Forth & Clyde Canal Society

CANAL NEWS

Autumn/Winter 2023 £1.50 FREE to Members ISSUE 182



COME CRUISE WITH US

Busy crusing season in 2023

Members Talk 26th October
AGM 18th November
New Year Gathering 2nd January 2024
Members Lunch 10th February 2024

CREW TRAINING, CHARTERS & BOAT MAINTENANCE

Visit our new interactive website at **www.forthandclyde.org.uk**

EDITOR'S REVIEW

Celebrating Fifty years of progress on the canals



Welcome to the 182nd issue of Canal News. I am now retiring as your editor after ten years, and give this brief review of our voyage since we started in 1980.

Pre-History

The canal closed in 1963 and rapidly got chopped into lots of little bits, all locks & bridges closed, some parts filled in, towpath overgrown. Within ten years a number of us started getting organised, running clean-ups and festivals, printing leaflets. Then in 1980 we all got together as the new Forth and Clyde Canal Society.

Ferry Queen to Voyager

Right from the start we believed in getting local folk to enjoy the canal, instead of seeing it as a threat.

We acquired a Clyde Ferry in 1981 and repurposed her as 'Ferry Queen', cruising on the canal with great press publicity. This was a very effective campaigning tool.

We launched Gipsy Princess in 1990. Other craft on the roll call of fame include Cadder Princess, Dick's barge, Alex Ingles, Janet Telford and Maryhill. Voyager was launched in 2005, greatly increasing our ability to get people afloat.

Events and Campaigning

Events have always been a major part of our campaigning. We ran a good number of festivals all along the canal, including public trips on boats both big and small. We also gave talks, put on displays, produced publicity, ran canal marathons, clean-ups, and restoration projects. All our activities won the argument round from "fill it in, it's dangerous" to "re-open it, we enjoy it".

All the time we were working closely with the canal owners and local authorities, whilst also lobbying national politicians. All our boat trips and festivals fed into our lobbying and

led to a number of initiatives, including the Local Plan for the whole of the canal, the Glasgow Canal Project and finally to the very successful Millennium Link.

Since then we have welcomed The Kelpies, marinas at Auchinstarry and Kirkintilloch, and a holiday boat centre at The Falkirk Wheel. We have also had to keep campaigning. In 2018 the bridges at Twechar and Bonnybridge were closed. All canal societies had to campaign hard to get the Scottish Government to come up with an extra £1.6 million to repair and re-open the bridges a year later. Campaigning continues.

Canal News

Canal News has been vital to all our activities from the start. Our role has, however, evolved. In the early days I edited issues 3 to 16. Canal News was typed and photocopied. Cut and paste meant just that. We had five issues a year, full of dates for members' diaries. It was a newsletter in the fullest sense. Now we inform our members through emails, social media and our website. Canal News has evolved to be a mini-magazine full of background articles. We now have three main readerships. Our armchair members who have joined to show their support, our active members and the councillors, parliamentarians, and others who receive copies as part of our profile outreach.

So, still vital.

Thank You

Huge thanks to Robert Irvine who has given me great support throughout. I could not have done it without his help. I also thank the many Society members and friends who have provided articles, pictures and news items, all absolutely essential.

Many thanks to Ewan Lauder whose graphic design skills have greatly enhanced Canal News, and Craig Cowan and all at Cowan Print for excellent production.



In this issue

Enjoy William Boyle on crew training, Jim Miller on maintenance, Jim McFarlane on volunteer lock restoration, Morna Gourlay on the canal side Claypits reserve, Don Martin celebrating 250 years since the canal came to Kirky, and Malcolm Gillies pictures for fungal foray.

CANAL NEWS CONTENTS

Issue 182 Autumn/Winter 2023


News p04


Features p8


Splashback p20


Society p22


About Us p24

NEWS IN BRIEF



(left to right) Cllr Colette McDiarmid EDC, Neil Kitchener LCA, Cllr Alan Moir EDC, Scott Castel FCCS, and Neil Bibby MSP.

Great Cruising Season

We have had a great cruising season with lots of charters, public fish & chip and pizza & pasta cruises, members pizza & pasta cruise, and more. Charters (see front cover) have seen everything from whisky tasting to choirs, birthday parties, to wildlife cruises. All our fleet, Voyager, Gipsy Princess and Maryhill have been in action. Thanks to all the members who maintain and crew the boats. See William's article on page 8 and Jim's article on page 10 for insights on maintenance and crewing. Don't miss our AGM on 18th November.

Campaigning

Campaigning for the canals is an essential part of what we do. During the summer we ran a fact-finding meeting for Cllr Colette McDiarmid EDC, Neil Kitchener LCA, Cllr Alan Moir EDC, Scott Castel FCCS, and Neil Bibby MSP. The group discussed issues and opportunities facing our canals, including safety on canals and preservation of this valuable asset.

Scottish Canals

A new five-year plan, guided by the public through consultation, has been designed around the four themes of explore and experience, places and spaces, canals for the future, and people and business. A new website has been produced along with rebranding. View online.

More troubling was negative press publicity over the summer as auditors told Scottish Canals to improve finances as a matter of urgency. Scottish Canals have pointed out the difficulties in maintaining a 200 – 250-year-old network of 140 miles of canal and over 2,500 structures.

Summer Fun

Storytelling, art and entertainment were all enjoyed at Stockingfield's family day. This celebrated the local community art project which is showcasing the canal's industrial past and community present with striking artworks along the canal. Also, young people have been learning to fish for free at Glasgow Claypits and Falkirk Kelpies with experienced coaches and free tackle and bait. Scottish Canals and the Scottish Federation for Coarse Angling organised the courses, which also emphasised positive social behaviour and waterways safety.

Canal Festivals

Our Society's boats and Seagull Trust carried many festival goers along the canal during Kirkintilloch's annual Canal Festival in August. The festival also included singers, dancing, African Balorfon Orchestra, and fireworks at the marina. Cruises included singing, storytelling and drama, plus food and drink.

We carried plenty of passengers from Auchinstarry in June as part of Kilsyth Civic Week.

Romans at Cadder

Canal News joined a good turnout for the opening in July of the new Roman heritage installation at Cadder. Nothing remains of the original Roman fort, the canal builders drove the canal straight through one corner and then a sand quarry obliterated the rest.

Two canal side memorials have been installed, a plinth beside Cadder canal bridge, and a plinth and seat beside the towpath a few hundred metres north of the bridge. The project was driven by Bishopbriggs Community Council in partnership with EDC and the Antonine Wall project.



Cadder Roman Heritage installation opening

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kirkintilloch Plans

Plans are afoot to develop a new visitor experience on the south side of the canal , illustrated by a public display at Kirkintilloch Canal Festival. Plans for the south bank towpath between Hillhead Basin and Luggiebank Road include improving surfacing, signage, heritage interpretation, seating and amenity areas. Some of the natural regeneration between the path and the canal will be removed to improve views. EDC tell us that plans are at an early stage, and they will welcome comments.

Falkirk Wheel Closure

The Falkirk Wheel will be closed to boat traffic for an extended period this winter to allow major investment to improve the wheel's resilience. Closure will be from 30th October to 8th March '24, which will unfortunately affect boats going from the Forth and Clyde Canal to the popular Festival of Light on the Union Canal.

Archives

We held a very positive meeting with EDC Archivist Janice Miller in August which will hopefully result in our digital archive, created by the CanalCraft project, being more publicly available for visitors to the William Patrick Reference Library in Kirkintilloch, probably in 2024. This is an excellent development. EDC staff and volunteers will improve the accessibility of the archives where needed. Professional archive staff at the library will be on hand to help visitors enjoy the archive and deal with any issues such as copyright. CanalCraft did a great job producing the digital archives and we would like the public have proper access. Access will be for in person visitors, not online.

Canal Books

A collection of canal and canal related books has very kindly been donated to the Society by Jenny Simpson, recently retired director of Wylie & Bisset LLP, the Society's auditors. These books belonged to Jenny's late father. A list of the books will be included as a separate insert in your envelope. Anyone interested in having any of these books is very welcome to them, for a donation to the Canal Society plus the cost of post and packaging. Please contact Robert Irvine at robertirvine_fccs@hotmail.com quoting details of the book(s) you are interested in.

Elephants at Maryhill

This plaque was spotted by one of our readers. We suspect the acronym might offer a clue.

The Elephants of Maryhill Locks

Work on the Forth and Clyde Canal began in 1768 and proceeded well until, in 1787, it reached this point in Maryhill. Here, the bedrock proved much harder than expected and no matter what they tried, the workers couldn't make any progress.

To solve this problem, Bryce McGillycuddy, a local engineer, arranged for forty elephants to be shipped from Africa to Glasgow. When they arrived in April 1788, over half of the city's population turned out to watch them being led up Byres Road towards Maryhill.

With the help of these elephants, the oval basins for the five locks required for the canal to descend into the Kelvin Valley were excavated in no time at all. At this point, McGillycuddy decided to reward the elephants for their hard work by giving each one a barrel of whisky. They quickly consumed all the alcohol before breaking loose and heading for the city's cream bun and yum yum district. Workers and residents alike fled for their lives as drunken elephants crashed through building after building, consuming all the pastries and cakes they could get their trunks on. This rampage only ended when, several days later, the elephants finally sobered up, but by then the entire district lay in ruins.

In the aftermath of these events, McGillycuddy was sacked, most of the elephants were recaptured and returned to Africa, and a new law was hurriedly passed, which is still in effect to this day, making it illegal to provide alcoholic beverages to elephants in Glasgow.

This plaque was erected by the
Glasgow Information and Kultural Identity Taskforce (GlaIKIT).
www.glaikit.scot

Charter a Society Boat

The Canal Society has a fleet of three boats available for charter. Each boat comes fully crewed. Our boats are an ideal way to enjoy a family celebration or enjoy a cruise for your organisation. Each boat has a galley to organise your own catering.







VOYAGER

Up to 45 passengers or maybe 40 if you are catering. Hourly rate of £150 first hour.

GIPSY PRINCESS

up to 25 passengers or maybe 20 if you are catering. Hourly rate of £120 for first hour.

MARYHILL

up to 6 passengers. Each charter is considered on its merits and the lowest figure would be £90.

Charges are reduced for second and subsequent hours at progressively reducing rates and a full day charter may enjoy a discount. Charities, youth groups and other eligible organisations may be considered for a reduction on the final figure calculated.

The boats are generally based at the Stables Restaurant, Kirkintilloch G66 1RH. Cruises can also start at Southbank Marina in Kirkintilloch, Spiers Wharf in Glasgow and Auchinstarry Basin, Kilsyth, by special arrangement. One way trips are also sometimes available to Glasgow, Auchinstarry and the Falkirk Wheel, and are advertised on our website.

Telephone bookings to Robert Irvine 01236 735533
Further information www.forthandclyde.org.uk

FEATURES

Society at Work

William Boyle continues our new Society at Work series

One man's view of training

My first contact with the Forth and Clyde Society was through an old friend who asked what I was doing with myself after retirement in 2020. Yes, you John Martin! He explained a bit about the goings on and asked, "would you be interested in coming on a Wednesday night? It's not for everyone but why not give it a try?" and I have never looked back; every day is a learning day and training nights are what it is all about.

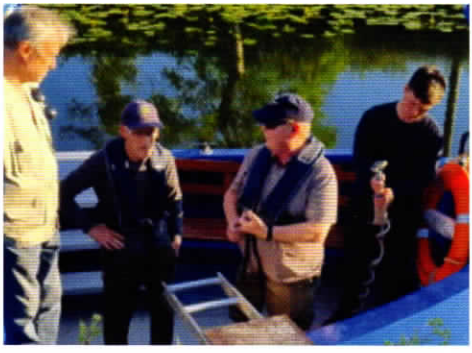
My first night was a bit of a mixed bag. Getting the names of people and forgetting who they were. A wee trip to Cadder Bridge, and a shot at steering Gypsy. The less said the better...

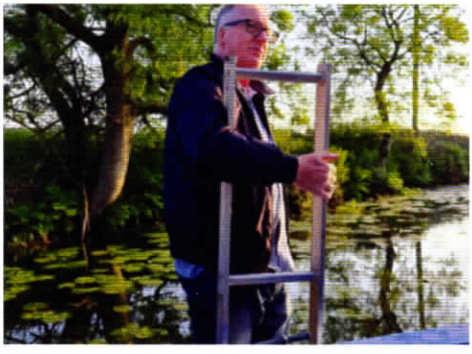
Wednesdays are when the crew meet, and training takes priority on these nights. The training is great, and it's varied enough to suit the different experience of the people involved. Training includes getting to know the internals and working of the engines, generators, bilge systems, toilet systems, and public address system and of course what most come for - sailing and the steering of the barges.

We have some of these training nights on the barge just talking through the policies and procedures that are the backbone of keeping everybody safe, and making sure the boats keep in tip top condition. Everything anyone needs to know is covered in these manuals written separately for Voyager and Gypsy princess.

So how does a training night go?

First, we have to know about dressing the barge, i.e., the placement of the safety equipment, life belts and add-ons like the throwing lines and the lights attached to the life belts; and we put out the firefighting equipment. There is quite a bit involved but





taken a bit at a time, it all comes together. Then we learn the rope procedures on how to tie up and let go prior to and on completion of sailing so that everyone follows the same plan - it's very important so that everyone remains safe - and it takes a wee bit of getting used to. Training is excellent on the nice dry sunny nights so we have to make the most of them when we can.

A recent training night on Gypsy princess

The plan was to carry out fire on board, man overboard and a medical emergency.

After leaving the berth at The Stables, turning the barge, and heading west towards

Hungryside Bridge, the Boatmaster informs the crew we have a fire in the galley area. Immediate action was taken to steer the barge to the side. Crew members managed to turn the electrical isolator switch and shut off the power in the area. Light smoke was noted coming from the electrical plug on the kettle, which was immediately covered with the fire blanket.

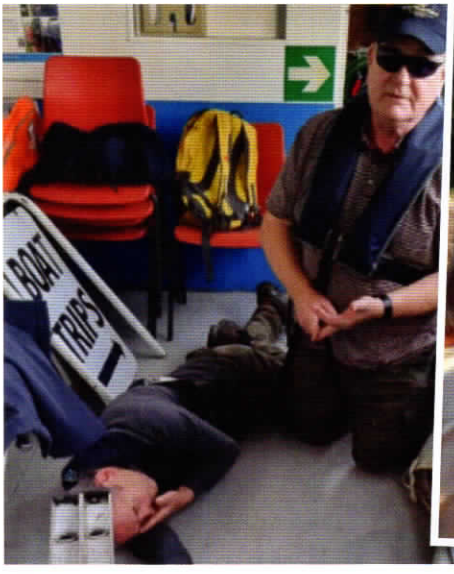
The grappling hook was used to get the bow safely pulled into the side. The safety gangway was used so a crew member could safely get to the towpath and make use of the emergency securing pins, which are hammered in the shore side and tie the boat securely before securing a second line aft.

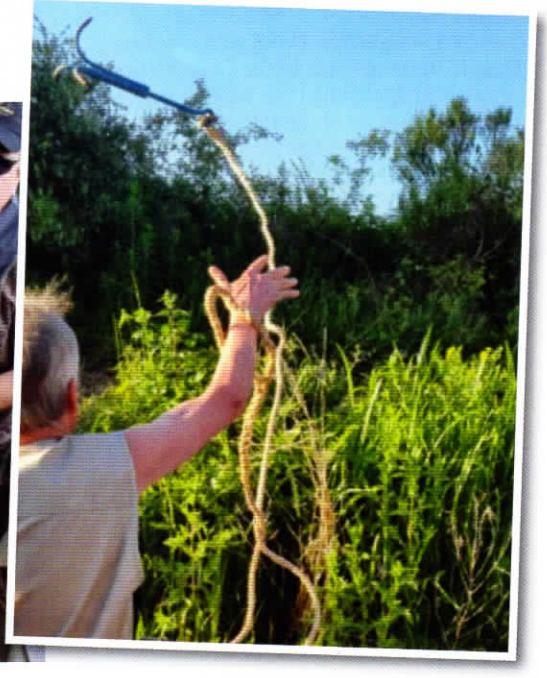
A discussion was held between the crew and the boat master to ascertain how well we had done, and to work out what we could have done differently.

We carried on, and practiced doing a man overboard procedure, using a lifebelt as the dummy and this was also carried out in a safe and competent manner.

The last part of the exercise was to assess our reactions to a medical emergency with one crew member having a suspected heart attack. I have got to admit it was all good light-hearted fun, but it was taken seriously, and I am glad we have crew members with a likeminded attitude to safety.

The most important thing I have learned, is we are all volunteers and here to help each other. I look forward to spending time on the canal with the crew. Thanks Scott, Jim, Tony, Paula, Liam and Chris.





FEATURES

Society at Work

Jim Miller continues our new series with another look at essential maintenance

Replenishment of Fresh Water and Pump Out of Sewage (Black Water)

Every so often there is a requirement to refill the Fresh Water (FW) tanks on all of our vessels and to empty the Sewage Water (BW) tanks to allow the vessels to operate. While we use the term FW, this is not potable water but is used for washing and flushing the toilet. For making tea and coffee there are a number of potable water receptacle on all vessels that are to be filled prior to leaving the mooring.

Voyager is fitted with both a FW tank contents gauge and a BW contents gauge. Note that as the FW gauge drops the BW contents rise.

Gipsy Princess is fitted with a "see through" FW tank under the sink in the Galley however as there is no BW gauge it is wise to pump out the BW as the level of the FW falls.

Maryhill's FW tanks are located under the bench seat in the main cabin and with the seats removed to observe the level in the tanks to ensure they are not over filled as any excess water will enter the bilge and requires to be removed upon it reaching the engine compartment. Note it is a common bilge from the bow to the aft engine room bulkhead. There are two Black Water outlet points on Maryhill both of which are outside the wheelhouse door, only one of which is connected to the tank.

While the tank arrangements differ on the vessels the method of maintaining the correct levels are almost identical i.e. fill one tank and empty the other – sounds simple but great care must be taken to ensure safe operation.

On all vessels the filling of the FW tank is to be conducted first so that there is no risk of



cross contamination that could occur if both tasks were conducted in tandem. Another reason for filling first is that it is being done with clean hands!

All boats have their own FW hose on board and this hose has NOT to be used for any other function for hygiene reasons.

Take FW hose to shore and attach to tap fitted on jetty, open deck piece taking care to place safely to one side. Insert hose into tank opening, turn water tap on and fill tank. On Gipsy Princess keep an eye on the water level within Galley tank while on Voyager watch the tank contents gauge. Once tanks are full remove hose and return to stowage on board relevant vessel.

As a society we have our own facilities for BW removal thus making us independent of Scottish Canals for this function. The pump out locker is located adjacent to the jetty situated on The Stables side of the canal and

is accessed by a padlocked door on the wall next to the tow path. Each boat has a key to this padlock kept on board to avoid any delays in operation. The way that the system works is that the boats tank has been fitted with an internal pipe so that the suction is taken from bottom of tank thus allowing tank to be emptied.

Within this locker are a petrol driven pump and the necessary hoses for BW removal and there is also a FW stand pipe for use in the case that taps on the jetty be non-functional.

Attached to the pump are an inlet and an outlet pipe. The inlet pipe has a coupler and to this we fit the extension pipe which has a suction end for attaching to the boat. The outlet pipe is fed directly into the main sewer.

Once the inlet pipe has been fitted with the extension the suction end is to be placed into canal prior to attaching to boat. Within the locker there is also a folding board that is placed over the deployed pipe to allow cyclists etc. to safely cross over the obstruction (pipe) that we have created.

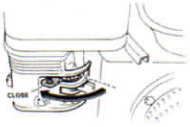
It is now time to open the waste tank taking care not to drop the deck plug.

The next step is to start the engine and this process is as follows:

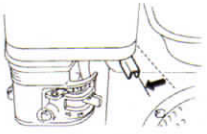
1. Turn the fuel valve to the ON position.



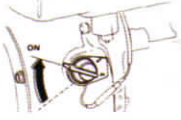
2. Move the 'choke lever to the CLOSE position. NOTE: Do not use the choke if the engine is warm or the air temperature is high. As engine warms, slowly open choke to allow clean running.



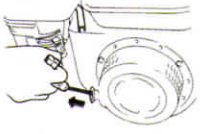
3. Move the throttle lever slightly to the left.



4. Switch the ignition to the 'ON' position (red switch)



5. Pull the starter grip lightly until resistance is felt, then pull briskly. CAUTION: Do not allow the starter grip to snap back against the engine. Return it gently to prevent damage to the starter.



Once engine has started and is pumping canal water remove suction end from canal and place tightly into waste tank deck piece – sewage will begin to flow.

When tank has been emptied, return the suction to the canal to flush pipe out prior to de-coupling and stowing back into locker.

FEATURES

Opening of the Canal to Hillhead, Kirkintilloch

Don Martin celebrates our canal's 250th Anniversary



Hillhead, Kirkintilloch.

RELIABLE SERIES.

WE are now able to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of trading on the Forth & Clyde Canal. As far as can reasonably be established, cargo boats began to operate from the Forth to Kirkintilloch in August or September 1773, enabled by the availability of a supply of canal water from Townhead Reservoir (near Kilsyth) by that date. On 2 August the canal committee remitted Sir James Dunbar to supervise the preparation of the canal for opening. On 8 October they confirmed that the Canal was navigable from the eastern Sea Lock to Kirkintilloch, for the accommodation of traders. John McLeish had by then been appointed to supervise the Sea Lock and Hugh McLellan had been appointed superintendent at Kirkintilloch.

It was recognised at the time that the Canal would shortly be continued to Stockingfield and then by a branch canal to Glasgow, so the status of the port at Hillhead (Kirkintilloch) as the western terminus of the Canal would quickly diminish. In the event, however, it remained as a local port for the Kirkintilloch/Campsie area. In due course central Kirkintilloch became a shipbuilding centre, while the western part of the town was developed as an interchange between the Canal and the significant early Monkland & Kirkintilloch Railway (opened 1826), but Hillhead remained as the main place for the loading and unloading of canal boats, with a notable trade in coal.

It also became a centre where cargo boats tied up at the week-end, for many of them had crews based in Kirkintilloch. These crews

spent most of their week afloat, but it was obligatory to return home for the Sabbath, so on Sundays Port Hillhead was packed with boats (whether horse-drawn scows or puffers), from bank to bank. The working week began at the end of the Sabbath on the stroke of 12 midnight, when boats began to struggle against each other to get underway as early as possible on Monday mornings.

Their working week might include voyages to Grangemouth and trips from there to Glasgow with cargoes of timber or pig iron, not ending until their return to Port Hillhead on the Saturday.

The canal boatmen's public house at Hillhead was the Waterloo Inn, situated very close to Hillhead Bridge. A highly-regarded member of Kirkintilloch & District Society of Antiquaries, Isaac Black who died in 1977 at the age of 91, worked in the Waterloo Inn from 1908 until 1913. While there he absorbed the traditions of the pub and found out about its history, which he later passed on to fellow-members of the Antiquaries.

During the late Victorian period it was owned by Archie Stewart, who was related to the boat-owning Hay family. His daughter Susan (Mrs Tennant) ran a grocer's shop adjacent to the pub, where she supplied provisions for the boatmen as an advance on their wages, deducting an appropriate sum from the latter at the end of each week. This was facilitated by the fact that the Hay boatmen were paid by the firm in Susan's shop every Saturday. To avoid prosecution under the truck acts a notice was displayed in the shop to advise boatmen that the value of their provisions would be docked from their next wage payment.

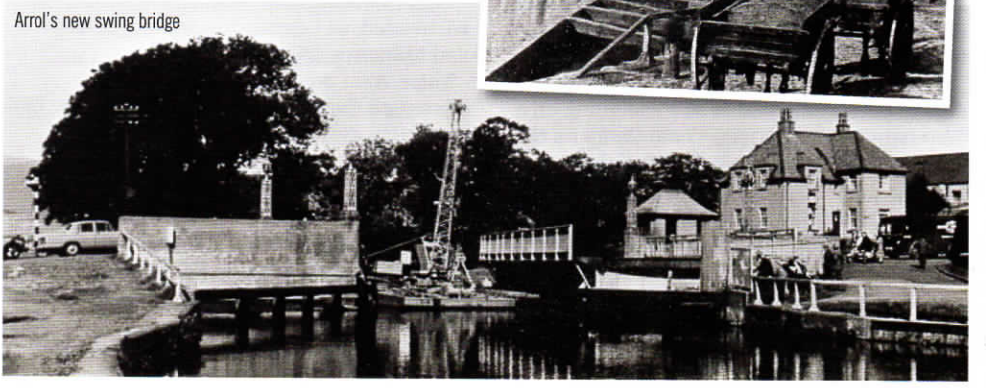
A notable feature at Hillhead is the swing bridge which was built and installed in 1938 by Sir William Arrol & Co of Glasgow. It has ironwork by the Lion Foundry of Kirkintilloch, located within sight of the bridge. The lamp standards are very similar to those at Lambeth Bridge in London, which were also made in Kirkintilloch by the Lion.

The writer of this article was careful to photograph this bridge in an 'open to the canal' position, during the early 1960s, believing that unless the bridge was photographed in this position before the Canal closed at the end of 1962, the chance would be gone forever. He was nevertheless delighted when the bridge was reopened for canal traffic at the start of the present century. The Arrol bridge at Hillhead has clearly stood the test of time.

Below: Bascule bridge and coal wagons



Arrol's new swing bridge



FEATURES

CAMPAIGNING MEMORIES

Jim McFarlane looks back 30 years to our Temple Gates project in 1993 and the detailed preparations needed



Volunteers cleaning out Lock 27

IS it really 30 years ago that I stood in a lock up to my knees in mud, in the Forth and Clyde Canal? In the early 1990's, Donald McKinnon (a member of the F&C Canal Society) suggested that we help SIWA in the clearance of Lock 26 & 27. I believe plenty is available to read in the archives on this.

It took 18 months of talks and planning to organise. I suggested that as I was going on a Waterway Recover Group Canal Camp on the Montgomery Canal., I would ask if they would be interested in getting involved.

They jumped at the thought, their only concern was getting their vans over the border.

I jokingly said, we could supply free breakdown cover. Due to their enthusiasm, I volunteered to look for the overnight accommodation, as I knew the minimum requirements, having been on a few camps before. We once slept in a hall where we had to bring our own floorboards!

There were no halls in Glasgow for the dates we needed, so I decided to contact Bearsden and Milngavie DC.

There were problems, but after much discussion the outcome was a success, the hall was made available for the weekend!

For the uninitiated, a Lock Clearance is exactly that – a clearance of EVERYTHING in the lock chamber, including mud and silt. It is removed by loading all the debris into 45-gallon drums with the top cut off and three holes in the sides at the top of the drum for big hooks from the winch.

The winch raises the drums to the top of the

lock chamber, where they are emptied and lowered down again to be refilled.

In discussions with the canal manager, I was informed that a crane would be onsite for the whole duration of the clearance. This was a real bonus and I started thinking about skips.

It occurred to me that Glasgow DC had skips that were attached to the Cleansing Dept (bin men). I made contact and met with them in the City Chambers over tea and biscuits. The meeting went well and shortly after, we received the go ahead to use their skips.

On my next canal camp I updated WRG of our progress and told them I looked forward to seeing them in June 1993, and the rest as they say, is history.

Fifty Tonnes of Rubbish

A massive effort by our Society, volunteers from the Waterways Recovery Group, Edinburgh Canal Society, and British Waterways resulted in over fifty tonnes of rubbish being removed from Lock 27 over the weekend. As well as lots of mud and general refuse, this included a dumped Cortina (towed away overnight by persons unknown) and thousands of glasses from the adjacent Tavern. Bankside trees were removed to allow later fitting of lock gates. See Canal News No 61, July 1993 for details.On the following 29th August our Canal Festival attracted thousands of locals, with over 500 taking to the water on the Nolly Boat and Cadder Princess. At a later date British Waterways fitted new lock gates.

The enthusiastic clean up by volunteers, popular canal festival, and many positive discussions with all the various authorities were vital steppingstones to the creation of the Millennium Link and the reopening of our canals.



Jim wearing his Temple Gates sweatshirt this year

FEATURES

A cracking day out at Claypits

Morna Gourlay pays a visit to Glasgow's newest Nature Reserve beside the canal at Hamiltonhill and a trip back into history



A SUMMER'S day in July 1938... a fishing boat makes its way along the canal, pulled by a horse with cheery rider, and a lady poses with her keen-looking collie. She's wearing a jacket and skirt, leather gloves, a beret tilted at a jaunty angle, and a pair of rather smart shoes, surely somewhat impractical for a walk along the Forth & Clyde at Claypits. Back then the area resembled a lunar landscape of barren earth, and the towpath must have been incredibly muddy underfoot.

The canal at Claypits has undergone a massive transformation in the past few years, and when these old photos were discovered in the Society's archive, I thought it would be interesting to work out exactly where the lady and dog were posing for that picture, and contrast 'then' with 'now'. My daughter Flora, a dab hand with the camera, agreed to an urban expedition, and accompanied by Bertie the Trusty Terrier, we set off.

The amazing amount of vegetation that has sprung up over the decades, plus the recent planting of trees, shrubs and grasses, made it instantly obvious that our mission was going to be difficult. I had confidently expected that the 1938 electricity pylon in the old photo would act as a reference point, but I'm pretty sure it has changed location (and design).

The only thing that did seem to tally with the old photo was a black 'doocot' on the extreme left of the picture, which is still standing today, and can actually be seen in an extraordinary aerial photo featured on one of the excellent Claypits legend boards, showing just how bleak the area once was.

So, using the doocot as reference, plus the houses high up on the hill on Ellesmere Street - part of the 1930s Hamiltonhill housing scheme and clearly seen in the old photo – we came to the decision that our smartly-dressed dogwalker had posed for the camera very near the new Garscube Bridge, one of Claypits' focal points. What would she have made of the changes since that summer stroll 85 years ago.



Claypits, of course, was aptly named – site of a valuable deposit of puddle clay, which was dug out and used as an impervious lining for the canal, a very low-tech but effective way of waterproofing, still in use today. It's astonishing that this area remained a wasteland in the years between canal closure in 1963 and the 2001 reopening, but the inspired decision to turn the area into a nature reserve in the middle of Glasgow has paid off.

Officially opened in July 2021, the £8.85m project has created a unique green space within a 10-minute walk of thousands of households. A perfect habitat for urban wildlife, it gives scope for health, leisure and learning opportunities, and has provided more moorings for those who fancy living on water. It creates a vital 'blue' space - recent research has revealed that people living near water enjoy better mental health and wellbeing.

Hamiltonhill, however, has not fared so well. Although much of Ellesmere Street has survived, most of the houses and several schools have been demolished over recent years, but 600 new homes are about to be built on the site and a splendid new playpark has already opened. And down below, the Claypits Nature Reserve provides a fantastic amenity, with paths to wander and panoramic city views to enjoy.

Finally, good news! Old Basin House, beside the Scottish Canal offices on Applecross Street, has recently been restored and is now home to Gathering Ground, a community space and café. Tasty toasties, good coffee and a loo too.

Thanks Morna. Morna (then Chambers) was Canal News' first ever Editor back in early 1980.



Morna and Bertie by the Claypits this summer, thanks Flora for the photo

FEATURES

Enjoy a fungal foray along the Forth & Clyde canal

Photos by Kilsyth photographer and fun guy Malcolm Gillies



AUTUMN is the season for fungal forays. Many different species can be admired along the canal and local woodlands and fields.

Most beautiful is the bright red and white Fly Agaric, often the seat of a pixie in children's books, but definitely in the "look but don't touch" category.

Most useful is the field mushroom, a real delicacy, and related to the mushrooms found in the local supermarket.

Experts can enjoy the culinary delights of chanterelles, ceps and ink caps. Non experts leave well alone. Fungi are not plants. Indeed, they seem to be genetically somewhere between plants and animals.

They mostly feed on dead plants and animals, cleaning up rotting matter and returning vital nutrients to the soil. Less welcome are the ones living in living trees, and sometimes us.

The fungi we see are the fruiting bodies. Each one can contain millions of spores, each one of which can start off a new fungus.

Fine threads called hyphae emerge from the spore, if it gets lucky, then branch and intertwine and often spread widely. The main





part of the fungus is this mass of hidden hyphae, not the distinctive fruiting bodies that we see.

The hyphae of some species live on the roots of trees, giving the trees soil nutrients in return for sugar. There are claims that the hyphae can connect trees underground, called the "wood wide web".

We hope Malcolm's pictures will get you out along the canal this Autumn, enjoying the sights of all the fungi in their wonder and splendour.







SPLASHBACK From The Canal News Archives

Fifty Years Ago

One of our predecessors 'Strathkelvin Canal Park News' reported on a major coarse fishing championship at Kelvinhead with 500 competitors, the Scottish Canoe Association's annual sprint competition held on the Dullatur stretch, and Edinburgh University rowing regatta at Wyndford. Local canal group SCAPA produced a report proposing a Canal Park, concerns over the new M80 proposed route, plus public meetings and a new picnic area. Pioneering days, yours truly was editor.

Forty Years Ago

'Ferry Queen Success' was our front-page headline celebrating our first fully operational season with over two thousand passengers carried.

Thirty Years Ago

The Imperial Canal of China, Monkland Canal and Llangollen Canal all featured. Who says we are parochial?

Twenty Years Ago

Our campaign against routing the M80 over the canal at Auchinstarry featured, along with reports on British Waterways Scottish Annual Meeting and the Scottish Executives new policy document 'Scottish Canals = an asset for the future'.

Ten Years Ago

We reported on construction of the Helix Project and The Kelpies. British Rowing Tour, Doors Open Days on the canal, cruises including Wings on the Water, and our upcoming AGM.

From the Photo Archives:
University of Edinburgh Ladies Rowing Team boarding in 1975 at Lock 20, Wyndford.



Toad tadpole shoal spotted in canal at Auchinstarry

Morna Gourlay reports on a curious amphibious phenomemon



THE CANAL at Auchinstarry is a favourite destination for keen Glasgow walker Susan Readman, who was lucky enough to witness a rare amphibious phenomenon there in June.

"I spotted – impossible to miss – thousands upon thousands of tadpoles moving eastwards along the canal," says Susan.

"My first sighting was of a several-metres-long slick of black, almost in the middle of the canal. From then on, as I headed west, I saw several of these 'slicks', long, short, thick, thin, as well as more straggly lines and larger clusters, sometimes nearer the bank."

Never having seen anything like it before, Susan contacted Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, where their Communications Officer Shane Gausden had the explanation – toad tadpoles shoaling.

This normal behaviour is not often seen because we don't have so many strong toad populations, according to Shane, so it's a rare but special sight!

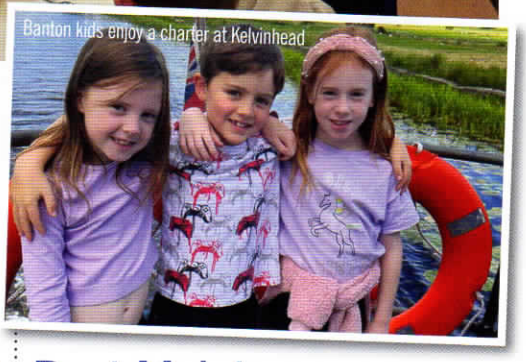
ARC encourages anyone who spots reptiles and amphibians in and around the canal to report sightings to their record pool at www.recordpool.org.uk where information gathered helps their conservation work and aids ecological research.

Volunteers at nearby Banton carried over 800 toads, frogs and newts across a busy road to the local mill pond this spring.

SOCIETY NEWS



Tea and chat with LUCS



Banton kids enjoy a charter at Kelvinhead

Crew Training

We have had a full crew training programme running from Easter. See William Boyle's article on page 10 for a good flavour.

Charters

A full charter season has seen our boats cruising from Kirkintilloch and Auchinstarry and into Glasgow. See News in Brief and come along to the AGM for a full report. Also very popular public fish & chip and pizza & pasta cruises.

Members Cruises

Our monthly members cruises, often with pizza & pasta, were joined by two special events in June, a cruise to view the new pedestrian bridges in Glasgow and our annual BBQ at our moorings opposite The Stables.

Boat Maintenance

This is absolutely continuous and, along with crewing, takes up an enormous amount of our volunteers time. Please help if you can. See Jim Miller's article on page 10 for a flavour.

Slipway

Our slipway has been fully booked throughout the season with many private boats hauled out for maintenance and inspections, and

is already fully booked for 2024, and with a waiting list. All this is in addition to the slipping of our own fleet for maintenance and MCA inspections for our two passenger boats, Voyager and Gipsy Princess.

Annual General Meeting

The 44th AGM of the Canal Society will be held at 1pm on Saturday 18th November at our offices in Southbank Marina, Kirkintilloch. As usual there will be full reports and the election of new office bearers and committee. We hope to follow on with a member's cruise at 2pm.

Farewell to...

All our main office bearers have retired or resigned during the course of the year or intend to do so at the AGM. So, we thank: -
Stewart Procter, Chair, and crew organiser.
Christine Hammell, Secretary and Company Secretary.
Robert (Riki) Irvine, Treasurer and Membership Secretary.
Robert (Bob) Kohn, MCA Liaison.
Thomas (Tommy) Lawton, Canal Talks.
Paul Carter, Canal News Editor.
All have put in many years of hard work for our Society. We wish them all the best for the future. The retiral of Tommy & Paul breaks the final personal link with the founding committee back in 1980.

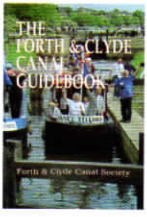
Events

Thursday 26th October – Evening talk by David Brown on 'Brown's Life at Sea'. FCCS offices, Southbank Marina, Kirkintilloch. 7:30pm.
Saturday 18th November – AGM FCCS offices, Southbank Marina, Kirkintilloch 1:00pm; cruise at 2:00pm
Weekend 25th-26th November – Kirkintilloch Christmas Festival Voyager Floating Grotto.
Tuesday 2nd January 2024 – New Year Gathering
FCCS offices, Southbank Marina, Kirkintilloch. 12 noon. Possible cruise if conditions permit.
Saturday 10th February 2024 – Members' Lunch – advance notice.

Working with LUCS

Our Society has been working together with the Linlithgow Union Canal Society on a number of issues this year. LUCS were also kind enough to invite us over to join them for a cruise on the Union Canal and tea in their offices.

Canal Guidebook



Copies of the Millennium Edition of the Forth and Clyde Guidebook are still on sale at the William Patrick Library in Kirkintilloch. The guidebook was prepared by our Society and published by EDC in 2001. Earlier editions were published in 1985 and 1991. New canal developments such as the marinas at Kirkintilloch and Auchinstarry, the Port Dundas junction, The Kelpies, and the new canal section and sea lock at Grangemouth are obviously not included. The Guidebook still however gives lots of valuable background information and is a bargain at just £2.50.

Michael Sweeney

We are sad to report the death of Michael Sweeney at the age of 72. Our thoughts are with Cathie and her family. Michael was a keen boater who has owned a number of boats in Loch Lomond and on the Forth & Clyde Canal. He joined FCCS six years ago along with his wife Cathie, being an active member helping with sailing, crewing and boat maintenance. He passed away at Strathcarron Hospice on the 8th September and will be sadly missed.

ABOUT US

Forth & Clyde Canal Society Officers

It's all change for our officers.

The AGM on 18th November will elect new officers for the year ahead.

So ... WATCH THIS SPACE!

Next Canal News copy date December 30th 2023.

Enjoy our Canal Informatrix

Keep in touch with us in a variety of ways:-

WEB SITE Visit our website www.forthandclyde.org.uk for latest news, events, and background information. Contact our webmaster if you wish to help, at our email address.

E-MAIL ALERTS keep up with the latest events etc. Join our email circulation list by contacting our webmaster on secretary@forthandclyde.org.uk

make friends with us on **Facebook**

Join us on **Twitter**

JOIN US AND HELP SAVE THE CANAL

- Campaigning
- Boats
- Socials
- Walks
- Volunteering

Annual subs

Family £25
Ordinary Member £20
Student or Pensioner £12

Come and enjoy our many activities from boat crewing and maintenance to talks and walks.

KEEP UP TO DATE: for updates and information go to www.forthandclyde.org.uk, make friends with us on Facebook, join us on Twitter and look out for email alerts.

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