did tourism also have a negative impact especially for those not involved in the industry?" The purpose of this chapter was to examine the impact, which tourism and the increasing numbers of tourists in Oban had on the employment prospects of its population throughout the nineteenth century. Opportunities available to males and females were studied separately to determine whether one gender benefitted at the expense of the other or did tourism have little or no effect on the balance between opportunities for men and women?

Obtaining accurate information to enable a study to be made of the changing occupations within a resort over time can be difficult. Detailed information was not always available and the accuracy of what was accessible can be questioned. As Walton (1983, p.74) stated:

> ‘‘Seaside resorts are particularly intractable as objects of social analysis. The high level of seasonal fluctuation, especially in the large popular resorts poses problems by encouraging indeed imposing multiple occupations and even seasonal migration. This reduces the value of census evidence on social structure, as the printed returns are based on a single occupational label for each person and short term occupations related to the holiday season tend to be excluded.”

Vanhove (1981, p.162) agreed that it is not easy to demonstrate the impact of tourism on employment as:

1. There are many types of tourism.
2. Tourism is not a composite product, and is made up of several individual elements.
3. Tourist facilities and services are provided by many small units, which often represent a significant proportion of the total manpower, and include self-employed as well as employees.
4. The measurement of employment in tourism has to cope with varying proportions of full-time and part-time employment.
5. Much activity in tourism is seasonal and the numbers employed can vary considerably at different times of the year.

Although Vanhove was writing about tourism at the end of the twentieth century this statement was also applicable to tourism employment in the nineteenth century.

Opportunities provided by tourism in resorts around the world has been extensively researched although few historical studies have been undertaken regarding the employment opportunities available to those living in Scotland’s coastal resorts. The effect tourism had on women’s employment in Scottish seaside resorts has also received little attention. This chapter looked in some detail at the job opportunities available to women where possible comparing Oban to other resorts. Although acknowledging the limitations of the available information regarding occupations, Walton (1983) examined specific occupations within selected English resorts. His analysis of lodging-house keepers, servants, annuitants and professionals was based primarily on census enumerators’ returns although local directories were also consulted. In his study *The Blackpool Landlady* Walton (1978) provided a comprehensive account of the role of women within seaside resorts from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth century.

Beginning with the stereotypical landlady as a rather frightening figure, he highlighted the function, which women actually fulfilled. In his study of the Isle of Man (Beckerson 2007) also explored the role of the landlady in *Holiday Isle - The Golden Era of the Manx Boarding House from 1870 to 1970,* although many of the case studies focused on the twentieth century. Little research has been carried out regarding the role of the landlady in Victorian Scotland. In *Wish You Were Still Here* Simpson (2013) devoted a chapter to this subject although concentrated mainly on the first half of the twentieth century.

This chapter also examined in some detail those who owned and managed the largest of Oban's hotels. Several studies have looked at the number, size and the facilities offered by hotels in resorts. Getz et al (2004, p.1) stated that although tourism is dominated by small owner operated businesses little has been written specifically about the family dimension. (Humair 2011) commented that economic history has paid little attention to the activities of service providers in particular to those in the hotel industry, the core of tourist development.

This chapter also looked at the types of accommodation available for those working in the tourist industry. The census returns for Oban between 1841 and 1901 highlighted that the town was attracting large numbers of migrants many of whom were employed both directly in the tourism industry in for example hotels, lodging houses, shops, boat hiring, coach driving and indirectly especially in the building trade. In Oban reasonably priced accommodation was difficult to access. It was more lucrative for builders to construct hotels and villas for visitors which resulted in a shortage of affordable houses. As Oban increased in popularity many lodging houses, which had had traditionally provided board for migrant workers, instead provided accommodation for visitors. Where were those on lower wages to be housed?

Before looking in detail at the changing opportunities available during the nineteenth century, the chapter began by examining the employment opportunities available to Oban's residents at the end of the eighteenth century before tourism became established.

7.2 Employment opportunities before 1800

There are four surviving records relating to employment in Oban at the end of the eighteenth century although all four only include male occupations. In 1791, Oban's Masonic Lodge was established and records were kept of its members occupations. In the same year, the local minister also provided details of occupations in his Statistical Account for Kilmore and Kilbride. In 1792, the local landowner, the Duke of Argyll instructed his factor in Oban to provide him with a list of the occupations of those who resided in his portion of the town and on the adjacent lands owned by the Captain of Dunstaffnage. Finally, a list of men of Military Age in 1804 gave details of male employment for those aged between 18 and 24 years at the turn of the century. A comparison of the four reports provided a relatively comprehensive account of male occupations as highlighted in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Occupations of residents on The Duke of Argyll's Lands in Oban 1791-1804

Occupations	Members of the Masonic Lodge 1791	The Statistical Account 1791	Duke of Argyll's Factors report 1792	Men of Military age (18-24 years) 1804
Tobacconists	0	0	2	0
Masons	9	3	40	9
Ships & Boat carpenters	12	12	12	10
Ship builder	2	0	0	0
Fishermen	0	0	6	0
Tailors	3	9	14	12
Clerks to Merchants in Customs House	4	7	9	1
Merchants	14	5	4	4
Brewers	0	0	2	10
Barber	2	1	0	0
Bakers	2	1	2	2
Carrier	1	0	0	0
Dancing Master	1	0	0	0
Drovers	1	0	0	2

Occupations	Members of the Masonic Lodge 1791	The Statistical Account 1791	Duke of Argyll's Factors report 1792	Men of Military age (18-24 years) 1804
Sailors	5	19	26	19
Joiners	5	17	30	25
Blacksmiths	2	12	8	7
Copper smith	1	0	0	0
Coopers	0	3	8	1
Saddlers	1	1	2	1
Slaters	1	5	2	3
Weavers	0	17	25	6
Innkeeper	1	0	0	1
Waiter in Inn	5	0	0	0
Upholsterers	0	0	1	0
Schoolmasters	3	1	1	4
Tanners	3	4	5	6
Bankers	0	0	1	0
Shoemakers	6	25	16	22
Painters	1	1	1	1
Preacher/minister	3	1	0	0
Surgeon	0	0	0	1
Ship master	7	0	0	0
Plumber	1	0	0	0
Constable	0	0	0	2
Sheriff Officer	1	0	0	0
Shopkeeper	4	0	0	7
Watchmaker	2	0	0	4
Collector of Excise	6	0	0	1
Controller of customs	1	0	0	1
Cartwright	1	0	0	0
Servant	1	0	0	2
Tidewaiter	0	0	0	1
Change keeper	1	0	0	1

Occupations	Members of the Masonic Lodge 1791	The Statistical Account 1791	Duke of Argyll's Factors report 1792	Men of Military age (18-24 years) 1804
Vintner	2	0	0	2
Labourers	0	24	0*	0
Total	**115**	**185**	**217**	**168**

* Total number of women, children and labourers 442.

Source: (Adapted from The Masonic Lodge in Oban, Charles Hunter private collection; Papers of Campbell of Argyll 1792; The Statistical Account of Scotland, Kilmore and Kilbride 1791; Men of Military Age in 1804, Charles Hunter private collection).

The Duke's factor listed those living on the Captain of Dunstaffange's land to the north of the river separately as illustrated in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Occupations of residents on the Captain of Dunstaffnage's Land in Oban 1792

Merchants	1
Clerks	3
Coopers	2
Blacksmiths	3
Brewers	2
Tanners	4
Labourers, women/children	60
Total	75

Source: (Papers of Campbell of Argyll 1792).

While the information contained in the reports in Table 7.1 and Table 7.2 provided a relatively detailed account of the occupations of the male population there were discrepancies between the sources especially in the numbers employed in some trades.

The list from the Masonic Lodge only recorded those, which were members of the Lodge, so did not include the total male population. As the Duke's factor's account did not separate labourers from women and children it was not possible to determine how many men were employed as labourers. His report suggested that Oban was

experiencing a period of growth and expansion with over a third of the working population employed as joiners and masons which implied that there were likely to have been a large number of labourers. The Statistical Account written by the Reverend Patrick MacDonald in 1791 also provided a breakdown of those employed in the town. His report was less detailed as only certain occupations were listed although he did record the number of labourers. Finally the list of Men of Military age only included those between the ages of 18 and 24. As there was no indication of the age range of the male population in any of the other accounts, this report may have excluded a large number of working men.

The 1792 factor's report recorded 40 masons living the town whereas one year earlier the Reverend MacDonald recorded just three. The considerable difference may be due to the number of masons employed in the construction of Oban Distillery, which was built between 1792 and 1794. This would have required a large number of tradesmen who may have been attracted to the town in search of employment although there was no indication where they came from. There was also a discrepancy in the number of clerks and merchants between 1791 and 1792. Although overall, these accounts suggested that trade and commerce was flourishing at the end of the eighteenth century.

The journals of travellers visiting Oban at this time stated there was at least one inn in the town however neither the Duke's factor nor the Statistical Account made reference to an innkeeper although the minister did note that there was an inn in Oban. Further evidence of the existence of an inn was found in the Masonic list, which provided the name of the inn-keeper and his five male waiters. As the four sources provided conflicting reports it was therefore very difficult to give an accurate picture of the absolute numbers of people employed in the different trades. As many occupations were seasonal some of the information may have been gathered at a time when few people were employed in a particular trade or indeed a large number may have been away from home at the time the information was collected. The Reverend MacDonald stated that there was seasonal migration especially of labourers and servants to the lowlands at certain times of the year in search of work. They would return to Oban when work again became available in the town. However, he did report that this practice had led to a demand for higher wages, especially for household servants with males earning £5 to £6 per annum and females £2 to £2 10s (Withrington and Grant

1983, p.282). This could account for the very low number of servants listed in all reports.

The factor noted that 32 men were sailors or fishermen, while the Reverend MacDonald recorded 19, which suggested that the minister's account was written at a time when many of these men were at sea. Although his figure of 15 to 20 fishing vessels registered in the town was similar to that provided by the factor. However as his report and the others are undated this cannot be substantiated. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 provided a valuable source of information, but highlighted that reconciling sources can be problematic as the details contained in them are not always consistent. These four sources do at least provide information about the types of occupations available and showed that Oban's residents were not just working on the land or as fishermen but employed in various trades including merchants and merchant's clerks. They reports also indicated that the town was undertaking a period of development with a large number of men employed in the building trade. As there are no lodging-house keepers or any other tourism related occupations listed in any of the accounts apart from the five male waiters listed in the Masonic list this implied that Oban was not receiving many visitors. Apart from the factor recording the total number of women, children and labourers in the town there was no mention of any female employment in any of the other accounts.

7.3 The changing pattern of female employment

Walton (1983) commented that there are few historical studies regarding the impact tourism had on the local female population of resorts. Ireland (1993) stated that the underrepresentation of women, in part, stems from the lack of available contemporary evidence, although his study of the Cornish village of Sennen highlighted the increasing involvement of local women in tourism from the late nineteenth century.

Female employment opportunities in Scottish resorts in the eighteenth and nineteenth century have not been studied in any detail, which may be due to the lack of information available. Seasonal employment was available in Oban's hotels, private houses and shops but these would not have been included in the April census. However, in the absence of other sources the census enumerators' returns provided a record of women's

occupations between 1841 and 1901, and enabled a comparison to be made over a 60 year period.

The contribution made by Victorian women to the economy was often ignored. In their study of women in Scotland, Gordon and Nair (2003, p.137) stated that women were:

> "Generally seen as having little or no financial independence. Those who have acknowledged that women made an economic contribution have claimed that it was 'shadowy' and largely hidden."

Bradley (1989) maintained that the role of a Victorian woman was to stay at home and devote herself to a domestic life as their delicate constitution made them unsuitable for the harsh world of work. However, for women living in seaside resorts there were opportunities to combine work and home especially by providing accommodation for summer visitors. Providing lodgings was also a respectable way for a Victorian woman to earn a living (Beckerson 2007).

The first record of female employment in Oban was provided in the 1837 edition of Pigot and Company's Commercial directory of Scotland. The directory recorded the number of women employed in different trades including shopkeepers. In Oban 20% of shops were run by women, a similar percentage to Dunoon with 18% and Rothesay with 17% (Pigot 1837). However, the directory had limitations as it only included women who owned businesses and did not list those who worked for others. In the absence of other sources, the census returns provided the only method of examining the changing contribution made by women to Oban's economy over a 60 year period from 1841 to 1901. Although the information was gathered before the tourist season began the census enabled a comparison to be made in selected occupations, which included lodging-house keepers, servants, hotel managers, hotel staff, and those employed in shops.

However, as highlighted previously the census could not be relied upon for accurately recording all women's occupations. This was evident from the 1841 census returns for Weymouth and Great Yarmouth where a much smaller number of women were recorded by the enumerator as lodging-house keepers than advertised in the local directories (Walton 1983, p.85). These discrepancies may be because the information was gathered at different times of the year. As most resorts were seasonal women not

taking in lodgers at the time the census was taken, may not have defined themselves as lodging-house keepers.

In Oban, there were also discrepancies between the numbers of lodging-house keepers recorded in the census with the number of establishments providing accommodation printed in the visitors' lists in *The Oban Times* between 1868 and 1890 and in *The Oban Visitors Register* between 1895 and 1901. Comparing the addresses in the visitors' lists with the census returns highlighted that the female proprietors of those properties were not listed as having any profession. This suggested that they did not consider themselves to be lodging-house keepers or indeed to have any occupation. Many of these women were the wives of professional men and town councillors who occupied substantial villas on the esplanade or on the hills overlooking the town. Oban was not unusual in this respect. Walton (1998, p.99) identified that 71% of the landladies who occupied large houses in Blackpool had husbands described as professional. In addition as many women had part time or seasonal employment especially in the hotels during the season the occupation recorded by the enumerator may have been dependent on the job being done by them on that particular day.

In the 1841 census, which took place in June, females accounted for 21% of the working population of Oban but by 1851 this had almost doubled mainly due to the increasing number of servants employed in domestic households and as maids in hotels and lodging houses. A comparison of Table 7.3 and Table 7.4 indicated that the percentage of working women in Oban in 1841 was lower than the national average but thereafter was consistently higher and remained so even after the percentage nationally began to fall. The decrease in the proportion of female workers in Oban in 1881 was most likely due to the increased male labour force. The reasons for this will be examined later in the chapter.

Table 7.3: Women as a Percentage of Oban's total labour force

	1841	**1851**	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
Actual Number	77	260	283	379	548	717	888
Percentage	21%	39%	37%	39%	32%	38%	38%

Source: (Adapted from Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1841-1901).

Table 7.4: Women as a Percentage of the total labour force in Scotland

	1841	**1851**	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
Female workers	36.39%	36.29%	36.81%	31.73%	31.31%	31.30%	29.8%

Source: (Morris 2000, p.209).

In 1841, Oban was still very much a rural community with a population of 1,398 and the percentage of women over 20 years of age employed as servants 17.7% was very similar to other resorts as illustrated in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5: Female domestic servants as a percentage of the total female population over 20 years of age in 1841 in selected seaside resorts

Weymouth	18.55%
Margate/Ramsgate	17.16%
Great Yarmouth	8.51%
Brighton	20.15%
Hastings	18.70%
Scarborough	14.19%
Tenby	21.42%
Oban	17.70%

Source: (Adapted from Walton 1983, p80).

After 1851, the number of women employed as domestic servants increased, although the overall percentage decreased see Table 7.6. After 1851 women were recorded in the census as cooks, laundry-maids and house-keepers whereas in 1841 they were only listed as servants. Therefore, many of these women may have been servants although not recorded as such. After the railway arrived in Oban in 1880, more hotels and shops opened providing more employment opportunities for women**.**

Table 7.6: Female domestic servants as a percentage of Oban's working female population

	1841	**1851**	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
Total Number of working women	77	260	283	379	548	717	888
Number of female servants	34	107	111	142	191	188	240
Percentage	44%	41%	39%	37%	35%	26%	27%

Source: (Adapted from Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1841-1901).

The census returns recorded servants living in properties, which were unoccupied outside the holiday season, which suggested that the owners of properties in Oban employed staff presumably to keep them safe during the long period of non-occupation. Servants were therefore not just employed during the tourist season but all year round. In his study of selected Scottish towns Morris (2000, p.81) commented that towns such as St Andrews had a higher percentage of professional men which accounted for the larger percentage of women servants. The heavy industry towns such as Clydebank with fewer professional men had a smaller percentage of servants as illustrated in Table 7.7. By 1901, 11% of Oban's total female population were employed as servants, a similar percentage to Dunoon.

Table 7.7: Percentage of the total female population employed as servants in Oban in 1901 compared to other Scottish Towns

Clydebank	3.3%
Port Glasgow	3.3%
Renfrew	4.4%
Dundee	4.1%
Dunfermline	4.7%
Forfar	5.6%
Selkirk	6.1%
Galashiels	6.4%
Brechin	6.6%
Dumbarton	7.6%
Coatbridge	7.7%
Hawick	8.3%
Oban	11.0%
Dumfries	12.5%
Dunoon	14.4%
Edinburgh	16.0%
Elgin	16.0%
Crieff	19.1%
Broughty Ferry	20.0%
St Andrews	24.1%

Source: (Adapted from: Morris 2000, p81, 82).

Seaside resorts not only attracted those looking for work but also those of independent means who had the time and income to enjoy the pleasures of the coastal towns. In 1841 19.3% of Oban's female population over 20 years old and 1.8% of the male population were listed in this category. The percentage of those of Independent means' in Oban can be compared to seven other seaside resorts as shown in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8: People of 'Independent Means' as a percentage of population over 20 years old in seaside resorts 1841

	Males	Females
Brighton	7.32%	12.50%
Weymouth	6.80%	10.69%
Margate & Ramsgate	9.23%	13.32%
Great Yarmouth	3.90%	10.28%
Hastings	5.35%	11.63%
Scarborough	6.71%	12.11%
Tenby	8.33%	15.43%
Oban	2.1%	15.80%

Source: (Adapted from Walton 1983, p.78).

Although the percentage of women of independent means in Oban was similar to other resorts, the percentage of male annuitants was much lower. The reason why there was such a difference was unclear and no documentary evidence has been uncovered which could account for the difference. The enumerators' records show that most of those women of independent means in Oban were the wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of professional men. The males of independent means were mainly retired military men.

As tourism increased additional shops and hotels opened to meet the visitors' demands, which offered alternative employment opportunities for women (see Table 7.9). In 1861, 19% of shop assistants in the UK were women (Bradley 1989, p.178) a similar figure to the 20% employed in Oban although only a small percentage of Oban's total female workforce worked in shops.

Table 7.9: Percentage of working women in Oban employed in shops

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
Number of female shop workers in Oban	4	15	11	21	26	43	90
Percentage employed	5%	6%	4%	6%	5%	6%	10%
Total number of working women	77	260	283	379	548	717	888

Source: (Adapted from Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1841-1901).

During the summer months the percentage of women employed in the shops was likely to have been much higher than indicated by the enumerators' returns. In late May and early June during the period referred to in *The Oban Times* as the 'Removal term' shop keepers moved to larger and more prominent premises for the season and they many have employed additional staff including women during this time. Many shops extended their opening hours to cater for the visitors during the summer with many trading from 0730 to 2200. After the arrival of the railway in 1880, the number of shops catering for visitors increased and the town had a large number of milliners, high-class clothiers and chemist shops, which may have employed women during the season. Such shops also offered alterations and high class dress making and tailoring which could also account for the 108 dressmakers employed in the town. Of the 888 working women in Oban in 1901, 90 recorded their occupations in the census as shop assistants or sales women. As the town increased in popularity, the majority of Oban's shops also became more specialised appealing to the tourists by supplying outdoor clothing, souvenirs, equipment for hunting, fishing and services for yachts and carriages.

The majority of Oban's hotels were built between 1881 and 1901, which created additional jobs for women including laundry-maids, serving maids, barmaids and cooks. As there were no records of the number of those employed in the hotels it was impossible to estimate the percentage employed during the summer season. By 1901, Oban had 34 hotels, several with over 100 rooms therefore during the summer months the numbers employed are likely to have been considerably higher than recorded in the census as highlighted in Table 7.10.

Table 7.10: Percentage of working women in Oban employed in hotels (excluding managers and owners)

	1841	**1851**	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
Number of Hotels	3	8	11	11	16	21	34
Total Number of working women	77	260	283	379	548	717	888
Number of women employed in hotels	7	17	17	24	40	72	103
Percentage employed	9%	6%	6%	6%	7%	10%	12%

Source: (Adapted from Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1841-1901).

For some occupations a general term may have been used to cover all permutations of a job. For example women are often given the general term 'servant'. Unless this was further defined as domestic servant or hotel servant there was no way to determine within the classification of servant, how many were working in the hotels unless they actually lived on the premises. Therefore only servants recorded in the enumerators books as 'hotel servant', were included in Table 7.11

Similarly, the term lodging-house keeper seemed unambiguous, but not all lodging-houses were accommodating tourists. The occupations of those living in the lodging houses recorded in the census enumerators' returns were mostly single men predominantly workmen and travelling salesmen.

Table 7.11: Number of Lodging-House Keepers in Oban

	1841	**1851**	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
Lodging-House Keepers	2	15	18	36	47	51	40

Source: (Adapted from Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1841-1901).

As the town increased in popularity providing accommodation for tourists became increasingly popular, although it was very difficult to estimate the actual number of properties providing lodgings. In the absence of an accommodation directory, *The Oban Times* and later *The Oban Visitors Register* provided the only record of these establishments. Although *The Oban Times* provided a list of those staying in the lodging houses in 1868 it did not list the number of lodging houses so 1868 was not included in Table 7.12.

Table 7.12: Number of Private Houses listed in the Visitors' Lists in *The Oban Times* and *The Oban Visitors Register*

	1876	**1884**	**1890**	**1895**	**1901**
Private Houses	77	82	96	189	146

Source: (Adapted from the visitors' lists in *The Oban Times*, July and August 1876, 1884, 1890, 1895 & 1901).

A comparison of the numbers of establishments providing accommodation in Table 7.11 and Table 7.12 confirmed that not only those listed as lodging-house keepers

in the census returns were offering accommodation. Some but not all of the lodging-house keepers recorded in Table 7.11 were listed in *The Oban Times* as accommodating tourists. However from the newspaper lists', it was evident that private houses were also accommodating tourists on a short or longer term basis. As stated previously, many women were not listed in the census returns as lodging-housekeepers perhaps as they only offered accommodation during the season and not all year round. This discrepancy was not peculiar to Oban as Walton (1983, p.85) stated that in 1845, 132 land-ladies were listed in Great Yarmouth's directory of lodging-house keepers whereas only 55 were recorded in the 1841 census. In Blackpool many women who took in working class weekenders at Whitsuntide and August were never listed as landladies (Walton 1978, p.30). Walton and McGloin (1979) suggested that those providing accommodation in the summer may have been reluctant to be identified as taking in lodgers as this could have been viewed as a demeaning occupation.

By 1901, the census returns for Oban recorded only 2% of the population (all female) listed as lodging-house keepers. This was a similar figure to Hastings, Southend, Brighton and Great Yarmouth, which all recorded a similar percentage in the 1911 census[6] (Walton 1983, p.87). For its size, Oban provided a large number of accommodation options for its visitors. In 1891, Oban had a population of 4,902 and a total of 124 hotels and private houses. This was a similar number but a much larger percentage than Bournemouth, where 119 establishments were recorded for a town with a population at that time of 37,381 (Walton 1983, p.92).

7.4 Oban's hotels – owners, managers and staff

At the end of the eighteenth century, Oban had a population of 734 and had one inn providing basic accommodation. By 1837, Oban's population had increased to 1,398 but tourism was still in its infancy and only four establishments, two inns, one hotel and one lodging-house provided accommodation. In comparison, Dunoon with a population of around 1,200 had four inns and hotels and ten lodging-houses and Rothesay, on the Isle of Bute had three inns and 26 lodging-houses for a population of just over 6,000

[6] The 1911 census was not available at time of writing so a comparison with Oban could not be made.

(Pigot, 1837). In the 1841 census taken in June, only 13 people including the hotel and inn-keepers were employed in Oban's hotels out of a total working population of 372. Most of those staying in the town on the census night in June 1841 were listed as travelling salesmen or tradesmen.

As highlighted earlier in the chapter, it was not always possible to establish exactly how many people worked in the hotels as the census returns recorded some occupations as 'hotel cook' or 'hotel servant' and in others as 'cook' or 'servant'. Therefore Table 7.13 included only those with hotel in their job title for example 'hotel cook', 'hotel servant', 'hotel boots', 'hotel barman'. As the information recorded in each subsequent census was gathered in April the figures do not provide a true reflection of the total number of people employed in the hotels during the summer season but do at least provide an indication of the numbers employed out of season. In the absence of any other data a study of the census returns between 1841 and 1901 enabled a comparison to be made of the number and percentage of women and men employed in Oban's hotels over this sixty-year period.

Table 7.13: Hotel staff (excluding owners and managers)

	1841	**1851**	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
No of Males	6	8	9	14	20	33	37
Percentage Males	46%	32%	35%	37%	33%	31%	26%
No of Females	7	17	17	24	40	72	103
Percentage Females	54%	68%	65%	63%	67%	69%	74%

Source: (Adapted from Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1841-1901).

As the number and size of hotels increased the percentage of women employed increased and some of the larger hotels retained a small winter staff, which were predominantly female. By 1901, Oban had 34 hotels therefore; the numbers employed in the summer would have been considerably higher than the number recorded by the enumerator. However, it was not possible to know whether the male/female percentage would have been different.

A further comparison was made between the gender of those who owned/managed the hotels. Table 7.14 revealed that in 1841, all hotels in Oban were owned or managed by men (unfortunately no distinction was made between owners and managers) but over

time the percentage of hotels owned or managed by women gradually increased and by 1901 almost as many women were in charge as their male counterparts. This increase was in part due to women taking over the running of the hotel following the death of a husband but others were single women. Some but not all of the hotels managed by women were smaller establishments and a study of the census returns highlighted that some of those had started out as lodging-houses but were later extended and renamed as hotels.

Table 7.14: Oban's hotel owners/keepers

	1841	**1851**	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
No. of Males	3	4	5	7	10	16	18
Percentage Male	100%	57%	63%	64%	63%	59%	53%
No. of Females	0	3	3	4	6	11	16
Percentage Females	0%	43%	37%	36%	37%	41%	47%

Source: (Adapted from Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1841-1901).

Whether the percentage of males and females providing accommodation in Oban was similar to other seaside resorts was difficult to determine. However, Walton (1983, p.89) study of the gender of hoteliers and lodging-house keepers in selected resorts between 1886 and 1895 enabled a comparison to the made with establishments in Oban listed in the newspaper visitor lists as taking in summer visitors within approximately the same period (see Table 7.15).

Table 7.15: Lodging-House Keepers Listed in Accommodation Directories 1886 - 1895

	Male	Female
High class south coast resorts: lodging-houses		
Bournemouth	61.6%	38.4%
Brighton	23.0%	77.0%
Hastings	24.0%	76.0%
Eastbourne	13.6%	86.4%
Isle of Wight lodging-houses:		
Sandown	51.7%	48.3%
Shanklin	62.0%	38.0%
Ventnor	44.6%	55.4%
North Wales lodging-houses:		
Llandudno	40.9%	59.1%
Llanfairfechan	63.3%	36.7%
Penmaenmawr	69.0%	31.0%
Colwyn Bay	49.7%	50.3%
Rhyl	48.4%	51.6%
Lancashire lodging-houses:		
Blackpool	36.7%	63.3%
Morecombe	26.5%	73.5%
Southport	29.5%	70.5%
East Anglia lodging-houses:		
Clacton	55.8%	44.2%
Cromer	54.3%	45.7%
Hunstanton	49.0%	51.0%
Sherringhan	84.6%	15.4%
Oban lodging-houses:		
Oban	15.2%	84.8%

Source: (Adapted from Walton 1983, p.89).

The table highlighted that the percentage of males and females running lodging-houses varied dramatically throughout the country. The difference between Oban and other

resorts may be because many of the properties in Oban were private houses only letting rooms in the summer not commercial lodging houses. However without any solid evidence this cannot be substantiated.

7.5 Place of Birth of Oban's Working Population

As the earliest records of employment in Oban gave no information regarding place of birth it was not possible to surmise whether the town had always attracted migrants. Although the Statistical Account of 1791, stated that improvements to the surrounding farms and estates resulted in many moving from the surrounding countryside into the village. The census enumerators' returns from 1851-1901 provided evidence that much of Oban's growth was due to in-migration not only from the immediate area but also from outside Argyll (see Table 7.16).

Table 7.16: Place of birth – Oban's total working population 1851-1901

	1851	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
Number born in Oban	151	172	204	232	341	582
% born in Oban	23%	22%	21%	13%	18%	25%
Number born in Argyll	230	213	279	365	348	342
% born in Argyll	35%	27%	28%	21%	18%	14%
Number born other areas	279	395	495	1166	1220	1458
% born in other areas	42%	51%	51%	66%	64%	61%
Total working population	**660**	**780**	**978**	**1763**	**1909**	**2382**

Source: (Adapted from Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1851-1901).

Dr Bailly, the health official for Oban provided further evidence of in-migration. In an article for the Journal of British and Foreign Health Resorts in 1892, reprinted by *The Oban Times* he stated:

> "The census returns for 1891 confirm that much of the rise in population is due not to the natural increase that follows from the excess of the birth rate over the death rate but to the large amount of in-migration which has been going on during this period. Of the 4,902 inhabitants only 1,709 were Oban born. The other parts of the highlands contributed 2,016, from the lowlands came 952 while from England, Ireland and abroad 225. Or we may say that 0.34 of the whole are natives, 0.41 were born in other parts of the highlands,

> 0.19 to the lowlands and 0.04 from England, Ireland and abroad" (The Oban Times 6 August 1892).

A large number of those coming to Oban were female servants from both the Argyll islands and the Western Isles. Many servants also came from Lochaber and the northern parts of Scotland. The number and percentage of Oban's total working population born in Argyll started to fall after 1871 which was also reflected in the drop in number of tradesmen working in Oban as shown in Table 7.17.

The considerable difference in the number of tradesmen between 1871 and 1881 may be due to 1871 being considered a poor year for the building trade. In April 1871, *The Oban Times* reported that trade was depressed and only the new reservoir at Glencruitten provided work. Much of the increase in migrant workers born outside Argyll after 1881 was attributed to a major building programme, which took place following the opening of The Callander and Oban railway in 1880. In 1881, the railway pier was further extended providing work for labourers. The census highlighted that the majority of whom came from Ireland and Glasgow. The Station Hotel with one hundred apartments was also constructed just after the railway opened. Oban's two largest hotels The Alexandra and the Great Western were refurbished and extended during 1881 and 1882, providing work for builders, labourers, joiners, painters and decorators. During the 1880s, a large number of private villas, public buildings, shops and new roads on the surrounding hills were constructed and this was clearly attracting tradesmen from outside Argyll to the town to meet the demand.

Table 7.17: Place of birth – Tradesmen working in Oban

	1851	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
Number born in Oban	31	30	40	73	37	102
% born in Oban	28%	22%	24%	14%	16%	28%
Number born in Argyll	32	30	47	101	49	59
% born in Argyll	29%	22%	28%	19%	21%	16%
Number born other areas	46	75	81	356	147	205
% born in other areas	42%	56%	48%	67%	63%	56%
Total no of Tradesmen	109	135	168	530	233	366

Source: (Adapted from Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1841-1901).

These prestigious hotels, which were competing for the top end of the market, were all owned by local residents and employed the services of Glasgow firms especially Wylie and Lockhead, who were responsible for the interior design of many of Oban's larger hotels. Work on the largest planned hotel the Oban Hills Hydropathic Sanatorium, which began in 1881 also attracted large numbers of tradesmen to the town. The firm of Robert McAlpine and Company from Hamilton was responsible for the brickwork and masonry and the carpentry and joiner was carried out by J McCormack and Company from Glasgow. Although no records exist for the actual number of tradesmen employed in these construction projects the 1881 census, recorded 86% of those employed in the building trade were born out with the town. Although there was no written evidence to support this, it was possible that workmen were recruited for these projects in Glasgow, as 25% of all tradesmen recorded in the 1881 census came from the Glasgow area. Towards the end of the century the expansion of the railways in the north west of Scotland with the line to Fort William which opened in 1894 and the Mallaig extension completed in 1901 provided work for labourers. On 18 April 1891, *The Oban Times* reported, "a number of our workpeople are engaged in the new railway and away from home". This would in part account for the falling percentage of Oban tradesmen in the 1891 census returns. The increase in the percentage of tradesmen in the 1901 census was likely to be due to the construction of the new road to the beach at Ganavan, two miles from the town centre and the extension to the railway pier both of which provided employment for a large number of labourers.

Towards the end of the century, the town not only attracted labourers, unskilled workers and tradesmen but also professional men. Those classified as professionals were doctors, lawyers, accountants, bank managers, engineers and head teachers which corresponded to those selected by Morgan and Trainer (2000, p.108). Oban was experiencing a major construction period and with new villas being bought and sold this provided work for the lawyers and bankers. As the town advertised itself as a health resort, the services of doctors were required for the invalids and their families although Oban's first hospital did not open until 1896.

In order to determine whether the percentage of professional men in Oban was similar to anywhere else in Scotland a comparison was made with 20 other towns as highlighted in Table 7.18. However as the information contained in Table 7.18 did not

indicate which occupations were considered ‘professional’ this may not provide an accurate comparison between Oban and the other towns. However, it does show that the percentage of professional men in Oban was similar to other resorts in Scotland.

Table 7.18: Male Professionals as a percentage of the working population in selected Scottish Towns 1901

Clydebank	0.6%
Port Glasgow	1.1%
Renfrew	1.3%
Coatbridge	1.4%
Dumbarton	1.7%
Dundee	2.2%
Galashiels	2.3%
Dunfermline	2.7%
Hawick	2.9%
Forfar	3.3%
Brechin	3.4%
Broughty Ferry	4.7%
Dumfries	4.8%
Dunoon	5.0%
Oban	5.2%
Crieff	5.6%
Edinburgh	5.9%
Elgin	6.0%
Selkirk	6.1%
St Andrews	7.7%

Source: (Adapted from Morris 2000, p.81-82).

In addition to a high percentage of tradesmen migrating to Oban in search of work, many of those employed in the hotels were also born outside Oban, as shown in Table 7.19. As the census was taken before the start of the season, the numbers were lower than they would have been during the height of the season.

The Oban hiring market took place each April for the engagement of farm workers and domestic servants. In 1878 *The Oban Times* reported that servant girls were in demand with good wages of £5-7 available for general female servants (The Oban Times, 13 April 1878). Nine years later the wages remained about the same with female servants securing situations at wages varying between £7-9 (The Oban Times, 16 April 1887). Those working in the hotels as servants, bar staff and waiters came mainly from the Argyll islands, the Western Isles, Lochaber, Sutherland and Ross shire with a smaller percentage coming from the cities. No overseas staff were recorded until the 1891 census when a Swiss chef and a German barmaid were employed at the Caledonian Hotel.

Table 7.19: Place of birth – Oban's Hotel Staff 1851-1901

	1851	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
Number born in Oban	1	0	1	1	5	12
% born in Oban	6%	0%	4%	2%	6%	11%
Number born in Argyll	8	9	11	17	14	19
% born in Argyll	47%	50%	41%	32%	18%	18%
Number born in other areas	8	9	15	35	59	75
% born in other areas	47%	50%	55%	66%	76%	71%
Total number of hotel staff	17	18	27	53	78	106

Source: (Adapted from: Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1841-1901).

It was difficult to make comparisons with wages in other Scottish towns as many newspaper advertisements did not state the rates of pay although occasionally wages would be printed. In 1879, an Ayrshire household advertised a position for a housemaid at £16 per annum (Glasgow Herald April 25 1879). In 1887, advertisements for general servant girls in Glasgow were in excess of £12 with experienced house maids earning up to £20 (Glasgow Herald 9 May 1887). To date no record of wages for any of Oban's hotels has been found.

The place of birth of Oban's Hotel owners and managers also changed over time as highlighted in Table 7.20. In 1851, Oban had eight hotels half of which were owned or managed by those born in Oban, which suggested that there was little investment from outside agencies. Almost all these establishments were small with the only one of any

size being the Caledonian. By 1861 the number of hotels had risen to 11 with five owned or managed by people born in Glasgow, two from Ayrshire and one from Perthshire. By 1881 Oban had 16 hotels which included several large establishments each able to accommodate in excess of 100 guests. Once again, the majority of hotels were owned or managed by people born in other parts of Scotland. In 1901, the census returns list 34 hotels. 10 were owned or managed from people born in Glasgow, three from Ross shire, two from Perth, Stirling, Lochaber, Ayrshire and England, and one each from Fife and the Borders. Oban's largest hotels the Alexandra and the Station hotel both employed managers born in Germany.

Table 7.20: Place of birth – Oban hotel owners/managers

	1851	**1861**	**1871**	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**
Number born in Oban	3	0	1	2	0	5
% born in Oban	38%	0%	9%	12%	0%	15%
Number born in Argyll	1	3	2	3	4	4
% born in Argyll	12%	27%	18%	19%	19%	12%
Number born in other areas	4	8	8	11	17	25
% born in other areas	50%	73%	73%	69%	81%	73%
Total number of hotel owners	**8**	**11**	**11**	**16**	**21**	**34**

Source: (Adapted from: Scotland's Census Kilmore & Kilbride 523, Oban 1841-1901).

7.6 Oban's Hoteliers

Several studies have looked at the number, size and the facilities offered by hotels including Gilbert (1954), Walvin (1978) and Walton (1983). However, less research has been undertaken regarding those who owned and managed the Victorian hotels in Britain and in Scotland in particular. In his recent study regarding the hotel industry in Lake Geneva between 1852 to 1914 Humair (2011, p.237) stated that economic history had paid little attention to the activities of service providers and in particular to the hotel industry, the core of tourist development. In a similar study of the history of Majorca between 1837 and 1914 Cirer-Costa (2012) highlighted the contribution made by several named hoteliers to the island's development.

Getz et al (2004, p.1) stated that although tourism is dominated by small owner operated businesses little has been written specifically about the family dimension. This section examined the background of some of Oban's hoteliers using a variety of sources. As the census only provided limited information about those who owned and managed the hotels other sources were consulted to provide a more detailed account. Fortunately some of Oban's hoteliers left relatively detailed wills and inventories which were available on the Scotland's People website. Local and national newspapers also provided information both in the advertisements for hotels and in articles about individual owners and their hotels.

One of the best documented hoteliers in Oban was Robert Angus who in the 1851 census aged 51 was listed as the innkeeper of a small inn in Charles Street, in the centre of the town situated close to the steamboat pier. Originally, from Dumbarton he lived at the inn with his wife, three daughters and one servant girl. Ten years later the census enumerators' returns stated that the family were still there. Robert was absent at the time of the enumerator's visit and his wife was listed as a hotel-keeper rather than an innkeeper. Durie (2012, p.5) provided a possible explanation for this change of classification as he stated whereas the early travellers used inns or coaching houses the tourists preferred hotels. David MacBrayne's steamers were bringing increasing numbers of visitors to the town and a hotel might have been perceived to attract a better class of tourist than an inn. In the 1871 census neither Robert Angus nor any members of his family were recorded as staying in Charles Street. A search through the census returns located them residing at the much larger 29 roomed Imperial Hotel in George Street, Oban's main thoroughfare, with his two elder daughters, a waiter, a housemaid and a cook.

In the 1881 census he was still registered as the Inn keeper of Imperial Hotel, which he ran with his daughter Agnes, his two other daughters having married and moved away from Oban. Agnes was not listed as resident at the Imperial but is instead recorded as the hotel-keeper of the much larger Queen's Hotel, located on the same street, close to the railway station. By 1891, Robert was not recorded at the Imperial Hotel and was not listed as staying in any other hotel or private house in Oban. The wills and testaments in Scotland's People, recorded Robert Angus listed as a hotel keeper, had died at the Imperial Hotel, Oban in April 1882 aged 86. On his death his personal estate was

valued at £1,548 17s 6d (Scotland's People 1882). He left his daughter Agnes the entire furnishing and stock of the Imperial Hotel which included wines, spirits, ales, linen, table ware and furniture on the condition that she worked with him at the hotel up until the time of his death. If she did not the estate was to be divided among the other members of his family. Of his five daughters, Agnes was the only one who remained unmarried and her other four sisters were left between two and four shares in the business. The will also mentioned his son William now deceased who had left to live in China.

Agnes Angus continued to run the Queen's Hotel, which she purchased in 1878 for £4,000 and in 1882 had it enlarged to a four-storey building. Agnes was also still running the Imperial Hotel although not registered as living there. Following a major fire the Queen's Hotel burnt down in the 1880s but was rebuilt in a much grander style in 1891 at a cost of £8,000 and was considered on completion to be one of the most striking in the West Highlands. In 1891 the census enumerators' returns recorded Agnes Angus as the owner of the Queen's Hotel although she still owned the Imperial which she sold in 1892 to Captain Cumstie. Cumstie a local general merchant owned the adjoining property and a large villa on the esplanade. In 1893 he applied for planning permission to add two additional floors to the Imperial (The Oban Times 18 February 1893). Agnes planned to extend the Queen's Hotel in 1895 but had a dispute with the owner of the adjacent land to the rear of the hotel. The dispute was over access and the owner maintained that access to her property would be blocked as work to the Queen's Hotel would temporarily close off access to her property until building work was completed. A case was brought against her, which was held at the Court of Session (Glasgow Herald 21 August 1897). She successfully won the case and the hotel was extended in 1898 to provide a total of 120 bedrooms and shops on the ground floor (The Oban Times 11 May 1898). In the 1901 census, Agnes Angus was still registered at the Queen's Hotel with a staff of nine which included a book keeper, a barmaid, a hotel cook, a laundry maid, two housemaids, a pantry maid, a waiter and a hotel boots. As she died after 1901, her will was not available although in 1927 she left a bequest to the town council of Oban for the benefit and advantages of the community. Agnes Angus was an example of how a Victorian woman could progress in business without a

husband. Tourism provided opportunities for a woman which may not have been available in other professions.

Women also became hotel owners through marriage which in Oban was more common that single women establishing their own businesses. The 1871 census returns recorded, 35 year old Jane or Jean Ritchie from Dumfries as 'widowed' head of the household and the hotel-keeper of the Great Western Hotel, considered at that time to be one of the most prestigious and largest hotels in the west of Scotland. Ten years earlier the census returns recorded her status as the book-keeper at the Caledonian Hotel in George Street. She was one of 11 staff listed at the hotel, which included two butlers, a cook, two laundry maids, a laundress and a dressmaker. Prior to this she had been employed as a barmaid at the same hotel. By 1866 Jane had married George Campbell who managed the Caledonian Hotel and that year they moved to the larger Great Western Hotel on the esplanade. In April 1866 he advertised the forthcoming sale of all the Caledonian's furniture and bed linens, to be sold by public auction. The advertisement also stated that:

> "Mr Campbell begs to intimate that he has relinquished the tenancy of the Caledonian Hotel and after April his business will be entirely confined to the Great Western Hotel, Oban" (Glasgow Herald 4 April 1866).

In 1879, following the retirement of Jane Campbell from the hotel trade, the Great Western was advertised for sale in Scottish and English newspapers. It was leased by David Sutherland, from Glasgow, a former steamboat steward employed by Mr D Hutcheson & Co. David Sutherland died in 1881 aged 52 and in his will he was named as the lessee of the hotel. Furniture and stock in the hotel at the time of his death amounted to £3,023 19s 6d and the value of the goodwill was £2,000. The debts accrued for the hotel amounted to £5,714, around half being for wines and spirits purchased from Glasgow merchants. Another £2,000 was for a debt due to Mrs Jane Ritchie or Campbell, the former hotel keeper of the Great Western (Scotland's People 1881). Following his death his widow, then his son continued to run the hotel and made further improvements. Between 1881 and 1882, an annexe was added at a cost of £2,000 and the hotel was advertised as the only hotel in the West Highland to have exhibited electric light (The Oban Times 20 September 1882). In 1899 the hotel was taken over by Alex McGregor formerly the hotel keeper of the Invercauld Arms Hotel, Ballater.

Following George Campbell's departure from the Caledonian Hotel to the Great Western Hotel, Catherine Smith whose parents had managed a hotel in Falkirk, took over the Caledonian. Following the death of her father, she had continued to operate the hotel in Falkirk with her sisters and mother. Prior to her arrival in Oban she and her sisters had managed hotels in Greenock, Inverkip and Arrochar. In 1865, the Smiths left the Arrochar Hotel and arrived at 100 bedroomed Caledonian Hotel in Oban where they paid £400 rental per year (Glasgow Herald 26 January 1866). In 1874 the Smiths were involved in a very public disagreement with William Carruthers of the British Museum. He was arrested over non-payment of his bill which he stated was due to him being overcharged. The case went to court and was covered extensively in the newspapers including a detailed account in *The Dundee Courier and Argus* on 21 September 1874. Mr Carruthers won his case and the following year the Smiths left Oban. The hotel was purchased in 1875 by Alexander Campbell a local councillor for £7,470 (The Oban Times 21 August 1875). In 1885 he advertised the hotel for sale with entry at Whitsuntide 1886 (The Times 25 September 1885). It was bought by George Watt who stayed for a year before moving to the Royal Hotel in Portobello. Mr Kirkpatrick who had previously had associations with the Great Western Hotel, Oban was the next owner purchasing the Caledonian in 1887 (The Oban Times 16 April 1887). In 1892 the Caledonian Hotel was listed as a limited company paying a dividend of 8% (The Dundee Courier and Argus 18 March 1892).

Not all of Oban's hotels were managed on behalf of others. Some managers owned and built their establishments. In 1866 Mr Lindsay Grandison McArthur, the owner of Braehead Villa in Oban acquired land along the shore just outside the town boundary, where he proposed building a new hotel. This part of the town had only just begun to be developed following the feuing of land by MacDougall of Dunollie. The 80 roomed Alexandra Hotel opened in 1870 and competed with the Great Western for the top end of the market. Mr McArthur ran the hotel with his daughter Jane until his death in 1885 aged 65. In his will the furnishings of the hotel were valued at £2,478 14s and he also left £300 to his daughter in lieu of wages. His debts amounted to £4,125 16s 8d of which almost £1,000 was owed to Thomas Lawrie and Sons, art dealers in Glasgow (Scotland's People 1885). The hotel continued to be managed by his wife who was

named as the head of household and hotel keeper in the 1891 census until it was put up for sale in March 1897.

On 31 March 1897, the *Glasgow Herald* reported that The Alexandra Hotel, Oban was to be sold by the Trustees of the late Mr L G McArthur, Oban. An advertisement in The *Glasgow Herald* on 3 April 1897 stated that the accommodation comprised a drawing room, large dining room, four parlours, smoking-room, 65 bedrooms and servants accommodation. The hotel had returned an average yearly profit over the last 6 years of £2,488 9s 2d. Robert Wylie from Wylie & Lochhead furnisher, Glasgow; Charles MacKillop, accountant Glasgow; Daniel MacEwan merchant, Callander and Major Peter Chalmers, Blairgowrie, bought the hotel. They already owned the Dreadnought Hotel in Callander and the Gairloch Hotel. The share capital was £16,000, divided into 1,600 shares at £10, each £1 to be paid on registration, £4 on allotment, and the final £5 on the 1st May 1897. The hotel was further extended in 1898 by Munro and Partners, a Glasgow firm of architects to provide additional bedrooms. In 1899 the company reported a dividend of 6% free of income tax (Glasgow Herald 15 March 1899).

Mr McArthur's former home Braehead Villa was purchased in 1866 by the McLaurin family who owned a linen and wool drapers business in Oban. They later bought the Craigard Hotel, which they owned until it was destroyed by a fire in 1886.

There was a great deal of movement of hotel keepers within the town many of whom started with small premises then went on to run larger establishments. Hotel keeping was frequently a family affair with several members running and working in these establishments. Although most of Oban's smaller hotels remained in private ownership by the end of the century the larger ones were owned by private companies which owned other properties throughout the country.

7.7 Housing the resident and migrant workers

Although Oban prided itself as a resort full of substantial villas and grand hotels providing every requirement for the visitor, those employed in the tourism industry, both residents and migrants found it difficult to find housing due to the increasingly high prices charged for lodgings. As the town continued to expand, more pressure was

put on the council and businesses to provide the necessary facilities to meet the requirements of the visitors. They also had to consider the needs of the residents and those who came to the town to work in the tourist industry as without them tourism would not be able to develop.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Oban was very much divided both socially and geographically. The area to the south of the river owned by Robert Campbell of Sonachan was primarily occupied by fishermen, labourers and unskilled workers who lived in the tenements and poorer quality housing overlooking the harbour. The area to the north of the river was owned by the Marquis of Breadalbane who had feued much of his land for substantial villas since the late 1840s.

Landowners and enterprising local builders were keen to maximise profits by providing land for the development of large properties. The census returns recorded those occupying Breadlabane's land were mainly the families of professional men and merchants. During the summer several of these properties advertised high quality lodgings for visitors. The majority of these villas sold for £500 to £700, which was much more lucrative than building workmen's' dwellings (The Oban Times 5 May 1883). Reports such as the one below from the Dean of Guild Court in 1883 suggested that an increasing number of houses were being built for letting or to private individuals as holiday homes:

> "Presently, the building trade is the chief industry of Oban. On all sides, new villas are rising up, proving how popular the place is with visitors, and how prosperous the town is becoming. There is no town in Scotland growing with the same rapid growth" (The Oban Times 21 April 1883).

The Essex textile manufacturer Sidney Courtauld built a villa on the esplanade in the early 1880s as a shore base for yachting. In 1883 Sir William Collins, the publisher and former Lord Provost of Glasgow commissioned a large house to be built on the recently feued lands on the esplanade as a summer residence for his family (The Oban Times 5 May 1883). The author William Black also purchased a large property on the seafront as a summer residence. With the increasing attraction of Oban, land and property had increased in value and substantial villas on the esplanade cost in excess of £10,000 (The Oban Times 7 April 1883). This was a substantial sum as in 1867, 70% of the male

workforce earned less than £50 a year and only 0.3% earned in excess of £1,000 per annum (Smout 1987, p.110).

However, there was still a need to house the local population, many of whom were unconnected with the tourist trade. In addition a busy seaside resort required a large summer population to cater for the requirements of the tourists and to work on construction projects within the town. Lodging houses which had previously provided accommodation for these workers were now accommodating visitors, which was more profitable. Providing accommodation for residents and incomers on low wages in Oban became a major problem as the majority of the villas being constructed were larger properties with rents out with the reach of ordinary citizens. Some local builders were willing to build flats to house the working population but their efforts were not always supported. In 1878 a large tenement block was built on Oban Hill overlooking the bay. This was an unusual location for a tenement as the area was dominated by large villas many of which provided accommodation for the visiting population. In a letter to *The Oban Times* local resident Professor Blackie a local resident complained about its construction.

> "The settlement's vulgarity is conspicuous and pervades the whole block. The perfection of hideosity (sic) is at the northwest gable where there is a sort of chimney on each side which resembles a monster with a head on each of two uneven shoulders. Is there no dean of guild or town council responsible for interfering in the amenities of the pretty little town? If so they merit the censure of the inhabitants as well as the displeasure of all tourists who visit this locality" (The Oban Times 21 September 1878).

Although residents such as Professor Blackie complained that Oban had to look attractive for tourists it was also necessary to house the workers who were crucial to the town's development.

This situation was not peculiar to Oban. Brighton and Hove had a large population not involved directly in tourism but which provided services for the residents. In order to alleviate the housing shortage land was provided by the Sandford Estates for the building of working class housing (Farrant 1987, p.140). No such provision was made in Oban and housing the population continued to be a problem. The situated intensified with the building of the Callander and Oban Railway as a large amount of land was required to build the railway track, the platforms and the station. There was no

undeveloped land available along the shoreline, so the homes of local fishermen, which stood in the way of the railway, were demolished. The railway company built two tenements on Aird's Place, behind the railway terminus, but this was not to provide alternative accommodation for the fishermen. The 1881 and 1891 census enumerators' returns recorded that rail workers and their families, the majority of whom were incomers to the town, occupied these properties.

By the 1880s Oban's population had reached over 4,000 and there was an acute shortage of affordable accommodation. Those who did find lodgings lived in sharp contrast to the visitors and were frequently housed in poor conditions where sanitation was basic. An article in *The Oban Times* in 1892 highlighted the problem and suggested.

> "Through difficulties experienced in securing smaller rented houses for which there is presently an unusually high demand. There is apparently a good opportunity for a speculative builder. The erection of tenements suitable for better class working men and others would no doubt at this time prove a profitable investment."

The shortage of affordable housing led to great debate in the pages of the local paper. An article printed in 1883 stated:

> "Buildings now being run up are all of the villa class with rents of £20, £30 and upwards to as high as £100 per annum. Tradesmen earning but a little above £1 per week and who have been foolish enough to marry on that figure are often placed in a dangerous position from their inability to pay big rents" (The Oban Times 21 April 1883).

In 1893 an article in *The Oban Express* stated that on Shore Street which ran adjacent to the railway station, there were 51 tenements housing 199 residents with no water closet which were regularly flooded with water and sewage due to poor drainage. On the south side of the town, Combie Street had 11 tenements accommodating 58 residents with no toilet facilities. The 28 residents occupying the five tenements called Crystal Palace located behind Combie Street were also without sanitary facilities. Within the basement an additional two families totalling 12 people were living together in dark accommodation little better than a cellar (The Oban Express 24 February 1893).

In an attempt to address the housing problem, the first purpose built workmen's dwellings were planned by Oban town council in 1898. The land was provided at a

nominal fee by local landowner Robert McFie of Airds. The tenement which cost £2,178 15s 10d was constructed at Glenshellach on land to the south of the river overlooking the railway yard. It comprised four houses each with three rooms with a yearly rental of £10. Four houses with two rooms on the ground and first floors were let at £8 a year and four houses with two rooms on the second and third floors at £8 10s per year (Oban Town Council Minute Book 1885-1900). These properties were constructed in less than two years and provided much needed accommodation for the working population (The Oban Times 7 January 1899).

Oban was one of the earliest resorts to provide municipal housing. Much of the municipal housing in Britain was not provided until after the First World War (Maylander 1920). Brighton's first council housing was not provided until 1900 and Scarborough was even later with the first municipal houses being built after 1920. Building continued in Oban but the properties constructed were either large flats or villas built by private builders. Apart from the tenements at Glenshellach, no other municipal housing was provided.

7.8 Conclusions

Comparing Oban's changing employment opportunities with other resorts in Britain was difficult to achieve as there was a definite lack of available published information relating to tourist related employment within resorts especially in Scotland.

Due to a shortage of documented information relating to employment in Oban, the census enumerators' books provided the most comprehensive information for this chapter although as stated previously they have limitations. The census was taken before the summer season began therefore the results may have been very different had it been taken in July. There was also a question regarding the reliability of the information contained in the census and the comparability of the data between censuses. It addition there was the issue of how people recorded their occupations especially in relation to those who worked in the hotels. By the end of the nineteenth century Oban had 34 hotels and 146 private houses providing accommodation which between them would have employed large numbers of staff. As no records exist of those employed

during the summer months it was not possible to establish exactly what percentage of the total working population were directly employed in tourism.

The chapter has highlighted that the contribution made by women to the tourist industry can be difficult to assess as many worked from home especially those providing accommodation during the season. A comparison of those listed as landladies in the census returns with those listed in *The Oban Times* Visitors' Lists and *The Oban Visitors Register* clearly showed that many local women who provided accommodation in their own homes were not recorded in the census enumerators' returns as having 'official' full time occupations.

This chapter has also provided a background into some of Oban's hoteliers, which was an aspect of tourism, which had not been studied in any detail. It identified that there was a great deal of movement of hotel keepers within the town many of whom started with small premises then went on to own and manage larger establishments. It also revealed that women were not only employed in menial roles within hotels. Many were managing some of the town's largest premises. It has also highlighted that people moved to and from Oban from other hotels throughout Scotland. Hotel keeping was frequently a family affair with several members working in these establishments. Although most of Oban's smaller hotels remained in private ownership, by the end of the century the larger hotels were owned by private companies. This enabled them to provide tours for visitors whereby accommodation could be arranged in their establishments.

For some of Oban's population, tourists and tourism provided them with much needed jobs in the hotels, transport services and shops. Landowners and entrepreneurs profited and even those not directly connected with tourism such as builders, masons and labourers benefitted. New hotels and public buildings were constructed primarily to meet the needs of the visitors but for those not involved in tourism there could be negative impacts. The census returns record that many of those employed in the hotels were housed in the poorer areas of town and lived in sharp contrast to the visitors.

This chapter has highlighted that Oban again displayed similarities to Butlers TALC model especially during the Development stage. The town clearly attracted a large

migrant population and some decisions were taken by outsiders. During the second half of the nineteenth century many of the larger hotels for example the Alexandra and the Caledonian were owned by those living outside the town. But there was still a great deal of local involvement especially the town councillors.

The previous chapters have all looked at the development of Oban examining how the town grew and developed to meet the needs of the visitors. Who these visitors were and where they came from is the subject for the next chapter.

Chapter 8

The changing composition of the visiting population

8.1 Introduction

This purpose of this chapter was to examine in some detail Oban's visiting population between 1868 and 1901. This time scale was selected as it contained the largest amount of documented information relating to the tourists who visited the town within the period covered by this study. Prior to the middle of the nineteenth century there was virtually no information about those who came to Oban apart from those who recorded their visits in their journals and diaries. The *Glasgow Herald* did occasionally publish a list of "Arrivals and Departures at Hutcheson's Caledonian Hotel", in the late 1840s but only the guests name was printed not their place of origin. The first list of visitors staying in the town was printed in *The Oban Times* in 1868 and although some visitors' lists were available after 1901, the number of establishments submitting detailed information about guests was greatly reduced after this time. As there were no accurate records relating to the numbers of those visiting Oban before the publication of the visitors' lists it was almost impossible to estimate how many people visited each season. Within Oban no other records of those staying in the town was gathered and in 1891, local businessman Thomas Boyd commented:

> "It is a pity some sort of visitor's census was not taken annually so as to enable one to form an opinion exactly how matters stand" (The Oban Visitors Register 19 August 1891).

Although the summer season lasted from June to September a common misconception was that tourism in the Highlands of Scotland was limited to only the summer months. On 7 November 1856, well outside the recognised season, *The Morning Chronicle* published a list of arrivals and departures at the Caledonian Hotel, Oban which included the names and addresses of more than 50 guests.

Sourcing information relating to the numbers of visitors to the British resorts was somewhat problematic as few sources existed and as Walton (1998, p.3) commented the Victorian and Edwardian figures for visitor numbers are guesstimates. In contrast European resorts were especially proficient at keeping statistical records and the level of

detail included was often far superior to that of British resorts. The French ‘taxes de sejour’ has allowed researchers to study the place of origin of visitors to French resorts and in Germany the lists of visitor staying at the spas was kept from the 1870s onwards (Walton and O’Neil 1993, p.206).

Shipping records cannot be relied upon to provide a record of those arriving in Oban as the numbers of passengers transported between ports were not counted. Tickets were often not purchased before boarding the vessel but only bought on board. As highlighted in Chapter 6 neither the shipping companies nor the Callander and Oban railway company kept accurate records of those who travelled to Oban. Although the numbers of tickets collected at Oban Railway Station 1883 to 1896 was noted this number recorded was the total for each year and would have included local residents not just visitors.

The purpose of this chapter was to look in more detail at those who visited the town in the latter half of the nineteenth century to endeavour to answer the final questions posed at the start of this thesis

- What was Oban’s tourist market? Where did they originate? Was it primarily from the local area or were visitors coming from outside the immediate area?
- What were the demographics of the visiting population? Did this change over time?
- Was the town only a gateway for onward travel or was it a destination in its own right?

The chapter was divided into sections. Section 1 examined the place of origin of Oban’s visitors between 1868 and 1901 and used the visitors’ lists printed in the local newspaper. Such a detailed analysis of visitors’ lists has not been carried out in any other Scottish resort. The purpose of this was to determine where Oban’s visitors originated and to identify whether this changed over time. As the local newspaper printed lists each week from June to September a sample period was selected which covered the last week of July and the first two weeks of August which was regarded as the height of the season. For each year the number of visitors originating from Glasgow, Edinburgh, other parts of Scotland, other parts of England, Ireland and overseas were identified. Visitors from Glasgow and Edinburgh were recorded

separately from those of the rest of Scotland, as it seemed likely that a large percentage of visitors would come from these cities. As London addresses appeared regularly those originating in London were listed separately from the rest of England. Visitors from Ireland and overseas were also noted to establish whether Oban had an overseas market.

The second section studied the profile of Oban's visiting population over the same time period to establish whether Oban had a particular market and again to find out if this changed over time. Visitors were classified under the following categories: single men, single ladies, couples, families and parties. However as the lists generally did not record the number within each family and party it was not possible to know exactly how many people were staying. It was also not possible to determine whether the family was an adult group or a family with children as ages were not given. Therefore the number of visitors within these categories had to be estimated. To ensure consistency a party was recorded as comprising five people and a family six. This section also examined the impact, which working class excursionists had on Oban and where possible compared the town's experiences with other centres throughout the country.

The third section looked at the length of stay of the visiting population to determine whether Oban was indeed just a stopping off point for onward travel to the islands or a destination in its own right. Authors frequently described Oban as simply somewhere visitors stayed overnight on route to the islands not a place people would stay for any length of time. By determining how long visitors stayed in the town the chapter aimed to dispel or prove the belief that Oban was only a gateway to the Highlands and islands.

The final section examined the effect which excursionists and day trippers had on resorts in Victorian England and Wales which has been studied by amongst others Walton (1983; 1998), Walvin (1978) and Hassan (2003). But less detailed information was available about the impact the excursionists had in Scottish resorts. Resorts had always dealt with the conflicting requirements of its local inhabitants and its visitors as the needs of each group were not always compatible. But with the arrival of large numbers of the working classes new tensions began to surface. Seaside towns which had for many years been enjoyed primarily by the upper classes of society were now being invaded by large numbers of day trippers not all of whom conducted themselves in what was considered to be a seemly manner. Excursionist and day trippers were often

regarded as a homogenous group comprising members of the working classes and were collectively condemned. However many were very respectable and travelled to resorts at the weekend to enjoy the seaside without indulging in rowdy behaviour, drink and its associated pleasures.

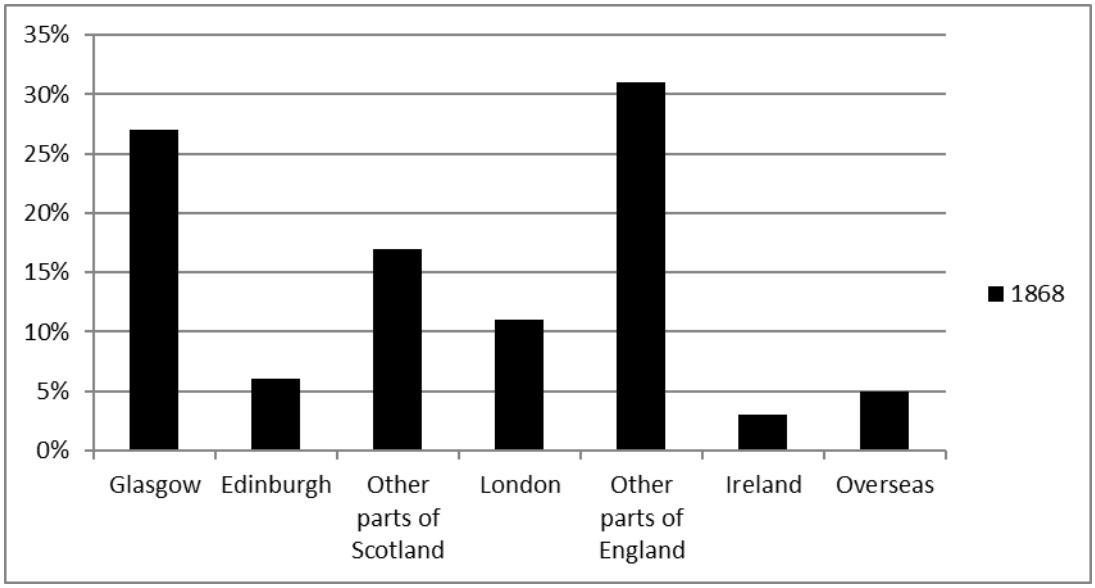
8.2 Place of Origin of Oban's visiting population 1868-1901

Apart from the list of guests staying in the Oban Caledonian Hotel occasionally printed in the *Glasgow Herald* during the 1840s and in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1856 there were no other records relating to the number of visitors who stayed in Oban until the 1860s. In July 1868, *The Oban Times* published the first visitors' lists which included details of the guests staying in the two largest hotels in Oban, the Caledonian and the Great Western. Guests staying in the private houses were listed under the heading "Visitors residing in Private Houses", although the individual properties were not named (see Figure 8.1).

Over the three week period the names and addresses of 1,251 guests were recorded. With its relative close proximity to Oban not surprisingly a large number of visitors came from the Glasgow area although perhaps not as many as would have been expected. Oban had a reputation for being expensive, and the addresses of many of the Glasgow visitors indicated they were from the more affluent areas and suburbs of the city. Glasgow's residents had a wide choice of resorts which were much closer to the city. Many of the houses for let in Oban were charging more than other Clyde resorts where properties of a similar size could be rented for less. In 1859 an article in the *Glasgow Herald* stated that few Glasgow citizens would consider travelling so far due to the expense and the overcrowding in Oban (Glasgow Herald 27 June 1859). An advertisement in the *Glasgow Herald* on 28 June 1863, offered a 5 bedroomed villa with three sitting rooms stable and coach house for rent in Oban at £25 per month. In 1863, a 4 bedroomed cottage in Kilcreggan on the Clyde was offered for 4 months at £30 in total (Glasgow Herald 3 June 1863). Around 40% of all English visitors (excluding London) came from the south east of the country and around 25% came from the Midlands especially Manchester and Liverpool. From 1839, ships sailed from Liverpool to Glasgow on a Monday, which was designed to connect with the Glasgow to Oban excursions. Some of Oban's hotels and private houses also advertised in *The*

Liverpool Mercury and the *Manchester Evening Times*, which may also account for the number of visitors from that part of the country.

Figure 8.1: Place of Origin of Oban's Visitors 1868

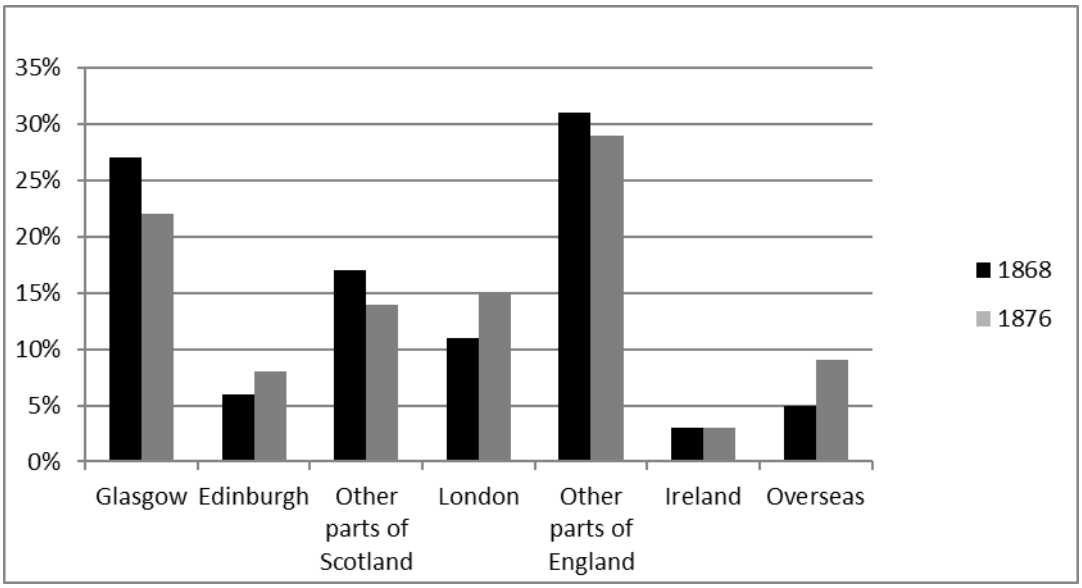


Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* visitors' lists 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868).

Very few visitors came from Edinburgh with only 6% of all visitors originating from the capital. The lower numbers of Edinburgh visitors may be due to a wider choice of resorts available locally to the cities' residents including Portobello, South Queensferry and North Berwick. For those wishing to travel further, the Fife resorts of Aberdour, Burnt Island and Elie were all accessible by boat or train from Edinburgh. Despite sailings being available from Belfast, Irish visitors were not staying in Oban for any length of time and their names and addresses very rarely appear. Overseas visitors only accounted for 5% and they were mainly church ministers and military men.

By 1876, all of Oban's 11 hotels submitted lists of their visitors to *The Oban Times*. Between 29 July and 12 August 1876, the names of 1,830 guests were recorded stating in the hotels and 75 named private houses, which provided details of their guests (see Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2: Comparison of Place of Origin of Oban's Visitors 1868 and 1876



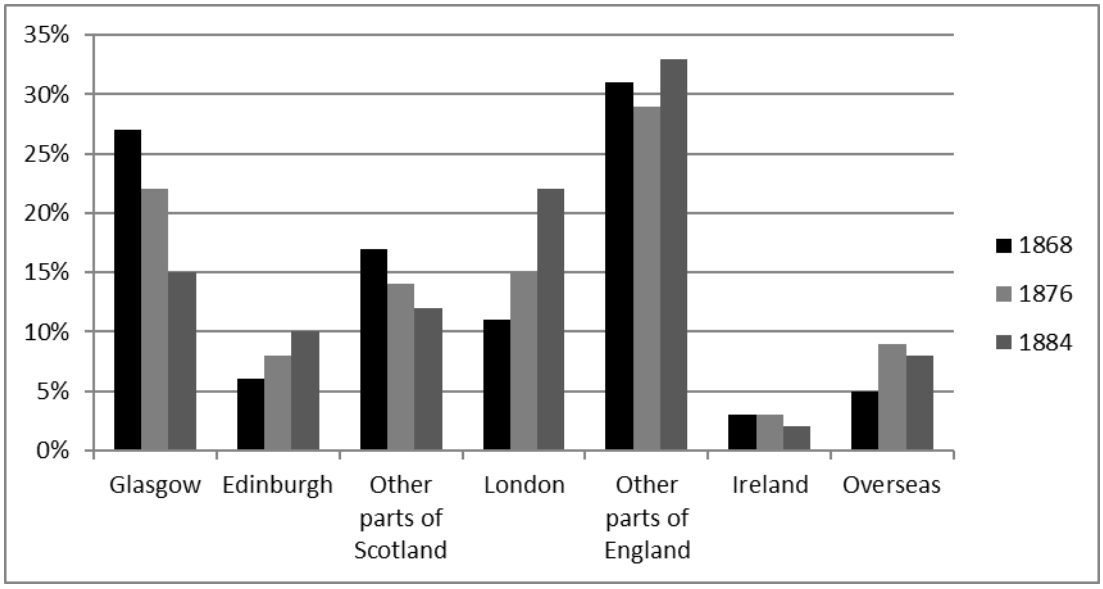
Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* visitors' lists 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868; 29 July, 5 & 12 August 1876).

The percentage of visitors from London had increased from 1868 which may be due in part to the opening of the "exclusive" 65 bed-roomed Alexandra Hotel in 1871 which advertised in the London newspapers. Almost 30% of visitors from other parts of England came from the south east and another 20% came from around Manchester and Birmingham. The hotel advertised in the Manchester Evening Times and the Pall Mall Gazette which could account for the large number of English guests. One of the biggest increases was in the number of overseas visitors which accounted for almost 10% of the total number of visitors, twice the number recorded in 1868. On 12 August 1876 almost 50% of the guests staying at the Caledonian Hotel were overseas visitors. The majority of these were single men from Russia, Prussia, France and Germany and included barons and counts. There were also visitors from the USA, primarily married couples and some guests from the Far East, especially India and China. They were not actually Chinese or Indian but included church ministers, doctors and military men. The increase in visitors from these areas may have been due to the opening in 1869 of the Suez Canal, which made travel from the east much easier. The social position of guests was obviously very important. On the 12 August 1876, the Mayor of Melbourne and, Mr Jouginey Lopez, who described himself as "Son of the Ex-President of Mexico", were recorded in the lists (The Oban Times, 12 August 1876). By printing such details the

town was advertising to prospective guests that it was not a provincial backwater but was attracting 'celebrities' and those from the top level of society.

In 1884, over the three week period from 26 July to 9 August, 3,546 visitors were recorded staying in the 18 hotels which included five temperance hotels and the 82 private houses listed in *The Oban Times* (see Figure 8.3).

Figure 8.3: Comparison of Place of Origin of Oban's Visitors 1868, 1876 and 1884

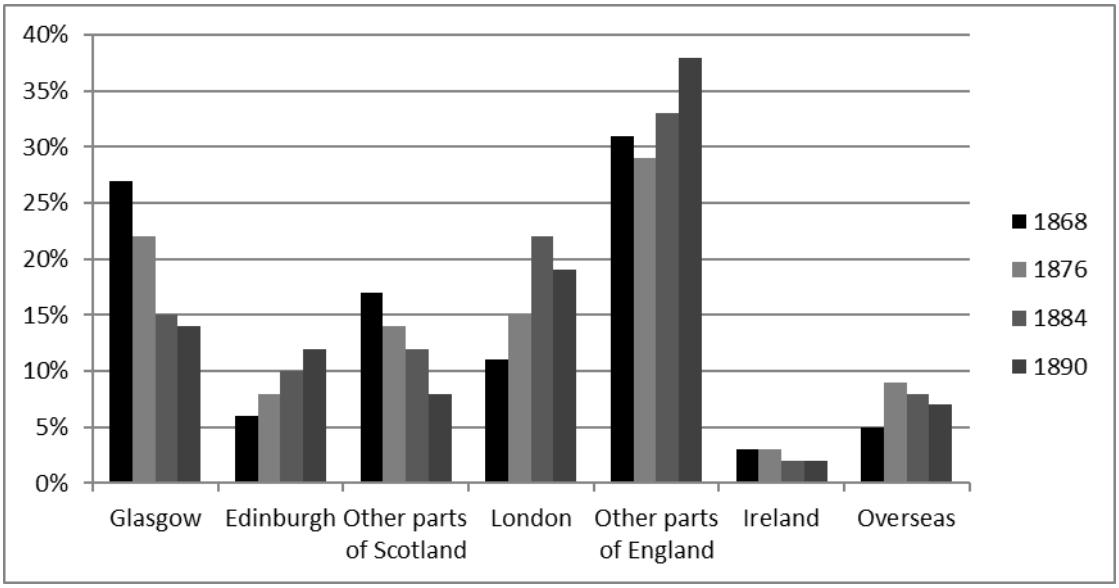


Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* visitors' lists 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868; 29 July, 5 & 12 August 1876; 26 July, 2 & 9 August 1884).

The percentage of visitors from London and other parts of England increased with over 50% now coming from south of the border which was almost certainly due to Oban's new railway link with Glasgow. On 30 June 1880, the Callander and Oban railway finally opened, 16 years after the first turf was cut, providing a daily (except Sunday) service between Oban and Glasgow. An established rail network connected London and most parts of England to Glasgow, and the new railway to Oban enabled a greater volume of visitors to travel to the west coast. The railway was a huge success and between July and September in 1881, 37,000 visitors arrived by rail although there is no record of where they originated (Oban Burgh Bill House of Commons 1881). Once again the majority of those from other parts of England came from the midlands although around 20% of all English visitors came from the south coast in particular Essex, Sussex and Devon. The reduction in the percentage of visitors from Glasgow in

1884 may have been due to the continued alleged higher cost of accommodation in Oban's hotels and private houses compared to that in other west coast resorts such as Millport, Dunoon and Rothesay which were also closer to Glasgow.

Figure 8.4: Comparison of Place of Origin of Oban's Visitors 1868, 1876, 1884 and 1890



Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* visitors' lists 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868; 29 July, 5 & 12 August 1876; 26 July, 2 & 9 August 1884 and 2, 9 & 16 August 1890).

1889 and 1890 were considered to be two of the best years for Oban to date and in a review of the 1890 season *The Oban Times* reported that:

> "The number of visitors this year has been in excess of any that have preceded it" (The Oban Times 4 October 1890).

Over the three week period 2,856 visitors were recorded as staying in the 19 hotels and 90 private houses. This was almost 700 less than those recorded in 1884 and was due to fewer establishments providing lists of visitors each week (see Figure 8.4). Nevertheless the breakdown of visitors' place of origin was similar to previous years with those with London and other parts of England remaining high. Oban's continuing popularity with English visitors may in part have been due to John Anderson, the secretary of the Callander and Oban railways efforts to promote the railway. Illustrated posters advertising Oban and its many attractions were exhibited at railway stations at

London Euston, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Stafford, York and Preston (The Oban Times 19 May 1890).

In 1890, the number of visitors from the northern counties of England was much higher than in previous lists and the addresses of those visitors reveal almost one fifth of all English visitors originated in Yorkshire and Northumberland. Around 35% of all English visitors came from the Lancashire area. Although the working classes had more holidays it appears unlikely that this would account for the increased number of English guests. The amount of time and expense required to holiday in Scotland would have been beyond the reach of much of the population and England already had a huge number of resorts, which could offer a seaside holiday. Lancashire mills produced around 80% of the world's cotton and coal production had more than doubled since the 1860s, which resulted in great fortunes for their owners. Their increased wealth may have encouraged these businessmen and their families to visit the Highlands. Resorts such as Oban may have been perceived as a holiday destination for the upper classes rather than towns such as Blackpool frequented by their workforce. In addition Oban had the added attraction of its close proximity to the islands, especially Staffa and Iona and offered sailings to other parts of the west coast.

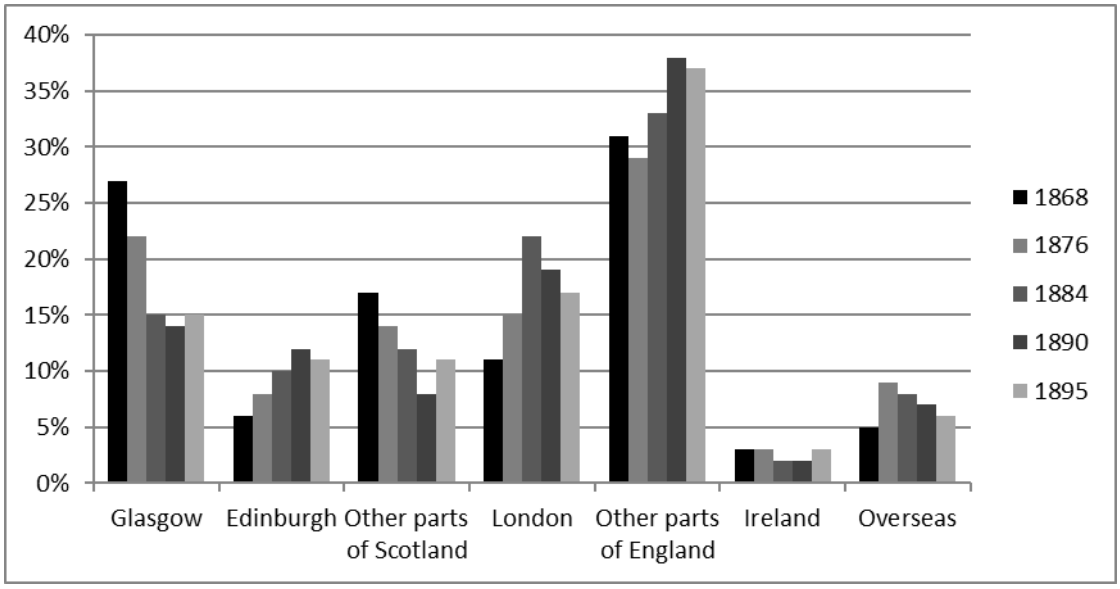
The percentage of visitors from Glasgow and from other parts of Scotland continued to fall although the number of overseas visitors remained consistent with the majority staying in hotels rather than private houses. As the hotels advertised more extensively than private houses this was not surprising.

The 1895 visitors' lists provided the final opportunity to examine the place of origin of Oban's visitors as this was the last year hotel owners supplied information about their guests to *The Oban Visitors Register* (see Figure 8.5). Between 31 July and 14 August 2,946 visitors were recorded staying in the 12 hotels and 189 private houses which submitted details.

Although this was the largest number of private houses ever recorded many of these establishments were smaller properties only accommodating one family or one couple. There were still more visitors from England recorded than anywhere else but their numbers had fallen slightly. For the first time the number of visitors from Glasgow and

other parts of Scotland rose. This may have been due to 12 tenement properties in what was considered to be the poorer area of town south of the river submitting lists of guests for the first time. The 1891 Census recorded that these properties were flats occupied by fishermen, weavers, and labourers. Their guests were predominantly families from Glasgow and other parts of mainly industrial Scotland in particular Lanarkshire and Stirlingshire. This was the first time addresses on the south side of the river were recorded as accommodating visitors and these properties were very different to those on the northern areas of the town.

Figure 8.5: Comparison of Place of Origin of Oban's Visitors 1868, 1876, 1884, 1890 and 1895

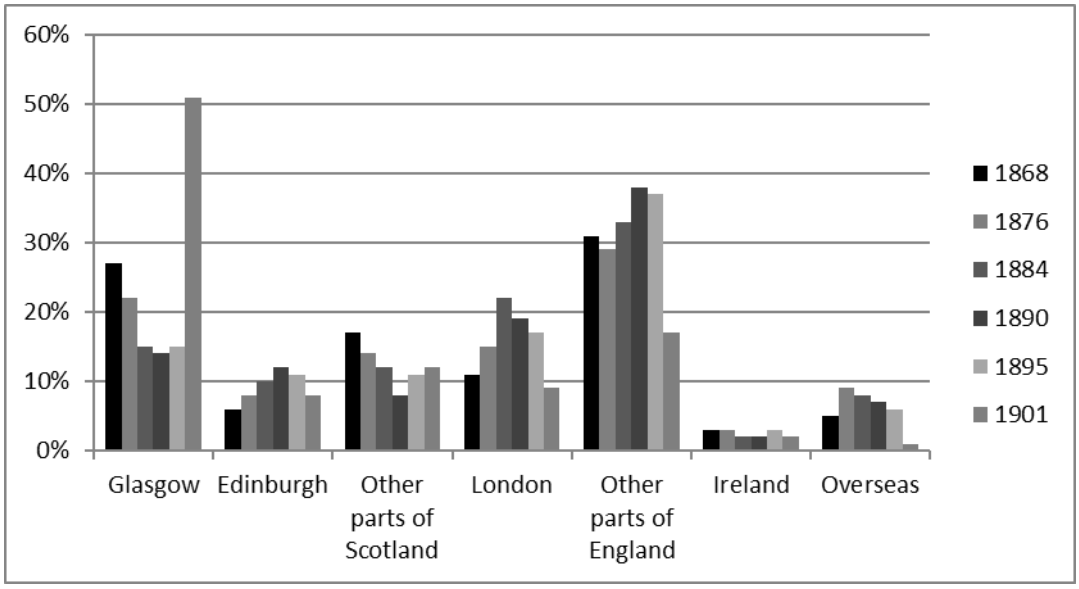


Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times visitors' lists* 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868; 29 July, 5 & 12 August 1876; 26 July, 2 & 9 August 1884; 2, 9 & 16 August 1890 and *The Oban Visitors' Register* 31 July, 7 & 14 August 1895).

In 1901, none of Oban's 34 hotels provided lists of visitors, so the information in Figure 8.6 related only to those staying in the town's 146 private houses, 43 less than was recorded in 1895. The number of visitors from Glasgow continued to rise, accounting for more than half of all recorded guests. In 1901, the number of addresses providing accommodation for visitors in tenements in the less fashionable areas of town to the south of the river had increased to 27. Again the census enumerators' returns for 1901 showed that those providing the accommodation were the wives of fishermen, weavers, saddlers and blacksmiths. In 1901, 77% of visitors who stayed at these

addresses were from Glasgow and 20% came from other parts of industrial towns in central Scotland. No prices exist to determine the cost of accommodation at these addresses but it is likely that they would have been considerably cheaper than the villas along the seafront or on the hills.

Figure 8.6: Comparison of Place of Origin of Oban's Visitors 1868, 1876, 1884, 1890, 1895 and 1901



Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* visitors' lists 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868, 29 July, 5 & 12 August 1876, 26 July, 2 & 9 August 1884, 2, 9 & 16 August 1890, *The Oban Visitors' Register* 31 July, 7 & 14 August 1895 and 2, 9 & 16 August 1901).

Visitors from London had decreased by almost 50% and those from other parts of England accounted for only 17% of all visitors, half the number for 1895. However as these figures are based only on guests staying in private houses they may not be accurate, as previous lists showed that many English visitors stayed in the hotels. Overseas visitors had also fallen to the lowest level ever recorded and only accounted for 1% of visitors. The lack of English and overseas visitors to the town may be explained by an editorial in *The Oban Times* on 12 July 1901, which stated:

> "The slackness of the season in Oban is a matter of general complaint. Instead of being a boon to the Highlands as generally anticipated the Coronation attractions of the south are proving positively disastrous. Not only have the English tourists remained at home but foreigners who have

not already taken their departure are still hanging about London and the southern holiday resorts."

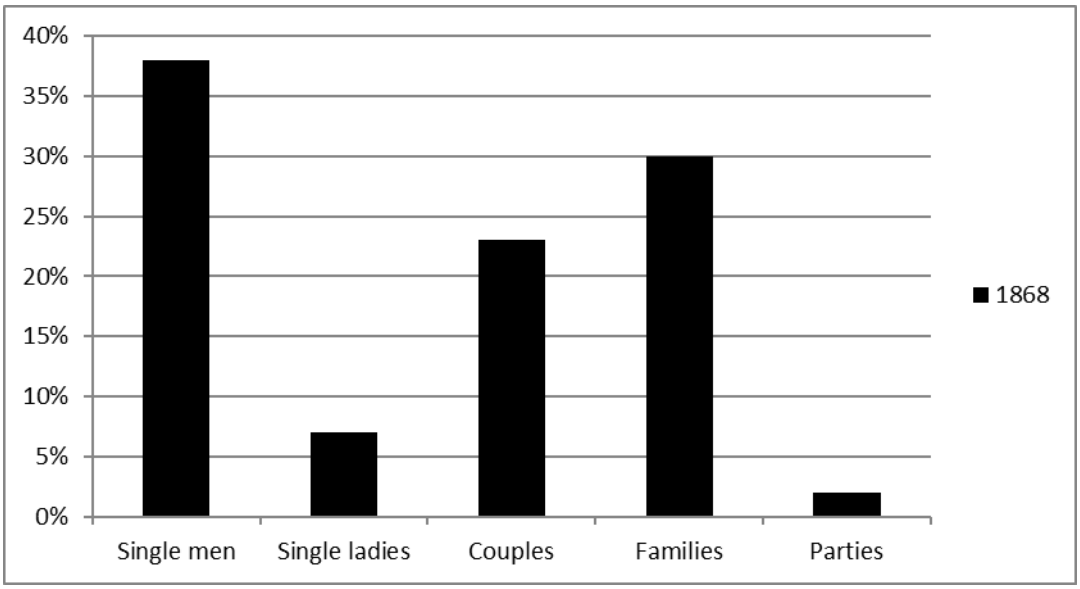
Editorials in *The Oban Times* throughout 1901 commented that some of the larger English resorts were suffering a series of bad seasons as visitors were holidaying in the European resorts especially in Germany and France. The newspaper suggested that tourists were looking for more than walking and bathing and were seeking new excitement overseas which could account for the drop in English visitors.

8.3 The profile of Oban's visiting population

In addition to establishing where Oban's visitors came from, the following section of this chapter looked at the visitor profile in more detail. The purpose of this was to determine whether Oban had a definite market and whether this changed over time.

1868 was the first year that visitors were recorded as staying in Oban's hotels and lodging houses (see Figure 8.7). Between the 25 July and 8 August 1,251 visitors were listed in the visitors' lists.

Figure 8.7: Profile of Oban's Visitors 1868



Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* visitors lists 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868).

Oban's market was clearly dominated by single males who accounted for over a third of all visitors. As stated earlier in this chapter Oban had the reputation of being expensive and this may have had a bearing on the type of visitors who came. In a letter to *The*

Times on 4 September 1868, a gentleman who had stayed in Oban commented that the cost of staying at the Caledonian Hotel was 3 shillings per bedroom, 2s.6d for breakfast and 4 shillings for dinner while sherry was available at 8 shillings per bottle. Another gentleman reported that the Great Western Hotel charged 19 shillings for an apartment to accommodate six guests and a maid, 2 shillings for breakfast and 4 shillings for dinner which he considered to be good value (The Times 14 September 1868).

Although these visitors considered the accommodation costs were not high they would still have been beyond the reach of the majority of the population. In 1867, 70% of Scotland's workforce estimated at around 1,000,000 people, were unskilled male workers earning £50 per year or less (Devine 1999, p.263).

Smaller establishments such as the George Hotel, which advertised bedrooms from 1s 6d, breakfast from 1s 6d and dinner 1s 6d (The Oban Times 22 September 1866) were still charging more than many could have afforded, as even a junior teacher or a clerk on a salary of £100 per annum would have considered this expensive. In addition to accommodation costs there was the added cost of travel to Oban. Resorts such as Rothesay and Dunoon or the Ayrshire towns of Largs and Ayr were closer to Glasgow and the cost of travel lower. Therefore Oban's clientele were likely to have been either business or professional men or those with a private income. In 1868, the majority of single males came from London, the southern counties of England and overseas. This may have been because the Highlands were promoted primarily to appeal to men to prevent the area from becoming spoiled and losing its rugged outdoor appeal (Haldane-Grenier 2005, p.116). Almost all the parties were made up of students from seven different Oxford and Cambridge colleges. College parties often stayed for several weeks and some resided in Oban for the whole summer usually staying in a private house with their tutor. Before the advent of tourism Oban had long attracted scholars and academics. One of the earliest recorded was Dr Edward Daniel Clarke, later Professor of Mineralogy at Cambridge University who visited in 1797 to study the local rock formations (The Oban Times 7 April 1883). Geology students were regular visitors to Oban making up many of the groups listed to study 'brecchia', a compound of fused and broken rocks found extensively in the area. Classical scholars were attracted to the island of Iona to study the inscriptions on the tombs of the kings of Scotland, Ireland and Norway. Mr E Shuckburgh an apparently noted classical Greek Scholar spent

several weeks in Oban with a reading party from Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Historians and literary scholars came to visit the city of 'Beregonium', Scotland's supposed Pictish capital and vitrified fort, situated seven miles north of Oban and eminent biologists such as Professor Huxley, Professor Milnes Marshall from Cambridge and Mr Samuelson, Editor of the Journal of Science visited Oban to study the marine life in the bay (The Oban Times 8 August 1868). Military men were also much in evidence as were clergymen, doctors, politicians, members of the British and overseas royal families and London bankers.

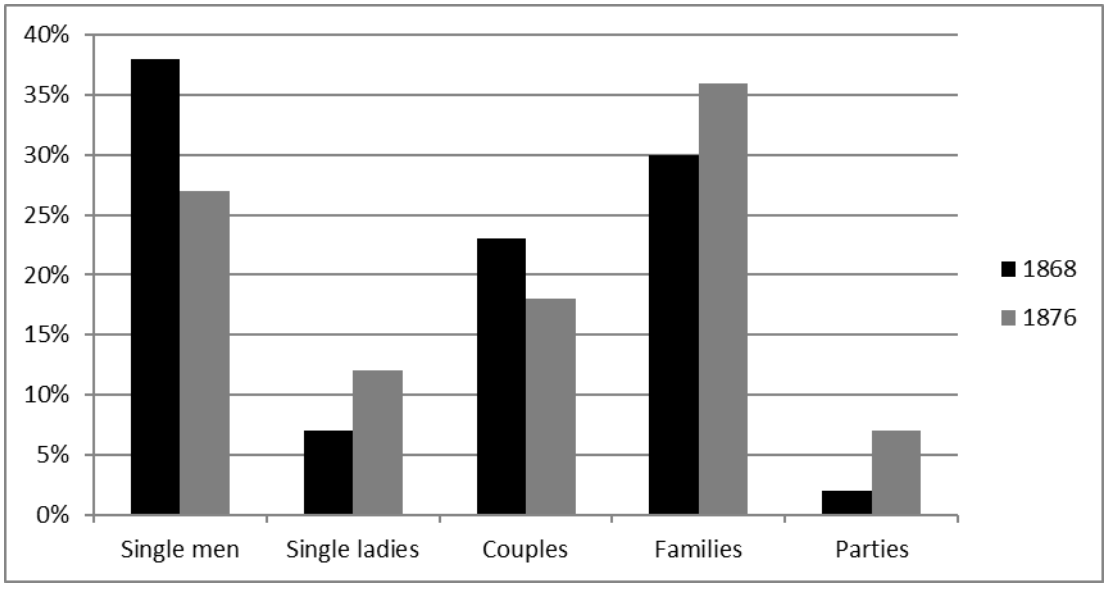
Families also accounted for a high percentage of guests and an analysis of the visitors' lists indicated that they favoured the private houses, often renting a whole house and staying for several weeks or even months along with their servants, maids, nannies and coachmen. Taking a house for a period of several weeks would have been more economical than staying in a hotel and would have provided the necessary space for their entourage. In 1868 the majority of family groups originated in Glasgow and the south west coast of Scotland. Oban was still relatively isolated and families from England were perhaps more inclined to choose one of the more accessible numerous English seaside resorts as they only accounted for 10% of the visitors. The majority of couples came from London or the south of England and single ladies were almost all from Glasgow or its environs many of whom travelled with a servant or companion.

From the visitors' lists it was evident that family members from different parts of the world holidayed together. A family party is often listed as coming from one town with one or more other members of their party having an overseas address. An example of which was the Munsie family who were first recorded in *The Oban Times* on 25 July 1868. The address for the two parents and two daughters was given as Glasgow while their son's home address was given as Madras, India. This family were regular visitors to Oban and their names appeared throughout the summers of 1868 to 1870 always staying for three weeks or longer. Loyalty to a resort was not unusual. Durie (2003, p.82) commented that many visitors returned season after season to resorts with some eventually purchasing property.

In 1876, 1,830 visitors were recorded and families and single men once again accounted for the highest number of visitors (see Figure 8.8). Although most families came from

Glasgow and Scotland, more families came from the north of England and the midlands and included Mr Muntz the Member of Parliament for Birmingham and his family, who stayed at Bellevue House for three weeks. Although their numbers were still low, the percentage of single ladies staying in Oban had risen to 12%. By 1876 a greater number of private houses provided accommodation, which may account for this increase, as the visitors' lists indicated that single ladies appeared to prefer to stay in these establishments rather than hotels. The majority of single ladies again came from addresses in the more affluent parts of Glasgow although single ladies from London accounted for 8% of all visitors. By 1876 the Callander and Oban Railway had reached Tyndrum 36 miles east of Oban, with a connecting coach service to the town making the travel to the town from Glasgow faster and more comfortable. There was also a large increase in the number of parties which were again predominantly from English universities although other parties included groups of men from America, Australia and Europe.

Figure 8.8: Comparison of Oban's Visitors 1868 and 1876



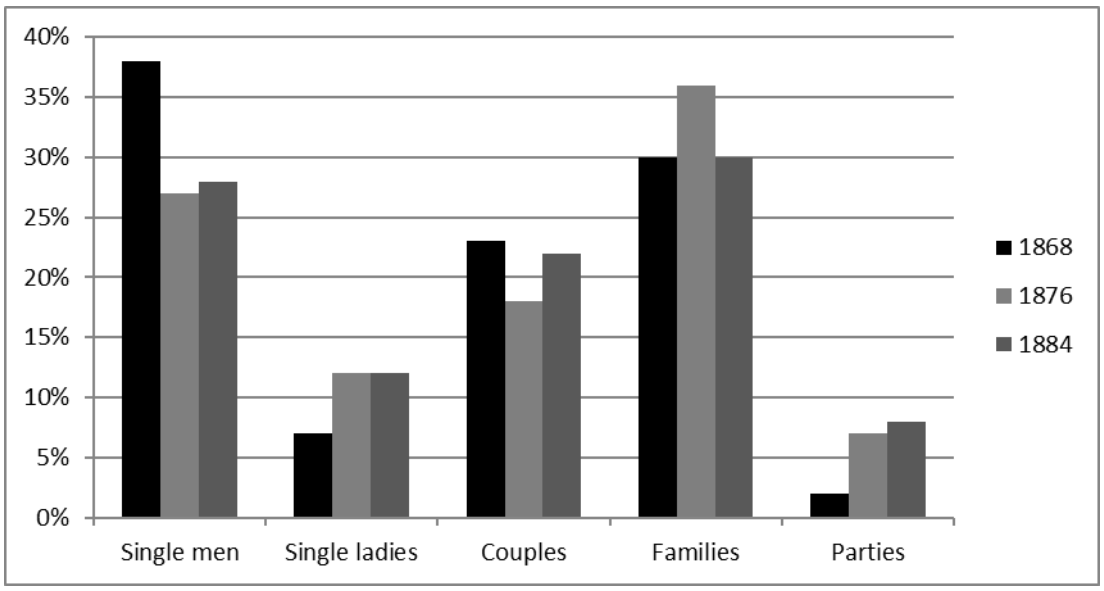
Source: Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* visitors' lists 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868, 29 July, 5 & 12 August 1876).

In 1884 Oban's popularity continued to rise, accommodation was at a premium, and in August, *The Oban Times* reported:

> "The lesson of the present season so far as it has gone is that in spite of the talk of Oban being a town of hotels, we still want more of them. Never had the hotelkeepers so good a harvest. Hotels generally with accommodation to spare at this period of the season are now crowded to repletion" (The Oban Times 16 August 1884).

In 1884 a total of 3,546 visitors were recorded (see Figure 8.9). Once again single men and families dominated the visitors' lists. Single men generally stayed in the hotels and families in the private houses although more families were staying in Oban's 18 hotels. The percentage of couples rose slightly and most stayed in the hotels. In July 1884 *The Oban Times* reported that the hotels were all full whereas many of the larger villas were still unlet. Although houses were advertised in Scottish and English newspapers their prices may have been considered too high. It is difficult to make comparisons between the cost of properties for let in different resorts as most did not advertise their prices. In 1884 a semi-detached villa with 8 rooms and kitchen on Oban's seafront was advertised for two months for £100 or four months for £150 whereas accommodation could be found in Dunoon, Rothesay and the Isle of Arran from £3 per month for a 4 bedroomed house with sea views (Glasgow Herald 28 August 1884).

Figure 8.9: Comparison of Oban's Visitors 1868, 1876 and 1884



Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868; 29 July, 5 & 12 August 1876; 26 July, 2 & 9 August 1884).

The cost of accommodation was not the only consideration for visitors. The Callander and Oban Railway had greatly reduced the journey time to Oban but there was still the

cost of travel. Many visitors came from London and the south of England and in 1881 the return rail fare from London to Oban was £6.12.3d (Charnley 1994, p.18). Oban was still viewed as a relatively exclusive resort and it is likely that only business and professional men or those with a private income could afford the time and cost of a holiday. In 1884 the names of London doctors and their families appeared regularly in the visitors' lists and having a salary of around £1,200 per annum they would have been able to afford a relatively long stay (Charnley 1994, p.1).

Wealthy industrialists and businessmen from Scotland and England were other frequent visitors throughout the summer months. David MacBrayne, the steam ship owner, arrived early each year and stayed for several months during the summer. His name first appeared in the census enumerators' books in 1861 as a guest in the Great Western Hotel and by 1875 he had purchased a villa on the hill overlooking the steamboat quay. Another regular visitor was Sir Peter Coats, the millionaire thread manufacturer from Paisley who arrived in Oban by yacht and spent many summers as a guest in MacPherson's Temperance Hotel.

In the 1884 visitors' lists it was evident that when families stayed for several months, the name of the head of the family was not always listed, especially where the family originated in Glasgow or Edinburgh. This suggested that the wife and children may have stayed in Oban for the summer while the father travelled to work in the city during the week. The railway had reduced the travel time between Oban and Glasgow to just over four hours. Train services were also very regular with five trains from Glasgow to Oban and four returning from Oban to Glasgow every day (except on Sundays) (Fryer 1989, p.132).

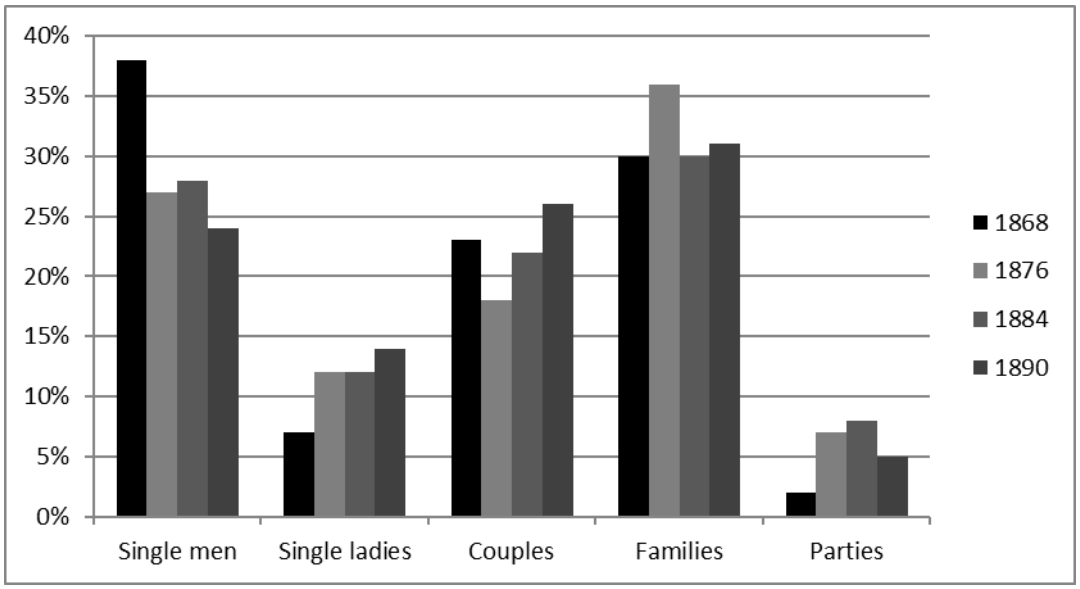
Oban was attracting royalty and aristocracy, not only from Britain but overseas too. Hotels were especially keen to advertise when a member of the aristocracy was in residence and in addition to their names appearing in the visitors' list a separate feature about the guest and details of their hotel was included in the newspaper. An example of which was a report in *The Oban Times* regarding the arrival of the King of Saxony in 1887:

> "The King of Saxony and his suite arrived in Oban from the South Pier at the 9.45am train on Saturday. At the station a large crowd had assembled to

witness the King's arrival. As soon as he was recognised a hearty cheer was raised. Two carriages were in waiting and his Majesty and suite drove at once to the Alexandra Hotel where special apartments had been provided" (The Oban Times 9 July 1887).

Prince Henry of Battenburg and the King of the Belguins (sic) were another regular visitors with *The Oban Times* (January 5 1889) reporting they had both stayed in Oban during the summer of 1888. The Prince of Florence and the names of various European Counts, Countesses and Barons also appeared each year and the visit of Duke of Westminster was printed several times in the yachting lists.

Figure 8.10: Comparison of Oban's Visitors 1868, 1876, 1884 and 1890



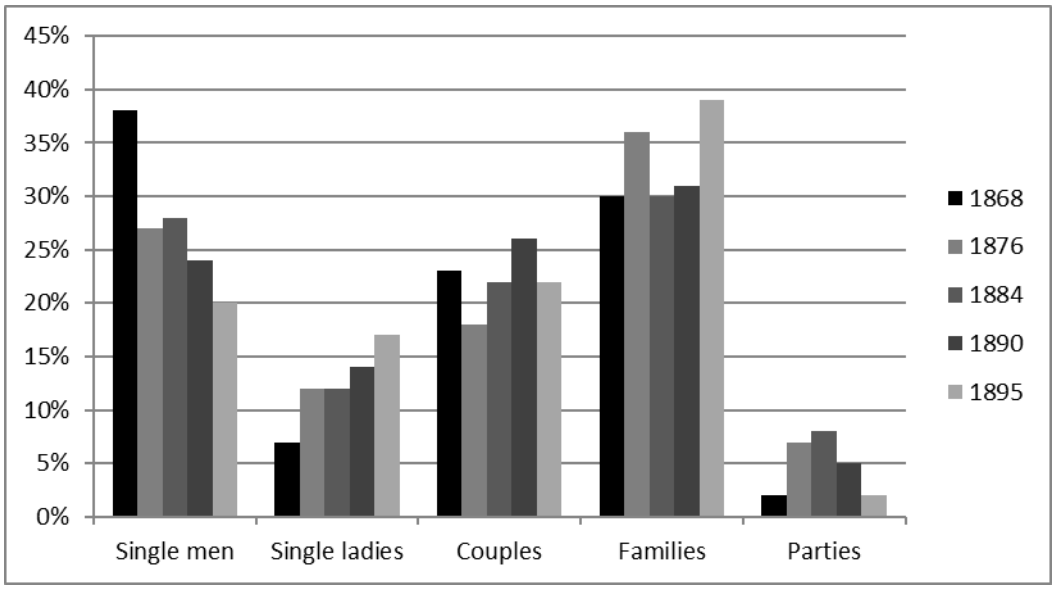
Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868; 29 July, 5 & 12 August 1876; 26 July, 2 & 9 August 1884 and 2, 9 & 16 August 1890).

By 1890, although there were still larger numbers of single men than single ladies the percentage of single ladies had doubled from 7% in 1868 to 14% in 1890. Local coach owners were clearly keen to appeal to female travellers and advertised tours in comfortable coaches which they stated were particularly suitable for ladies. Although they still accounted for almost a quarter of all visitors the percentage of single males continued to fall. Ease of access and the opening up of the countryside may have diminished the thrill and mystery associated with Oban and the more adventurous males may have sought excitement and new challenges elsewhere. Families continued to account for the highest percentage of visitors. Frequently only the wife and children of

families originating in Glasgow and Stirling areas were recorded which suggested that the husband may have worked during the week returning to Oban at the weekend. The percentage of couples increased to 26% of all visitors with the majority originating from London and the south of England.

By 1895 families were clearly the dominant group of visitors to Oban accounting for almost 40% of the total (see Figure 8.11).

Figure 8.11: Comparison of Oban's Visitors 1868, 1876, 1884, 1890 and 1895



Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* Visitors' lists 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868; 29 July, 5 & 12 August 1876; 26 July, 2 & 9 August 1884; 2, 9 & 16 August 1890 and *The Oban Visitors Register* 31 July, 7 & 14 August 1895).

Large family groups accompanied by their staff were still very much in evidence. *The Oban Times* reported that all the larger houses in Oban had been let for the season for periods of three to four months. Although a large number of families came from England, two thirds of all family groups originated in Scotland. As highlighted earlier in the chapter in 1895, 12 addresses in what was considered to be the poorer area of town south of the river submitted lists of guests. Those staying in these properties were predominantly families from Glasgow and other parts of mainly industrial Scotland. Although no prices for these addresses exist they may have been considerably cheaper than the villas on the esplanade or the surrounding hills. The numbers of single men continued to decline and they now accounted for only 20% of all visitors compared to

38% in 1868. An editorial in *The Oban Times* at the end of the 1895 season may account for their demise. It commented that whereas Oban offered much for the traveller, the Highlands and northern parts of Scotland offered unspoiled and untamed countryside where outdoor pursuits such as stalking could be enjoyed (The Oban Times 21 September 1895). The number of single ladies had risen to its highest level to date perhaps due to the publicity the town was receiving. On 18 May 1895, *The Oban Times* quoted from an article written in the Gentlewoman about the town which stated: "I do not know what more the heart of a woman wants that Oban cannot supply."

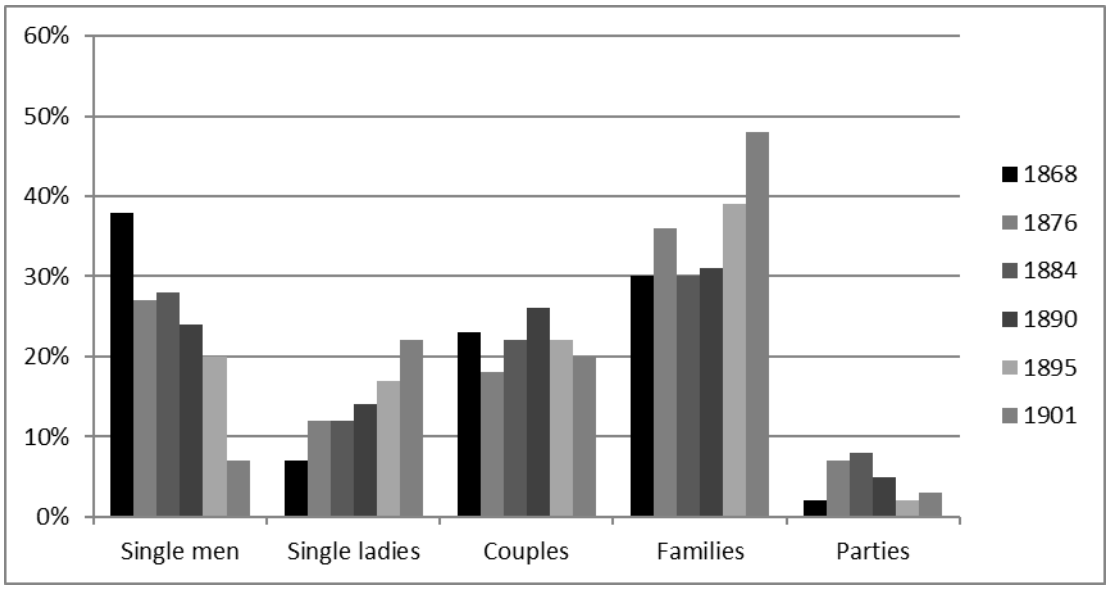
Initially very few single ladies holidayed in Oban and their numbers remained relatively low. Haldane-Grenier (2005, p.116) suggested that the lower numbers of single women may have been due to restrictions regarding travel. Men were freer to explore the countryside than women who required the protective structure of tours. But by the end of the nineteenth century women had gained greater freedom and it had become more socially acceptable for them to take part in greater physical activity on holiday. Walking and cycling became popular and those promoting tourism in Scotland tried to attract young women to the country. Women were a huge almost untapped market and their numbers were likely to continue to grow. Realising this potential, the North British Railway Company published a promotional booklet entitled 'Epistles of Peggy'. Peggy was a fictional character, a young woman who extolled the virtues of a holiday in the Scottish Highlands through a series of letters. The letters provided information about sport and leisure activities while at the same time reassuring female travellers of their safety and security while holidaying in the area (Haldane-Grenier 2005, p.116).

Female travellers however were not a new phenomenon as Urry (2002, p.24) stated they frequently outnumbered men on Cook's packages to Europe. The visitors' lists indicated that single ladies visiting Oban preferred to stay in private houses rather than hotels, probably due to the security of a private house as opposed to staying in one of Oban's many licensed hotels. Single women holidaying in Oban came mainly from the west end of Glasgow, London and south-east England. The increasing number of single female tourists could be due to several factors. Worsnop (1990, p.23) stated that the 1851 census showed a surplus of predominantly middle-class unmarried women. This imbalance continued and from the national census of 1871 it was evident that women outnumbered men. Beddoe (1998, p.29) maintained that this led to an increased number

of single women in the population both unmarried and widowed. By the 1890s it was estimated that one in six women would remain unmarried (Gleadle 2001, p.183). Some women chose to remain single and for those who had a private income this could prove a more attractive alternative to being married. Some of the women who stayed in Oban did not travel alone but instead with at least one other female usually from the same town. Others were listed with a companion but others appeared to be travelling alone.

The 1901 visitors' list only included those staying in the town's 146 private houses as none of Oban's 34 hotels provided any information about their guests (see Figure 8.12).

Figure 8.12: Comparison of Oban's Visitors 1868, 1876, 1884, 1890, 1895 and 1901



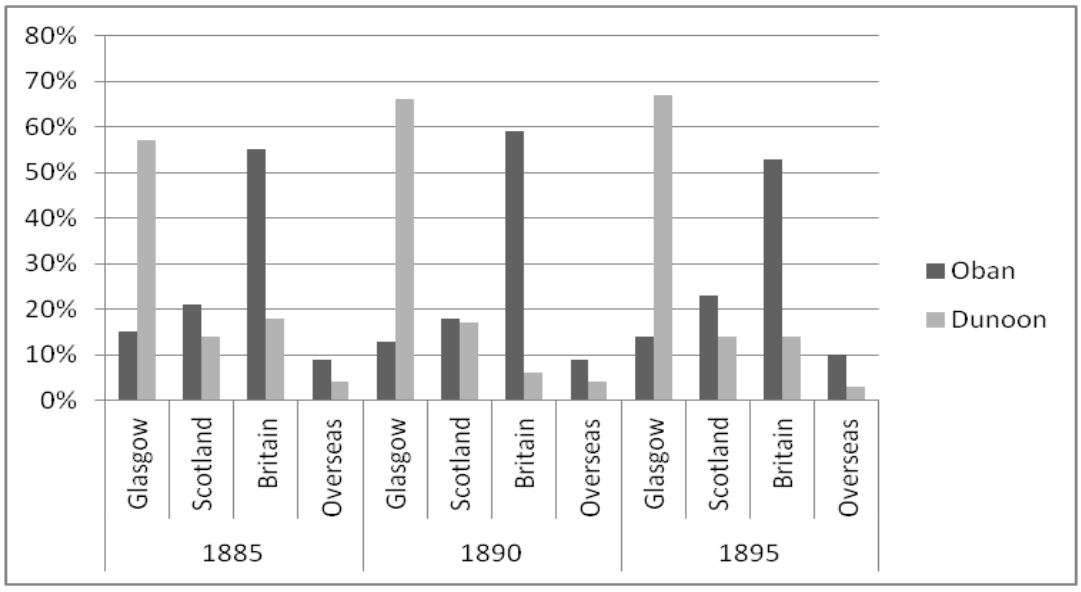
Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* 25 July, 1 & 8 August 1868; 29 July, 5 & 12 August 1876,; 26 July, 2 & 9 August 1884; 2, 9 & 16 August 1890; and *The Oban Visitors Register* 31 July, 7 & 14 August 1895; 2, 9 & 16 August 1901).

Once again families comprised the largest numbers of visitors. Overall families were clearly Oban's main market remaining consistently high between 1868 and 1901. In the early years families mainly originated in the south of England but by 1901, 80% of family groups came from Glasgow and central Scotland, with fewer than 10% from the south of England. In 1901, 77% of those who stayed in the 27 tenements to the south of the river came from Glasgow although no addresses were given so exactly where they came from in the city cannot be identified.

In 1901, only 7% of single men were recorded staying in the town, although this figure is unlikely to give an accurate account of their numbers as they usually resided in the hotels. Perhaps the fears highlighted in *The Oban Times* in 1895 of increased competition from overseas were beginning to come to fruition. However, an account of the season in *The Oban Times* on 31 August 1901 stated: "Oban is now very full of tourists, all the large hotels and letting houses being well taken up".

As no other detailed studies have been carried out regarding the visitor profile it was not possible to compare Oban's visiting population with other resorts. However Durie (2003, p.80) provided details of a study regarding the place of origin of those staying in Dunoon. The information was taken from the visitors' lists in *The Dunoon Herald* and *Cowal Advertiser* between 1885 and 1895. Although the visitors' lists for Oban were for 1884 not 1885 it still enabled a comparison to be made between Oban and Dunoon's market over a 10 year period (see Figure 8.13).

Figure 8.13: Comparison of Oban and Dunoon's Visitors



Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* visitors' lists and Durie 2003, p.80).

Oban was clearly attracting a very different market to Dunoon. Dunoon's clientele came mainly from Glasgow whereas Oban's originated principally from other parts of Britain especially London and the south of England. As both towns were holiday resorts in Argyll and both within relatively easy reach of Glasgow some similarities between

the visitors' place of origin would have been expected. Dunoon's closer proximity to Glasgow may well have had some influence in the choice of holiday resort for Glaswegians. There were regular steamers from Glasgow to Dunoon and also a train service from Glasgow to Gourock where passengers could travel to Dunoon by steamer. Although Oban also had excellent sea links to Glasgow the travel time and cost was greater. In 1885 the journey time from Glasgow to Dunoon by steamer was 2 hours 30 minutes and to Oban 8 hours 50 minutes. The cost of a return journey on the steamers *Columba* or *Iona* were 1s 6d return to Dunoon and 10s to Oban (Glasgow Herald 16 July 1885). The significant difference in travel time and cost may have had an effect on the decision process especially for the less well off when planning a holiday.

8.4 Length of Stay of Oban's Visiting Population

Authors frequently described Oban as simply a stopping off point, and not a place people would stay for any length of time. By determining how long visitors stayed in the town this chapter aimed to prove or disprove the belief that Oban was not a destination but just a gateway to the Highlands and islands. Durie (2003, p.81) stated Oban was a place people tended to pass through, hence its nickname the "Charing Cross of the Highlands". This appeared to be the perception of the town in the Victorian era as in an article in *The Scotsman* in 1864, reprinted in 2005 entitled Oban. "A little bay with broad appeal", the author who signed himself W.M. wrote:

> "Oban is generally regarded by tourists as merely a convenient halting place for a night to break the journey on the great Highland route to Inverness" (The Scotsman 12 August 2005).

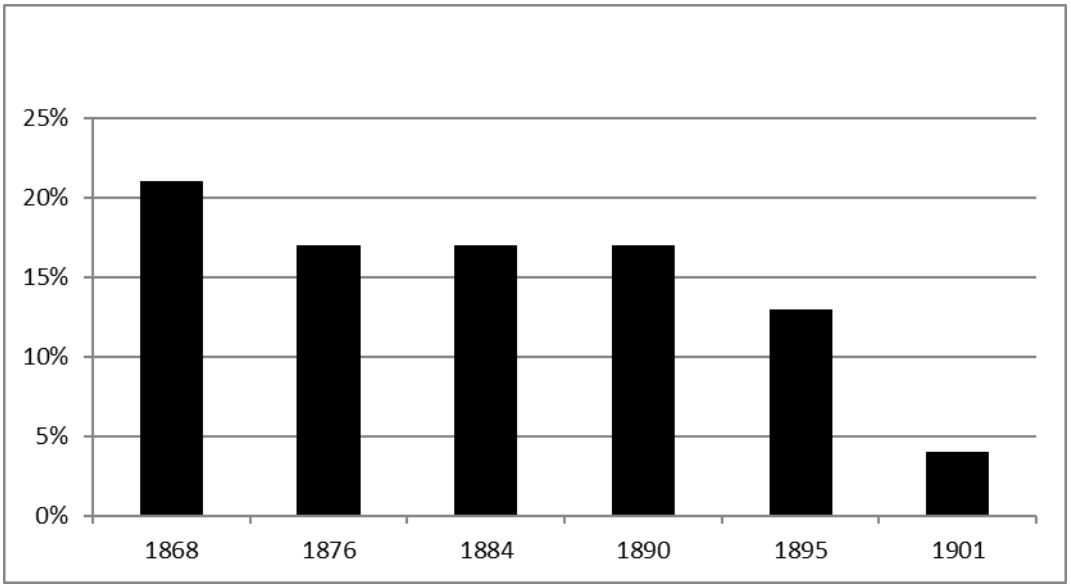
Thirty years later an assessment of Oban in Groome's Gazetteer agreed with these views:

> "Tourists go to Oban simply for the purpose of getting somewhere else. Beautiful as the situation of the town is, its chief attraction to visitors is the ease with which from Oban they can reach other parts of the Highlands" (Groome's Gazetteer 1894, p.124).

The details of each of Oban's visitors was recorded on a spreadsheet for the three sample weeks at the end of July and beginning of August between 1868 and 1901 and those visitors which stayed three weeks or longer were easily identified (see Figure 8.14).

In 1868, 21% of all visitors recorded in *The Oban Times* stayed for at least three weeks and indeed many were resident for up to three months. Between 1876 and 1890, 17% of visitors stayed for three weeks and 13% in 1895. By 1901 this figure had fallen to only 4% but this may not provide an accurate comparison as the 1901 figures are based on private houses only. However it is likely that the 1901 figure would be lower than in previous years. The week long although often unpaid summer holiday had started to appear at the end of the 1880s and by the end of the century this had become standard practice in many industrial towns (Fraser 2000, p.250). By the start of the twentieth century although more people may have been able to afford a holiday, not everyone had the time or means to enjoy such long breaks. None of the visitors to Oban who stayed in the addresses in poorer parts of the town in 1895 and 1901 stayed longer than a week.

Figure 8.14: Percentage of visitors staying 3 weeks or longer 1868 to 1901



Source: (Adapted from *The Oban Times* visitors' lists and *The Oban Visitors Register*).

Throughout the period covered families accounted for the highest percentage of visitors to the town. Each year the largest percentage of families staying three weeks or longer came from Glasgow and surrounding areas, consistently remaining at around 40%. This high percentage from Glasgow may have been due to businessmen taking a house for the season while travelling to Glasgow to work during the week. With the opening of the Callander and Oban railway travel time between Glasgow and Oban was reduced to just under five hours. None of the single men or single ladies stayed for three weeks and

this trend continued throughout the period covered. This suggested they may have been touring Scotland rather than staying in one location. Between 1884 and 1895 visitors from England especially couples and families from London and the south coast accounted for around 24% of all those staying three weeks or more. Although the number of parties staying in Oban was always less than 10% of the total visiting population most parties comprised students and their tutors from Oxford and Cambridge who often stayed for several weeks.

By 1901, Oban had attracted visitors for over 100 years but their reasons for visiting were changing. As highlighted in earlier chapters the journals of the early visitors to Oban indicated that they came initially in search of romance culture, religion and history. Much had been written about the west highlands, and especially around Oban and Mull and this romantic vision of the highlands had undoubtedly encouraged people to visit the area for themselves.

But towards the end of the nineteenth century the social class and expectations of those visiting Oban changed. A combination of factors including more holidays and improved transport meant days away and overnight stays were no longer just the preserve of the more wealthy in society. For many resorts the differing expectations of socially diverse groups of visitors could lead to conflict. Faster steam ships and the Callander and Oban railway meant easier and quicker access to Oban from central Scotland and the final section of this chapter examined the effect which the day trippers and excursionists had on Oban's residents and summer visitors.

8.5 The Arrival of the Excursionist

By the end of the nineteenth century the seaside became accessible to a greater number of people. This was due to combination of factors which included the introduction of holidays, rising wages and cheaper steamer and rail fares. Resorts had always dealt with the conflicting requirements of their local inhabitants and visitors as the needs of each group were not always compatible. However, with the arrival of large numbers of the lower middle and working classes new tensions began to surface. Seaside towns, which had for many years been enjoyed first by the upper classes, then the middle classes in

society, were now being invaded by large numbers of day trippers not all of whom conducted themselves in what was considered to be a seemly manner.

Since the start of the railway age in the 1830s many companies and charitable bodies including Sunday schools, temperance societies and friendly associations travelled in organised groups to the coast. A visit to the seaside was viewed as a healthy alternative to spending days off in the pubs or visiting fairgrounds and cheap amusements which came to the industrial towns on holidays (Fraser 1990, p.249). Excursions were not only confined to rail transport and before the railway extended throughout Scotland wealthy manufacturers would hire a vessel and provide their workforce with a day's sailing from Glasgow to Rothesay, Dunoon, Arran and Oban. Employers also organised excursions for their staff and families and these outings were often accompanied by the Works Band. Such outings were beneficial to the companies as Fraser (2000, p.249) stated:

> "This had many attractions; it encouraged identification with the firm; it allowed a display of paternalism and noblesse oblige by the employer."

These large excursion parties were often criticised although perhaps not always fairly as they were an easy target. It was not just the behaviour of the excursionists at the resorts which caused concern. In order to reach the coast they were obliged to travel by rail or boat sharing a limited space with other passengers. Although supposedly segregated from the first class passengers they could access most parts of the ships and local and national newspapers frequently commented on the unseemly conduct of passengers. A day trip from Glasgow to the Clyde resorts was a popular outing but the actions of passengers was criticised. Instead of enjoying the sights some of the passengers both male and females became drunk and abusive and on occasion attacked other passengers and crew. After witnessing such a scene a newspaper reporter commented that unless the Clyde steamers wished to alienate all bona fide passengers their owners needed to take steps to prevent such behaviour (Glasgow Herald 31 August 1861).

Such letters in the newspapers could damage both the reputation of a company and the resort associated with it. Although the steamships were conveying large numbers of day trippers the companies also wished to attract the wealthier clientele who paid higher fares and made use of the facilities on board the vessels. Perhaps believing that the behaviour of the day trippers would prevent the more affluent passengers from

travelling David MacBrayne's company printed the following announcement in the *Glasgow Herald*.

> "Until further notice no steerage return tickets to be issued by steamer Iona between Glasgow and Dunoon on Saturdays" (Glasgow Herald 2 September 1865).

In 1874 *The Oban Times* commented on the problems which large numbers of excursionists had caused at some Clyde resorts:

> "There are many places on the Clyde which in the past attracted excursionists but now cease to attract a resident summer population owing to the conduct of daily excursionists whose conduct we regret to say was often boisterous and objectionable in more ways than one" (The Oban Times 29 August 1874).

Reports regarding the behaviour of the working class visitors to Oban were far less negative than some resorts. One of the few negative reports regarding excursionists was recorded by Wolverhampton lawyer Henry Underhill and his party during their visit to Dunolly Castle in 1868. While walking round the grounds they were apprehended by MacDougall of Dunolly the castle owner who told them that:

> "The Glasgow Fair had been lately held and so many excursionists invaded the place committing all manners of damage" (Underhill 1868).

On the whole reports regarding the excursionists were positive. On 20 July 1872 *The Oban Times* commented that the excursionists which had arrived on the steamer were noticeably sober and conducted themselves well. Although steamers carried large numbers of visitors the number conveyed was small compared with the railways. Once the rail connection was established between Glasgow and Oban in 1880 it brought the town to within 5 hours travel from Glasgow. The railway brought tourism to Oban on a scale the town had never previously experienced. Those who had only a day's holiday could travel from central Scotland to Oban and back within a day. Throughout the summer large excursion parties from several companies usually from Glasgow or Stirling regularly descended on the town. Excursion trains could be huge and frequently brought as many as 2,000 people at one time. The newspaper reports stated that these parties usually comprised of working class men and their families on organised works outings. They came for a day and their reasons for visiting often differed greatly from the long established clientele. This brought new problems and pressures to Oban as the

town councillors and local businesses had to cater for mass tourism while at the same time retain Oban's image of a quality top class resort. However, reports regarding their behaviour were generally positive and the only mention of any drunken visitors was uncovered in 1882 when the following details were reported in the local paper:

> "During the week we have had monster excursions to Oban. The town on two days has been overrun with citizens of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Paisley, Perth, Hamilton, Motherwell and Wishaw. We were glad to see that the excursionists were all well conducted and respectable people. Undoubtedly a great change has taken place in the social habits of the working classes. A tipsy man was the exception out of the thousands who came here" (The Oban Times 27 May 1882).

In May 1883 *The Oban Times* reported that upwards of 2,000 people arrived from Glasgow and Motherwell, which amounted to approximately half of Oban's resident population of 3,991. The following day two trains from Glasgow and Perth arrived on the same day carrying a total of over 2,000 visitors. Once again their conduct was reported on favourably and the editor of the paper also queried what the visitors thought of the local population's behaviour toward them:

> "It is a matter of gratification to us to be able to wind up each paragraph noting the visits of strangers to Oban in words of commendation on their good conduct. I wonder what visitors think of our conduct towards them? Is it sufficiently courteous and polite to make strangers visit our borders again? We sincerely hope so" (The Oban Times 28 May 1883).

Negative reports regarding the behaviour of working class excursionist visitors to Oban were minimal. This may have been because the majority of large excursion parties were organised by companies or charitable organisations. Those visiting were generally accompanied and activities were planned during their visit to the town. Being further from Glasgow, Oban may have avoided some of those unsupervised excursionists who caused disruption in some of the Clyde resorts.

8.6 Conclusions

This chapter has highlighted that it was virtually impossible to calculate the number of people who visited Oban between 1868 and 1901. Although the information contained in the visitors' lists provided an indication of the numbers of those staying in the town and their place of origin they did not include everyone. Those who only stayed for a

short period and the day excursionists were not recorded. An added problem was that not all establishments provided information about their guests on a regular basis. Therefore the number of visitors actually staying in the town was likely to have been considerably higher than those recorded in *The Oban Times* and *The Oban Visitors Register*. Although an analysis of the lists was carried out for approximately the same three weeks in selected years the sample size differed as the number of hotels and guest houses submitting lists varied from week to week.

The visitors' lists did highlight that during the later part of the Victorian era Oban was a popular and busy resort not only attracting visitors from Scotland and England but also from most European countries, the Americas, Africa and Asia. Throughout the period studied a large percentage of Oban's visitors consistently came from England. England had a vast variety of seaside resorts which suggested that those coming to Oban were unlikely to have come for a seaside holiday. Prideaux (2009, p.20) stated that as remoteness increases resorts have to offer something unique to attract visitors to travel otherwise they will stay closer to home. For many visitors Oban's attraction may not have been just the town but its popularity was also due to its proximity to the islands.

The lists also highlight that from the mid-1890s onwards there was a definite change in the location of accommodation available for visitors' in the town. From the earliest visitors' lists the private houses were clearly situated on the more prestigious north side of the town, along the esplanade, or on Pulpit Hill, an exclusive area south of the town centre. Those providing the lodgings were mainly the wives of professional men. From 1895 onwards, in addition to the large villas, which still accommodated guests, other addresses appeared for the first time. These were not the usual large houses, but instead tenement flats located in the streets to the south side of the town, traditionally an area where tourists would not normally have visited far less stayed. In 1895, 12 addresses in this part of town were listed as providing accommodation and by 1901 this had increased to 27. This suggested that by the end of the century Oban was attracting a wider cross section of paying guests as the majority staying at these addresses were families from Glasgow.

Whilst they do not give a complete account of all visitors to Oban, without the details contained in the visitors' lists very little would be known about the place or origin or

the demographics of those who holidayed in Oban during the late Victorian period and they do at least provide a valuable source for analysis. Apart from the occasional listing of arrivals and departures published in the *Glasgow Herald* in the 1840s, prior to 1868 there were no comprehensive records of visitors to the town. Had *The Oban Times* and later *The Oban Visitors Register* not compiled a list of visitors, obtaining information about those who visited Oban would have been virtually impossible. No official records were kept of the numbers of visitors staying in the town and there were no surviving copies of hotel registers from the Victorian period. In the absence of any other statistics the visitors' lists were a valuable source and for Oban provided the only relatively comprehensive records of visitors to the town.

An examination of the length of stay questioned the perceptions of Smith who visited in 1865 and Durie (2003) that Oban was just a stopping off point and not somewhere people stayed for any length of time. By the middle of the nineteenth century the town had undoubtedly become a destination in its own right, regularly attracting upwards of 3,000 guests staying each week in the height of the season.

As there was a lack of detailed published data regarding information about visitors staying in other resorts comparing the origin of Oban's visitors with other centres was not possible. Although the research carried out on Dunoon's visitors enabled a comparison to be made between the two towns which highlighted that Dunoon and Oban attracted very different markets.

Finally this chapter highlighted that the arrival of the excursionist and day trippers had little negative impact on the town and its residents. Although the numbers visiting were not high compared to other resorts, upwards of 2,000 people regularly arrived in Oban on one day. Whereas in some resorts excursionists were often regarded as drunken and disorderly there were no complaints about bad behaviour in the newspaper or any reference to any major incidents in the town council minutes. Even with improved steamer and rail transport Oban was still further from the main centres of population. Those who visited appeared to come in organised excursion parties rather than individual travellers who were more prevalent in the Clyde resorts of Millport, Dunoon and Rothesay. Oban's relative isolation may have helped to preserve its exclusivity as a resort.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This study has examined the development of tourism in Oban from the end of the eighteenth century to the start of the twentieth century. Although most of the town's development took place during the nineteenth century the beginning of modern tourism is generally associated with the eighteenth century as Walton (2009, p.784) commented:

> "For most purposes the origins of 'modern' tourism, entailing the commercial organisation of journeys in search of health, pleasure and difference that depend on access to disposable time and income on the part of the participants and make a significant economic and environmental impact on routes and destinations, generating employment and changing social arrangements in the process, are to be found in eighteenth century."

One of the aims of this study was to determine why a rural relatively isolated village with poor overland access, no sandy beach and few facilities became a popular tourist resort and to study the effect which the increasing numbers of visitors had on both the physical landscape and the local population.

This thesis posed a similar research question to those which many other monographs and thesis posit: why has this particular resort developed in this manner through time and what factors explain the growth and emergence of Oban as a resort? This type of question has confronted many historians of tourism but despite models such as Butler's lifecycle concept, it is clear that no two resorts exhibit exactly the same growth trajectories.

There is a developing literature within tourism studies which is associated with the resort lifecycle e.g. Butler (1980) that has assisted in conceptualising how resorts have grown and developed. Whilst few studies within tourism have identified the historical dimensions of the resort lifecycle model due in all probability to a lack of data, this model offered numerous insights for historical research. In particular it helped to situate individual case studies such as Oban in a wider conceptual framework where the development of tourism can be compared and contrasted in time and space.

What the Butler model helped to establish alongside the historiography of resort tourism, is that much of the published research is informed by studies of English seaside resorts. Fewer studies exist on Scottish resorts although Gold and Gold (1995), Durie (2003, 2006 and 2012); Haldane Grenier (2005); and Simpson (1987 and 2013) have made a major contribution to the history of tourism in Scotland. Where studies do exist many have been related to the history of transport especially in relation to rail and steamer travel. This thesis has attempted to fill some of the gaps and contribute to the existing knowledge regarding the history of tourism in Scotland since the 1700s.

It is clear from existing studies of Scottish tourism and its evolution that a major gap in knowledge existed prior to the commencement of this research study. In particular, much of the existing transport focused research with a tourism dimension e.g. studies of rail and steamer services has been focused on the growth in demand facilitated by innovations in transport technology and the impact of tourism supply to stimulate demand. Yet these studies do not really provide a holistic understanding of what factors (aside from transport) led to the growth and development of resorts such as Oban. Therefore, this thesis fulfilled an important gap in our knowledge of the history of tourism in Scotland by examining the effect tourists and tourism had on the social, environmental and economic fortunes of the village of Oban in Argyllshire between 1770 and 1901 through examining its transformation from rural fishing village into a thriving coastal resort. The Oban of 1700 which barely existed apart from small scattered settlements bore no resemblance to the established resort Oban had become by 1901.

The early chapters of this thesis highlighted that much of the initial development of Oban was due to the efforts of local landowners who provided the investment and infrastructure required. Throughout the nineteenth century Oban's various landowners continued to have an input into the layout of the town and its transport systems. Whereas some resorts grew in a piecemeal fashion with a variety of building styles Oban was designed as a planned town by its landlords the Duke of Argyll and later the Captain of Dunstaffnage giving it a uniformity of building styles. Tourism did not really develop until the arrival of *The Comet* and Oban's main landowner the Duke of Argyll realised the opportunities available and built an inn and a new quay. Although they were unsuccessful in obtaining inward investment from outsiders the failure to establish

business links was not entirely due to their apathy but primarily because of the difficulties faced through the lack of overland transportation and the high cost of fuel. Trading was established on a national and international scale through the intervention of enterprising local merchants who overcame these barriers by utilising the sea routes to ports in England, the Baltic countries and America.

Historically the promotion of Oban as a destination was initially due to its early visitors rather than the marketing efforts of the local population. Explorers such as Joseph Banks whose 'discovery' of Staffa in 1772 and Johnston and Boswell's account of their tour of the Hebrides the following year enticed others to visit. The town was fortunate in coming to prominence during the age of Romanticism and the area's culture and history were instead promoted by writers and artists including James MacPherson, William Wordsworth, Sir Walter Scott, Felix Mendelssohn and Joseph Turner. The journals of the first visitors highlighted that they were drawn to the area by these writers and artists. The town's development and promotion continued to be influenced by outsiders throughout the nineteenth century, especially by the rail and steamer companies and various guidebooks. In order to fully understand the relationship between the visitors and the residents evidence from both groups would have to be considered but in the absence of any documented evidence from local residents the journals provide the only account of the relationship between the two groups. The key dates identified in Oban's development are highlighted in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Key Dates in the Development of Oban

1734	Oban Trading Company Established
1760	Customs House opened
1772	Joseph Banks 'discovered' Staffa
1783	Johnson and Boswell visited Oban
1799	Publication of Sarah Murray's "A Companion and Useful Guide" which included Oban
1800	Duke of Argyll's planned town designed
1801	Opening of the Crinan Canal
1803	William and Dorothy Wordsworth visit Oban
1804	First Feus granted
1805	Road from Ardrishaig to Oban opened
1812	New Inn built
1812	Original quay expanded
1814	Sir Walter Scott's "The Lord of the Isles" published
1818	Henry Bell's steamboat '*The Comet'* arrived in Oban
1820	Oban's first church, the Congregational opened
1827	Scottish Tourist and Itinerary Guide's first mention of Oban
1832	Oban's first purpose built hotel the 'Caledonian' opened.
1832	Dalmally to Oban road opened
1847	Visit to Oban by Queen Victoria
1849	New steamship harbour built
1851	Introduction of David Hutcheson's "Royal Route" to Oban
1864	St John's Episcopal Church built
1866	First town reservoir built
1866	*The Oban Times* Newspaper launched
1877	Miller's Guide to Oban first published
1880	Callander & Oban Railway arrived in Oban
1888	Advertising of the town by the council in the Official Guide of the Glasgow Exhibition and transatlantic steamers.
1898	First municipal houses built.
1899	Arrival of the first motor car.

9.2 Summary of Key Findings

This thesis has placed Oban in a comparative context to the growth and history of resorts in other parts of the United Kingdom. From the documentary analysis undertaken it was evident that compared to many other resorts in England and Scotland, Oban was late to develop and did not become established as a tourist resort until the middle of the nineteenth century. Its late development can be attributed to its relatively isolated location which meant access was difficult and generally slow. Within Scotland resorts which were situated closer to major centres of population especially those in Aberdeenshire, Fife, the Lothian region and along the Ayrshire and Clyde coast were established much earlier. Perhaps because it developed later, Oban did not correspond exactly to Butler's stages of development of tourism in the Scottish Highlands but appeared to initially be a stage behind. However by stage 4 the period from 1865 to 1914, which Butler termed Railways, hotels and sportsmen Oban had caught up which suggested that its development may have been more rapid than other Highland resorts especially in the second half of the nineteenth century.

During the early part of the nineteenth century the town itself was not the main attraction and its initial popularity was due to its proximity to the island of Staffa. This bears similarities to Pirie's concept of incidental tourism, whereby the town initially was developed as a gateway not a destination in its own right although this changed over time. Oban also followed the traditional linear style of development with the largest hotels spread along the seafront and smaller less expensive accommodation on the area behind although the steep cliffs behind the bay limited building and the town instead grew on the hills surrounding the bay.

The railway has long been accredited with having a major impact on the development of any resort but this research has shown that visitors were coming to Oban long before the opening of the Callander and Oban Railway in 1880. Steamships from Glasgow had brought visitors to the town since the early part of the nineteenth century and from the 1860s ships were conveying passengers to the town from Northern Ireland. Whether the railway took traffic away from the steamboats or split the market is debatable due to the lack of passenger records and discrepancies in those records which do survive. The continued success of both methods of transport may be attributed to the establishment of

an integrated transport system whereby railway, steamship and coach companies recognised the benefits of working together and planned their timetables to benefit all concerned.

Although landowners were content to receive an income from tourists this thesis has highlighted that many did not want any disruption to their lives. This was especially evident in relation to routes for road and rail links and access to beaches for sea bathing. Similarly the town councillors were keen to promote Oban as a tourist town but as the majority had an interest in the tourist trade they were careful not to encourage anything which would adversely impact on them or their businesses.

9.3 Contribution made to existing knowledge

One of the major contributions this thesis has made to the history of tourism in Scotland is through a study of visitors' lists in the local newspapers *The Oban Times* and *The Oban Visitors Register* from 1868 to 1901. For the first time a detailed analysis of visitors to a Scottish resort over a period of time has been undertaken. A study of the addresses in the lists highlighted that the town did not have a provincial market or even a central Scotland market. Oban's visitors originated from all parts of the country especially from the south of England and from overseas. The lists were also examined to establish whether Oban had a particular market and also to determine whether this changed over time. By classifying visitors under the categories: single men, single ladies, couples, families and parties this enabled a detailed study of the demographics of Oban's visitors which is again something which has not been undertaken for any other resort.

Oban was often described as the "Charing Cross of the Highlands", a stopping off point for visitors traveling on to other destinations. The visitors' lists in *The Oban Times* clearly demonstrated that visitors were not just passing through but some were staying for several weeks. Undoubtedly many people stopped in the town en-route to the islands of Mull, Iona, Staffa and Skye and there visits are not recorded. Overall the visitors' lists contradict the commonly held view that Oban was only a gateway to the islands but a destination in its own right. This research clearly showed that Oban had a variety of visitor markets including day trippers and longer staying guests. Another common

misconception was that tourism in the Highlands of Scotland was limited to the summer months. Visitors' lists in both the local paper and the *Glasgow Herald* clearly challenged this claim with names of guests listed in November well outside the recognised season.

Obtaining accurate figures regarding the number of visitors who arrived in Oban was a major problem as no accurate records survive of those carried on the various forms of transport. No records existed of the number of passengers transported by the steamships and there was limited statistical data for the Callander and Oban Railway Company. Innovations in transport technology from the personal carriage to the stagecoach then the steamers and railway enabled greater distances to be covered and over time this expanded the market size. As the nineteenth century progressed, more people especially the emerging middle classes had the means and opportunities to enjoy leisure and resorts found themselves dealing with the competing needs of different classes. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s the local newspaper regularly reported on excursion trains from all parts of Scotland and the north of England often carrying over 2,000 visitors arriving in the town which at that time had a population of less than 4,000.

Walton (2009) stated that more research was required into the labour history of tourism. This study has gone some way to address this by examining the employment opportunities available to males and females in Oban. This study has demonstrated that women played a major role in Oban's development as a resort. A woman's role in Victorian times was generally viewed as that of a home maker and their caring qualities supposedly made them unsuitable for the harsh world of work. But many women living in seaside resorts could combine work and home by providing lodgings for summer visitors. By the end of the nineteenth century 47% of Oban's largest hotels were managed/owned by women which showed women could be as successful in the hotel trade as men and highlighted that women did not only take over establishments on the death of a husband but could be successful in their own right. Although this study has shown that not everyone benefitted from tourism. As the town grew and became popular there was a lack of affordable housing although some municipal housing was provided at the end of the nineteenth century.

This study has been innovative in that it has made use of previously unrelated material including an examination of the wills and inventories of selected local hoteliers. Through record linkage i.e. combining this information with that of other sources such as the census enumerators' returns and newspapers reports a more detailed account of the hoteliers was provided. The purpose of this was to establish whether the hotels were owned and run by local residents or were people moving from hotels in other places to the town perhaps beginning with a small business then moving into larger premises.

The tensions and conflicts which developed from an intermixing of social classes as more people were able to afford holidays has been extensively covered by several authors including (Walvin 1978), Walton (1983), Gold and Gold (1995) and Durie (2003). Although the numbers of excursionists arriving in Oban was small compared to some English resorts the town regularly received two excursion trains a day which could amount to over 4,000 visitors. However, apart from the occasional comment regarding 'tipsy' excursionists on the whole they were welcomed and their behaviour favourably commented upon. Many of the comparisons made within the thesis have been made with English resorts as detailed data has not been available for many Scottish resorts. As Oban was further from the main centres of population it may not have attracted the same numbers of excursionists and day trippers who could access the Clyde resorts of Dunoon and Rothesay more easily and cheaply. Those who visited Oban appeared to come on organised works or charitable outings rather than unorganised day trips. There are similarities with the work of May and Travis on the Devon resorts which highlighted how a resort's relative remoteness from cities with a potential working class excursionist market can help maintain a resort's exclusiveness.

9.4 Limitations of the Research

Whilst this study offered many new insights and perspectives on the evolution of resort tourism in Scotland and the west coast based on the experience of Oban, there are of course numerous limitations which need to be recognised when interpreting the findings of this thesis. For example the lack of detailed information relating to passenger numbers for both rail and steamer restricted the extent to which one can accurately assess each mode of transport had on visitor numbers to the town. The lack of detailed and accurate visitor numbers was another common issue for the history of hospitality as

hotel registers and records are rare and in the main Victorian and Edwardian figures for visitor numbers are guesstimates (Walton 1998).

As there were no known hotel registers for Oban's hotels in existence all data relating to visitor demographics was taken from the visitors' lists. Although they provided a great deal of valuable information, the details contained in them could not be guaranteed as being totally accurate as not all establishments consistently provided lists of guests which made weekly comparisons difficult. The lack of studies of visitors' lists for other resorts apart from the study of Dunoon meant that it was not possible to compare Oban's visiting population with other coastal resorts.

Newspaper reports implied that Oban was perceived as an expensive destination but again the lack of published information regarding cost of accommodation made this difficult to confirm. Where information did exist it was not always possible to establish whether like for like comparisons were being made. For example comparing accommodation costs between resorts proved difficult as many advertisements in newspapers did not publish the cost of accommodation, instead inviting prospective visitors to write for details. Using this source to make comparisons was further complicated as even when prices were advertised, without knowing more than the basic details of properties in other towns it was difficult to compare similar establishments.

9.5 Further opportunities for future research

In conclusion, there are a number of research areas that could be explored further in the light of this study. Although the thesis addressed the impact of tourism on the town and population of Oban within the confines of specific data sources, there are several further opportunities for future study. This thesis only considered certain aspects of tourism in Oban within a fixed time scale 1770-1901 and there is clearly scope for further research. The period covered could be expanded into the Edwardian era to examine the impact that the arrival of the motor car had on the town and on the railways, steamers and coach companies. Further extending the time scale to consider the period including and after the World Wars may determine whether Oban experienced decline or renewal. Although Oban's development had similarities to the first four stages of Butlers TALC

model this would demonstrate whether Oban later followed the same pattern as the Clyde resorts, which were examined by Butler.

While the focus of this research was on Argyll and more specifically Oban, some of the themes explored could be could be extended to other resorts. For the more quantitative researcher computer technology could be used to analyse the visitors' lists which could offer a fertile area for future detailed research. By collecting data from a sample of visitors' lists in different resorts throughout Scotland, this would develop a more comparative methodology to extend this research to a more pan Scotland setting. This study examined visitors lists over three consecutive weeks at the end of July and beginning of August in selected years but this could be expanded to determine whether a study of other weeks e.g. in June and September would yield similar or different results. The visitors' lists also contained details of visiting yachts and their owners and this is a further source which could be studied over a period time.

A more detailed study could be made regarding the number of beds available in the town by combining the accommodation establishments listed in the visitors' lists with the addresses in the census enumerators' returns. The census returns could also be used to determine the age range of those providing accommodation and their status e.g. married, single, widowed. Although a study was made of the place of birth of Oban's working population a more detailed breakdown of those involved in tourism could be made by age group to determine if a specific age group was benefitting from the town's continued dependence on tourism. Further studies could be made of Oban's retail establishments to determine the percentage of Oban's shops catering for the tourists and whether this changed over time.

Overall this thesis has filled a gap in the history of British resorts by providing a detailed study of tourism from a Scottish perspective. The research carried out in particular with regard to employment and the visiting population provides a basis for future researchers to build upon. It has shown that the contribution made by resorts in Scotland including its smaller towns, should not be overlooked as they too have a rightful place in the history of tourism in Britain.

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