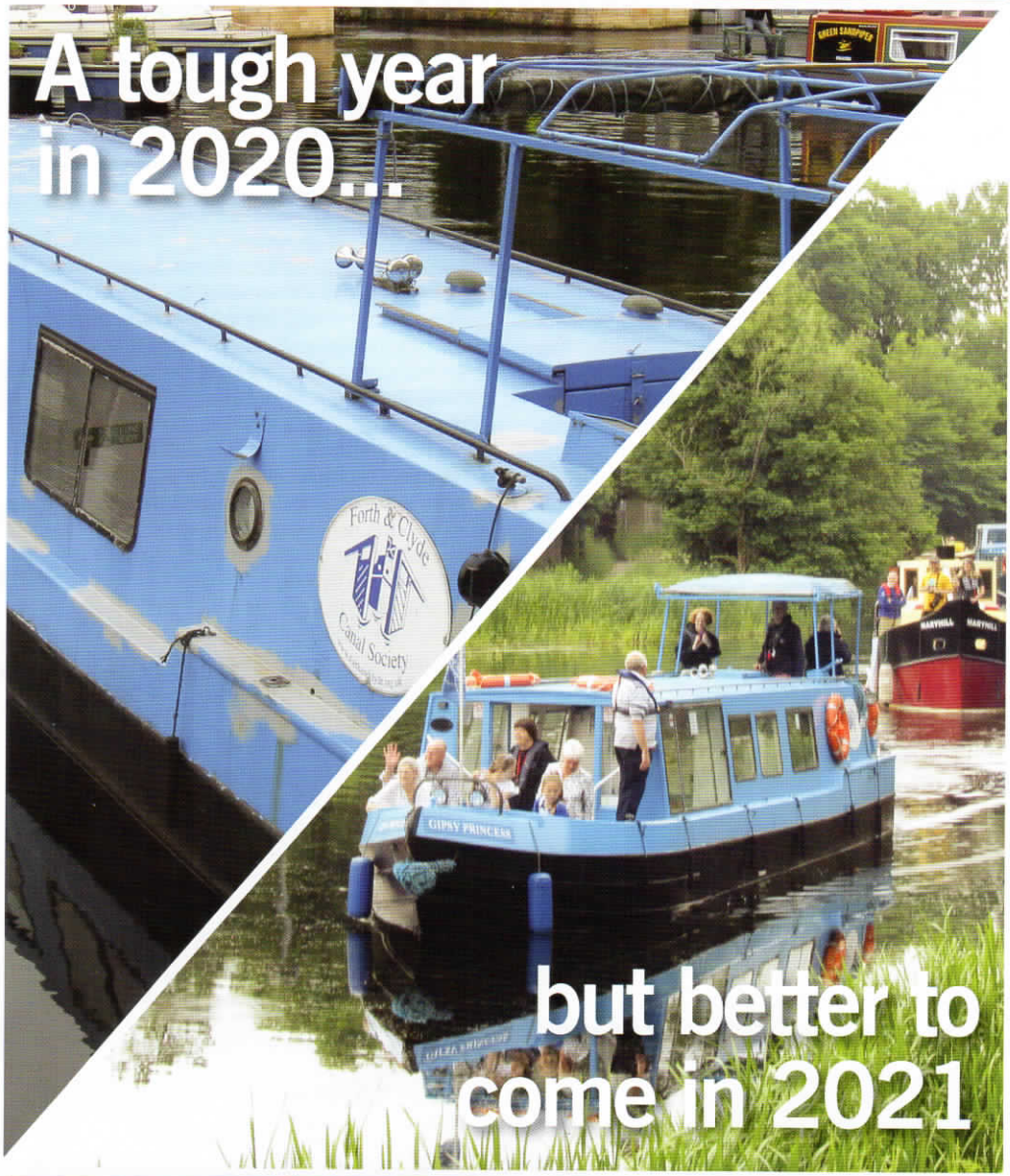
CANAL NEWS

Spring 2021 £1.50 FREE to Members ISSUE 174



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

EDITORIAL

Looking forward to a brighter future

WHAT a year! We managed just one charter in March last year before lockdown started. Thereafter a series of lockdowns put paid to what would have been a very busy charter season.

Although we were left high and dry, the public discovered the vital breathing space offered by the towpaths and came out in their droves. Walkers, cyclists, kids, pushchairs, dogs, anglers, joggers, all joined the busy throng, not always amicably. But this does demonstrate the vital role of the canals in public recreation in Scotland.

Some construction projects managed to keep going, see News on page 4 for a flavour. Kimberley Manderson of Scottish Canals tells us on page 6 how they have been coping with Covid, including the major Union Canal breach. Clem Clements interviews Technical Manager Alasdair Hamilton on construction of the iconic Stockingfield Junction canal bridge on page 8.

Family History is rapidly growing in popularity and we have had several enquiries, which give a fascinating glimpse of working lives on the canal during its industrial heyday, page 15. The Underground Wonderland of the Union Canal tunnel in Falkirk is revealed for all to see on page 10.

Shorter articles include winter wildlife visitors from the arctic, members coming together to relocate Craft Daft, Canal News through the decades in Splashback, how to use our Facebook page, and a fond farewell to canal stalwart Ronnie Rusack MBE.

Covid postponed our AGM in November, and we still do not know when we will be able to get together again for meeting and cruises. To keep us up to date the chair's and treasurer's 'AGM' reports are given on pages 19 to 23.

Meanwhile the canal continues this year to prove its worth by providing vital outdoor relief to our citizens during continued restrictions in Winter/Spring 2021.

We hope that we will soon be able to give the public added cheer by getting our boats back out on to the water.

We hope this issue will help lift the spirits. There is life after lockdown. Please forgive all the glitches you find, producing Canal News whilst avoiding face to face working is not easy. We very much welcome input from members, short news items or longer articles, and as many pictures to choose from as possible. A two-page article with pictures has a maximum of 600 words. Shorter items as brief as possible please. This is after all a MINI magazine, and we try to pack in as much as possible.



NEWS IN BRIEF


Stockingfield Bridge

Cruising Ready

The Canal Society fleet needs continued work to keep it cruising ready, including mechanical maintenance, cleaning, and painting. Chair Stewart Procter has prepared a comprehensive schedule of works. If you are on the crews email list please respond to Stewart's calls for assistance.

If not, please get yourself on the list, see back page. Covid prevented our AGM being held but financial and chair's reports are given on pages 19 to 23.

Stockingfield Bridge

Work is now underway to construct a new three-way canal bridge at Stockingfield in North Glasgow. The iconic active travel bridge will connect the communities of Maryhill, Gilshochhill and Ruchill. It will also complete the missing link in National Cycle Route 754. Towpath users have for the last two centuries had to descend from the towpath, go through an underpass shared with road traffic and back up again, to get past Stockingfield Junction. Soon they will be crossing a unique sweeping bridge with viewing platform.

Funding is from Sustrans and Glasgow City Vacant and Derelict Land Fund.

The canal itself will reopen to boat traffic on March 15 this year, and the bridge will open Summer 2022. Meanwhile parts of the main line and Glasgow branch towpaths are closed, look out for diversions.

For an interview with Scottish Canals; Alasdair Hamilton by Clem Clements see page 8 in this issue.

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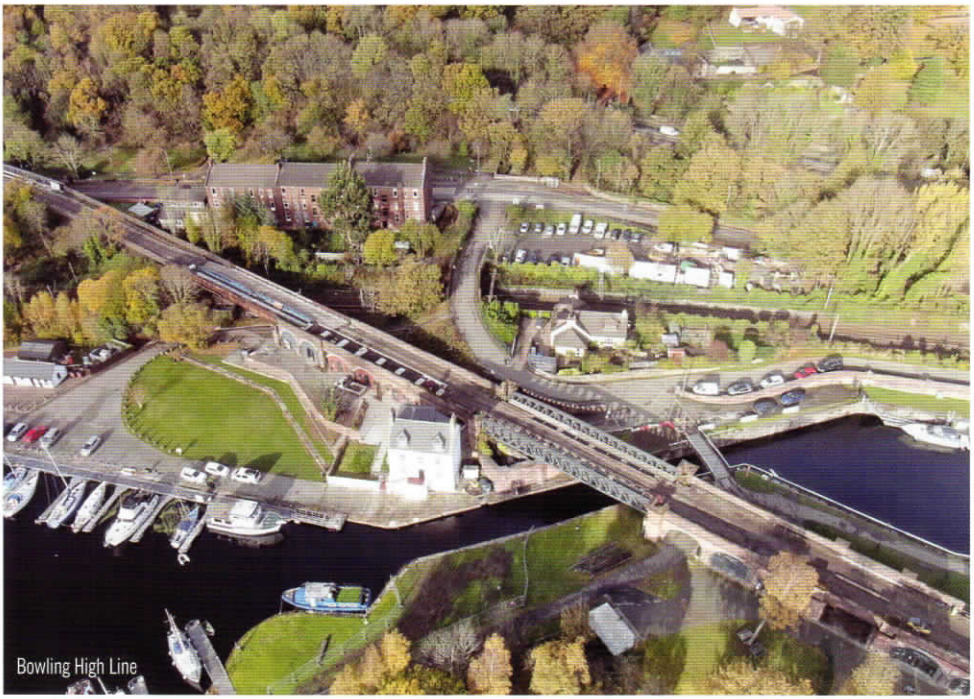

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NEWS IN BRIEF


Bowling High Line

Garscube Bridge

The new Garscube electronic footbridge over the Glasgow Branch was completed last year. The new bridge and link were constructed for Scottish Canals by Mackenzie Construction.

The communities of Panmure Gate and Woodside are now connected with each other and with the canal towpath. This is part of the £6 million Claypit's project which is providing a new wildlife site, due to open this year, and all part of the wider regeneration of North Glasgow.

£20 million investment

The Scottish Government has provided nearly £20 million for civil engineering works by Scottish Canals this winter. The projects are all part of Scottish Canals' Asset Management Strategy 2018 – 2030. Works include: -

Caledonian, replace gates at Gairloch, Lock 17. Crinan, upgrade locks 1 to 4 and bridge works. Union, reinstate Muiravonside breach.

Forth and Clyde, Lowland Gates Survey, Bonnybridge embankment.

Bowling High Line

Bowling's High Line linear park, now called the Bowline, came a step closer with delivery of a large new access ramp built by Coatbridge Engineering. The ramp will connect the towpath with the historic High Line Viaduct, which is being used as part of the Loch Lomond cycleway, Cycle Route 7, supported by Sustrans. The viaduct was built in 1896 to carry the Caledonian and Dunbartonshire railway over the canal. Abandoned in 1960, work started in 2017 with repairs to the viaduct and swing bridge, as part of the Bowling Basin initiative.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Scottish Waterways for all

Sign up to their website at www.swfa.co.uk and send short pieces for their on-line newsletter to stuart.h.rennie@blueyonder.co.uk.

Boaters Newsletter

From Scottish Canals, covers Covid, stoppage programme, Union Canal resilience works, services, towpaths, "canal careful", fuel and selling your boat. Moorings@scottishcanals.co.uk.

New canal centre plan for Twechar

Twechar's new £1.6 million Canal Centre has received big backing from East Dunbartonshire Council. Construction may begin this Autumn.

The new centre will be based at the slipway east of Twechar Bridge and will offer a range of activities, like kayaking, cycling, climbing, and walking. FCCS has offered guided heritage walks.

Magnet Fishing First

Well, do you know what magnet fishing is? Your editor thought it was a way of catching electric eels, but apparently not. A surge in popularity during lockdown has seen people 'fishing' with magnets all along the UK's canals. But not actually for fish. Scottish Canals have achieved a UK first with a pioneering agreement with official Magnet Fishing Scotland, partnered by Police Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland. The new Code of Conduct will govern where magnetic fishers operate, what to do with any ancient artifacts found, and how to dispose of recovered junk. There you are then, always something new in Canal News.



Magnet fishing

FEATURES

Kimberley Manderson from Scottish Canals reports on the latest developments on the canal network

Flowing through 2020

THERE'S no denying 2020 has been an unusual year for Scottish Canals. From winter maintenance to events, day trips and boat transits, Coronavirus halted everything in its tracks, prompting us to work towards a new normal for our canals.

Spring is usually a busy time for Scotland's waterways. At Scottish Canals, it means the completion of many winter maintenance projects whilst preparations get underway for the boating season ahead. However, the government-announced lockdown on 23rd March 2020 meant that some of this was put on hold, including the lock gate replacement works in Fort Augustus and the installation of the new Garscube Bridge on the Forth & Clyde Canal in North Glasgow.

Water control and maintenance have been crucial to keeping our canals flowing through lockdown. When many people were working from home, our essential workers were out on the network ensuring safe water levels and regularly inspecting the canals to minimise any public safety risks.

The importance of this work was highlighted in the early hours of 12th August 2020 when a significant storm and water from the upstream catchment caused the Union Canal to breach between Polmont and Muiravonside. Our emergency team immediately mobilised and worked with contractors to reduce the flow of water by installing stop planks and concrete dams, closing the towpath and introducing a diversion at this busy site. The following day our environment team, working with partners, rescued 11,000 fish, safely moving them to unaffected areas of the canal.

Thanks to £6.5 million of additional Scottish Government funding, we are now working to reinstate the canal and towpath by spring 2021.

As restrictions eased, maintenance teams began undertaking important vegetation management and weed control and our operational teams worked to reopen the canals in line with Scottish Government guidance. Our customers and staff learned to adjust to social distancing measures on the canal bank and at our destinations with floor markers, signage and towpath stencils encouraging people to distance and 'Be Safe. Be Smart. Be Kind'.



Crinan Canal Lock 2 dewatered ahead of gate replacement

Our canals have played a key part in keeping people outdoors and active, with public access to towpaths available throughout all phases of lockdown. This led to a huge increase in

towpath traffic with many more families, cyclists, runners and more out on the network.

By embracing online activity, we ensured Scotland's Canals kept flowing through 2020. Our biggest online success is the implementation of a new digital booking system for boaters.

Previously, boating customers were encouraged to phone or email ahead and collect a paper licence from the sea lock. This year, with a few short clicks, customers on the Caledonian and Crinan canals were able to select the destination and type of licence they required in advance. This reduced transactions at the sea lock, gave customers flexibility and helped reduce paper use, benefitting the environment.

We continue to support customers with online activity this winter, holding our annual customer forums virtually and we're keeping stakeholders engaged by moving public meetings for ongoing projects such as Stockingfield Bridge and Bowling Harbour online.

As we approach the end of the year, our 2020/21 canal improvement projects are now underway, including replacing the largest lock gates in Scotland at Gairlochy, whilst investing £3.7 million improving lock gates on the Crinan Canal. These are part of £19.95 million capital investment programme to upgrade and improve these incredible heritage assets in this financial year.

This year has been challenging for all of us but has shown how important Scotland's canals are to our health and wellbeing, tourism economy, wildlife and local communities.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our canal customers for visiting and enjoying our waterways in 2020 and wish you all the best for the New Year.



Aerial view of the Muiravonside breach

currently Scottish Canals biggest project and the most significant since the redevelopment of the F&C canal through to Helix Park in Falkirk. Given its size and complexity at £12.8 million the contract was awarded to Balfour Beatty.

The project is linked to other works that have been going on along the Glasgow branch of the canal; the new sliding bridge at the Claypits linking Hamiltonhill to Garscube Road, and the new bridge that is going over the M8 at Sighthill. Overall called the Pearl Necklace with Possil.

When I asked Alasdair about the most complex part of the project, he immediately replied the design of the bridge. The planners needed to get the right bridge to fit in with the landscape and the objective of the project, while also producing something that is a unique structure with high quality infrastructure that will have a lasting effect on people viewing it.

The canal here has been a local obstacle for two hundred years (see box) and Alasdair says, "The objective of the project can be summed up in one word, 'connectivity'". The whole idea is to reconnect the communities that have been divided by this watery obstacle for a couple of centuries and reunite the people of Maryhill and Ruchill for social benefit. "The junction has been seen as a barrier, and in the not-too-distant past as a gang boundary". It also fits in with the Scottish Governments Active Travel project encouraging people to use the canal pathways and the canal itself.

The project has been tabled for some time. Back in 2007 it was desired that an iconic structure be erected, and it was envisaged as the Bigman Bridge – a permanent three-way footbridge suspended from the outstretched arms of a 'Big Man' designed by sculptor Andy Scott, he of the Kelpies, however funding proved difficult.

The whole thing is due to be completed in 2022, despite lockdown issues, and early plans are being made for a celebration with the community, including boat users and to link with the Riverside Museum. Alasdair is keen that there will be a marking of the re-opening of the canal to water-borne craft of all shapes and sizes, as well as those 'land-lubbers' who will be more interested in the improvements to the canal towpaths.

We had to condense this down from a larger and very interesting article. Please give the editor your postal address for a full copy.

The canal was completed from Grangemouth to Stockingfield Basin in 1775. The subsequent construction of the Glasgow Branch to Port Dundas and the main line to Bowling left a three way divide and the towpath on the "wrong" side of the canal. At the end of the nineteenth century a passenger ferry operated here, and a floating bridge has also been used.



FEATURES

Union Canal, Falkirk

By Paul Carter, photos by Mike Browne



An underground wonderland

TAKE a stroll through the 630m long Union Canal tunnel near Falkirk High Station and enjoy an underground wonderland. The tunnel has improved lighting, but a good torch will help you appreciate the geological sights even more.

Many beautiful and intricately patterned flowstones coat the tunnel walls, around 200 paces or so in from the northwest portal. Delicate pencil stalactite's hang from the roof. These have all been formed by calcium rich groundwater percolating in, over the two hundred years since the tunnel was built.

Talking of groundwater, there are plenty of drips to dodge, plus a permanent gusher flowing into the canal from the tunnel roof near the northwest portal. Is this an old borehole, or an intentional drain?

Fairly near the southeast portal, the tunnel takes on almost cathedral like dimensions with a soaring vaulted roof in trough bedded sandstone, with light brown and ochre colours. Strong bare sandstone forms the tunnel walls and roof for much of the length, with interleaving softer siltstone layers.

However, over the years various supports

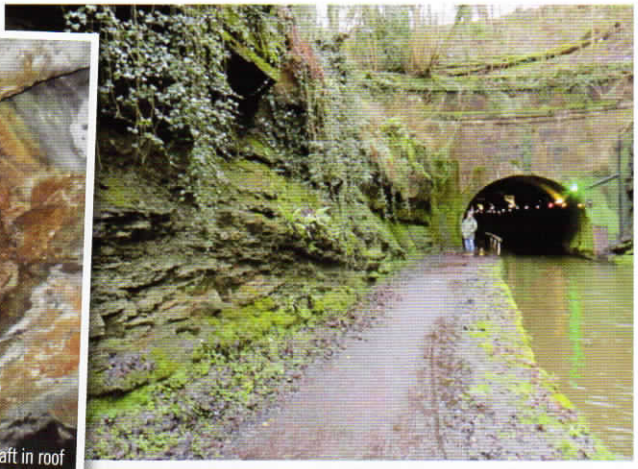
have been added, including a "new" looking sandstone masonry roof near the southeast portal, full arch in sandstone masonry about half way through, brick walling and another masonry arch plus masonry arches at both portals.

There are also three shaft entrances in the tunnel roof in the northern half of the tunnel. These are 1.5m to 2.0m in diameter, some blocked with iron girders and timbers. Were they construction shafts?

The tunnel has been used for sound and light shows, as well as its more practical use of getting boats under Prospect Hill. It was originally driven at the behest of the owner of Callander House, who did not want a dirty coal canal in his back yard. See the House Museum for a wonderful painting, two hundred years old black (literally) propaganda. Also see the impressively tall masonry bridge just east of the tunnel with "smiling and greetin" faces carved in the arch crowns. The greetin, or crying face, faces the tunnel, where the contractor lost money.



Shaft in roof

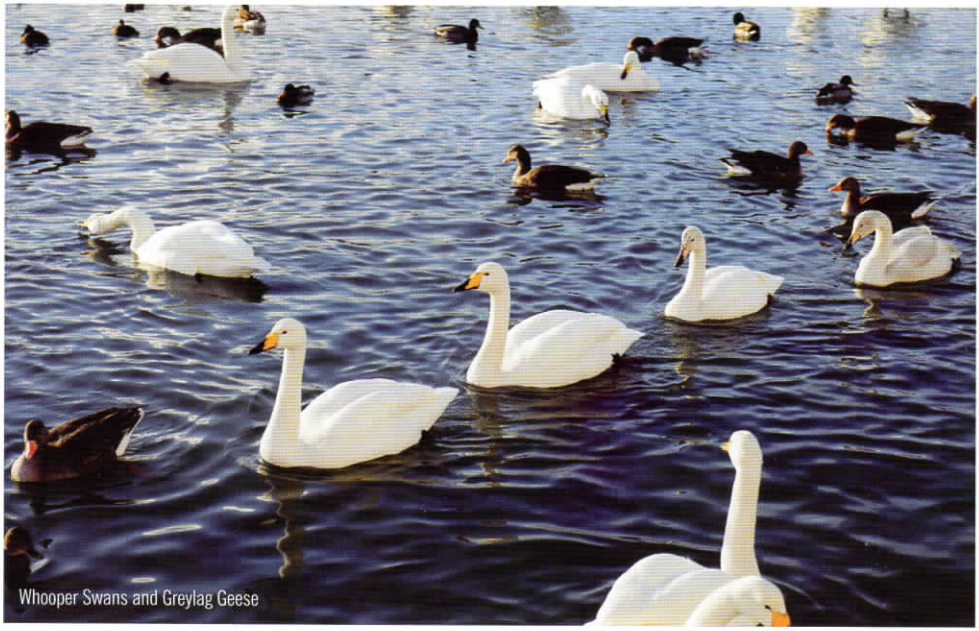








FEATURES



Whooper Swans and Greylag Geese

Now is the season to enjoy wonderful winter birdlife

WINTER is a hard time for wildlife, especially when the water freezes over, and the ground becomes frosted and covered in snow.

Most arctic birds get round the problem by flying south. Quite a few find our canal and surrounding lochs and ponds a welcome haven from the rigours of the Arctic winter. Greylags and pink footed geese flock here in their thousands from Greenland and Iceland, accompanied by families of elegant Whooper swans.

Ducks like teal and wigeon also flock down from Iceland, Scandinavia and Russia to join our resident mallards and tufties to feed along the canal and local lochs. Take a good look at any ducks, you could also spot goldeneye, goosanders and gadwall.

But ice is a complete game changer. When the canal and local lochs freeze over many birds have to try elsewhere, particularly our rivers and coasts. Kingfishers in particular have to migrate or die. Almost all of the Banton Loch cormorants disappeared in the cold freeze of January, but many herons hung on, managing to get small fry in some unfrozen shallows. Flocks of teal stayed put, they are used to the arctic and maybe wondered what all the fuss was about.

Resident birds like coots, moorhens, great crested grebes and dabchicks would prefer to stick around but they can be far travelled. Some of 'our' birds will have come from the arctic, so they can move to estuaries and coasts when our area gets completely iced

over. Even our mute swans have to move away sometimes, although they hate leaving their territories.

It is not just waterbirds that migrate here for the winter. Colourful winter thrushes, redwings from Iceland and field fares from Scandinavia, feast on the remains of our autumn hedgerow berries along the towpath and worms in the fields. Some winters they are joined by flocks of colourful waxwings from Scandinavia.

But Spring is just around the corner. Soon all the arctic birds will be heading back north, our resident birds will be scrapping over territory, and the first African birds like warblers, swallows and cuckoos will be winging over the horizon.

Enjoy the ever changing scene.


Moorhen


Redwing


Teal

FEATURES

Craft Daft on the move

By Christine Hammell



ON THURSDAY 5th November a collaboration of Canal boat groups assisted Christine McKay in the transfer of her converted Ferry Boat no.10 from its Stables Mooring to Southbank Marina . Known as CraftDaftonaRaft the old ferry has been at its mooring in Kirkintilloch for many years in different guises but most recently as a craft boat. Like everyone else the business has been affected by the Covid19 restrictions. It was decided that it would help promote this great wee business if it was based at Southbank Marina.

It was heartening to see volunteers from Forth and Clyde Canal Society Seagull Trust and friends working with Christine as they towed the boat successfully to the Marina. Bringing up the rear and in reverse was Christine's coverted orange lifeboat acting as the brakes. By the time they arrived at the Marina there was quite a " socially distanced " crowd issuing instructions from all angles. All in all a great day out and we wish CraftDaftonaRaft success in it's new venue.



CANAL MEMORIES

We have had several enquiries from people tracing their family histories, histories with canal connections

Ann Nelson, nee Mitchell

Ann wrote to us about her 3 x great grandfather and two of his children who were bridge keepers on the canal at Craigmarloch near Kilsyth and Hillhead, Kirkintilloch.

James Mitchell was a tenant farmer in Rigg, Falkirk, when he married Margaret in 1802, later becoming bridge keeper at Craigmarloch. After James' death in 1830 Margaret became the bridge keeper, assisted by her daughter Agnes. In the 1861 census Margaret, now aged 80, was still recorded as Canal Bridge Keeper at Craigmarloch, dying in 1866. Her daughter Agnes carried on as bridge keeper.

Margaret's son Robert Mitchell, Ann's 2 x great grandfather was recorded in 1851 as a boatman and later as bridge keeper at Hillhead Eastside bridge Kirkintilloch, dying in 1880.

So, quite a family tradition of canal bridge keeping, including two female bridge keepers. Ann would be interested in any other information that our readers may have, please let the editor or secretary know. We were able to send her an interview from 1997 by the editor with Ella McLachlan of Kelvinhead, who's granny lived in the lock cottages at Craigmarloch.

Guthrie Hutton, FCCS president and historian, comments on "Ann's splendid story" that "I am aware of one other female bridge keeper (if my memory serves me well) at Ruchill."

Archie Gilbert

Archie wrote to tell us about his wife's great great grandfather John McColl who was a tonnage weigher and bridge keeper on the canal from at least 1841 to 1858. Archie was looking for any information on 'East Bridge' or just 'Bridge House by the canal in Kirkintilloch'. Tommy Lawton has sent off an old photograph to Archie.

But it looks like Ann and Archie's family histories may have crossed at Eastside in the mid 1800's. We will put them in touch.

Amanda Thomson

Amanda wrote to say "I am trying to get hold of a series of pamphlets produced by Paul Carter in the late 1970's. He interviewed my papa whose father and grandfather were lock keeper and blacksmith at Auchinstarry, Kilsyth." Amanda wanted to give it to her 84-year-old mum, who still lives in Kilsyth. We sent Amanda a copy of the interview and were rewarded with a copy of her wonderful 'A Scots Dictionary of Nature'.

Compiled by the Editor from emails received by the Secretary. Please let Canal News know of any interesting canal history stories.



Townhead Bridge house, Kirkintilloch

SPLASHBACK From The Canal News Archives

Forty Years Ago

'A strong Recreational Future for the Canal' was Brian Davenport's message to the Society's AGM in October 1980. Yes, we used to have AGM's back then and Brian was British Waterways Board's chief engineer for Scotland.

He described the canal as providing a linear park through urban areas and how we should use kids natural sense of adventure, through organised clubs, to help them enjoy the canal safely.

Our February 1981 issue, now being edited by your current editor, was headlined 'Latest Moves on Canal Plan'. It quotes Calum Murray of Strathclyde Region telling us that ambitious plans for our canal were being finalised by local authorities and BWB. FCCS were very much involved, along with the Tourist Board, Countryside Commission and the Scottish Development Agency.

Thirty Years Ago

'M-Way Madness? Sanity Must Prevail' was our front-page story in January 1991 by Guthrie Hutton dealing with the repeated threat to route a new M80 alongside and across the canal near Kilsyth, ultimately defeated after much campaigning.

'Blueprint for a £3m Revival, Onward to Phase Two' was our April 1991 lead story, describing improvement works on two stretches of the canal, Maryhill to Blairdardie and Kirkintilloch to Twechar. British Waterways were teamed with Glasgow and Strathkelvin Districts and Strathclyde Region.

Twenty Years Ago

Progress on the fantastic Millennium Link dominated our December 2000 and March 2001 issues, along with a picture of Scottish Canals ecologist Olivia Lassiere struggling to hold a three-foot-long pike she was translocating out of harms way from the work. Society events included weekly 'Mad Marches' along the canal and weekly boat maintenance sessions, plus a talk by Anne Parsonage of the Glasgow Humane Society, all designed to keep us all warm and get the boats ready for the cruising season.

Ten Years Ago

An article by Tommy Lawton on the Helix Project at the Grangemouth end of the canal describes construction of this vital new link from the canal to the North Sea, with the famous Kelpies, and called for something equally spectacular in the west.

IN MEMORIAM

Farewell Ronnie

Our canals lost a tireless campaigner and real stalwart with the death of Ronnie Rusack MBE on November 24th last year after a long and brave fight against cancer.

Ronnie was a firm believer in deeds as well as words. A real canal pioneer, he ran the Bridge Inn at Ratho on the Union Canal for many years. My wife and I remember a wonderful meal on his restaurant barge, about 50 years ago, sailing along the canal from the Bridge Inn, Ronnie at the helm.

Since those pioneering days Ronnie has always been to the fore, volunteering, campaigning, helping run canal events, chairing the Seagull Trust and Lowland Canal Volunteering Group. Active to the last, in his last week he represented Scottish Waterways for All at a meeting where he passionately emphasised the importance of volunteering and training to the future of the canals.

He will be sorely missed.

By Paul Carter, with thanks to Pat Bowie, General Manager, Re-Union.

More Maryhill memories

Alison Payne's interesting piece in our last issue described Society members epic sailing of 'Maryhill' from the island of Bute to her new mooring at The Stables, Kirkintilloch ten years ago. But we only had room for one of her great pictures so here are some more.







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SOCIETY NEWS

Society AGM

We were unable to hold our usual meeting and cruise in November due to Covid and there was no on-line alternative that would have been suitable for all our members.

So the AGM has been postponed until we can all get together again. However, our Chairman's annual report incorporating boat convenor's report, and our Treasurer's condensed report, which includes the membership report, are given on the following pages.

CanalCraft

Elena has submitted a very detailed Evaluation Report on the successful completion of this heritage project. If you would like to see an email version, please contact the secretary or editor.

Digital Archives

An important part of CanalCraft was digitising the Society archives, including Canal News, photos and interviews. We are looking into practical ways of making this publicly accessible.

Boats

Stewart Procter has emailed round a detailed schedule of planned boat works for 2021. At this time he is not looking for volunteers to complete any of the tasks, but is giving us all a 'heads up' of what is required before we can become operational again. Covid restrictions, the vaccination programme and weather will all determine when volunteers are needed. Please be ready to answer the call, and get yourself onto the email list if not already on, and wish to be involved.

Facebook

Being a computer neanderthal, your editor asked our secretary Christine for a simple guide to the Society's Facebook page. Here it is...

We have a Facebook page which can be found by searching for Forth and Clyde Canal Society on your own Facebook page or with your search engine. You need to register with Facebook if you want to follow Forth and Clyde Canal Society (it's not too difficult) and be notified if there is a new post on the page.

This allows you to see and hear messages, pictures and videos about the Society and activities around the Lowland Canals as they happen. At the moment we have over 900 followers who have the opportunity to see what's going on around the canals. They can also comment and interact with us about the issues we post. It's a great way of advertising our events, campaigns and keeping the Forth and Clyde Canal Society in peoples minds. I monitor and post articles regularly on our page. It's a bit like reading a magazine.

We are also developing a YouTube channel where you can find short canal related videos. You can Subscribe (free of charge) and click the bell icon to be notified when new videos are posted. During lockdown I filmed one of the big cruise ships, that now berth on the Clyde, and posted the video on our Facebook page. It generated 4500 views. Social Media is not for everyone but it's certainly another way of promoting our Society.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Navigating a difficult year

AS I COMPOSE this report, we have all had a year to remember for all the wrong and sad reasons, however I do hope this finds you all fit and well.

It started with the breaking into and vandalism to the boats whilst they were moored at The Stables over the New Year period which resulted with them being moved to Southbank Marina where they have been all year. This was then followed in early January with the death of our vice chairman Jim McLachlan.

During the period between January and March the boats were cleaned to remove the mess caused by the vandals and a start was made to prepare them for the forthcoming sailing season for which we were receiving enquiries and bookings. We had got as far as slipping Gipsy Princess for hull cleaning and minor repairs before her MCA inspection. At this point Covid-19 was coming in a big way into our lives and with a lock down looking possible the decision was taken not to leave Gipsy Princess on the slipway and she was returned to the marina.

We did manage to complete one charter this calendar year in early March for one of the primary schools from Kirkintilloch which lasted 45 minutes, which was all they requested.

For the rest of the year all our meetings, training, charters, and events were cancelled. This included a BBQ marking the end of the CanalCraft project and the marking of the Society's 40th year.

What has been going on during the last year? Not a lot due to the various restrictions that we have all had to live with, however the boats have received some TLC. Surface rust has been treated on both Gipsy Princess and Voyager, with Voyager also receiving painting.

Whilst not much has been happening on the canal side of things, life continues behind the scenes with regards to the running of the Society. Due to problems we encountered during the last MCA inspection regarding

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

the operator manuals for Gipsy Princess and Voyager, they have been edited / modified to ease in use.

A further task, which from the outside appears to be simple, is dealing with the finances which is ok until dealing with the accountants at the end of the year, when it would appear they always have new questions which require answers.

Just as the canal system was returning to normal operations after the first lockdown period there was the major breach on the Union canal which resulted in not only serious damage to the canal but also the main Edinburgh to Glasgow railway which runs downhill from the canal. As I write this the canal is still closed although there are plans in place for the repairs to the canal to commence.

On the Glasgow branch the new footpath from Applecross Basin I believe is open as is the new bridge which crosses the canal at the clay pits. Further works were the installation of fishing piers in Firhill basin.

Work has started on the new bridge at Stockingfield Junction and hopefully any restrictions there will be lifted by the time we get operational again.

What will 2021 bring? Well the crystal ball was looking a bit less cloudy as a start has been made with the first vaccines being available, however we are still in a further lockdown.

Our plans for 2021 will require to be flexible, with everything depending upon Covid-19 restrictions, and the weather.

Maintenance of boats. Voyager will require a wash and brush up to her roof areas and slipped to clean and paint the hull. Gipsy Princess requires a lot more work for example: all external steelwork both above and below the water line requires cleaned and painted, the rear canopy removed and repaired or replaced, various broken / failing hinges replaced. Both boats also require to have all their engines serviced. I cannot foresee the above commencing until the Spring and nearer the time I shall distribute a list of actual work required.

If you wish to help with the above works but are not on the crew mailing list, please let me know and you will be advised of any plans.

Upon completion of the above works the boats will require to have their annual MCA inspection carried out before we can commence crew training and charters, and this could be as late as early summer at best.

I hope by the time you have received this copy of Canal News things may have improved and we can all start to return to some sort of normality, we can but hope for the best.

Stewart Procter
Chairman



TREASURER'S REPORT Robert Irvine



YOU should all have a copy (see following page) of the summary accounts for the year ended 30 September 2020 in which you will see we had an opening balance of £49,829.93 and a closing balance of £45,151.55, giving a negative income for the year of -£4,678.38. This is wholly due to our inability to operate our boats due to Covid-19.

The above figures include a "ring fenced" amount of £20k, up £5k from last year, which has been set aside for any unforeseen circumstances. Due to the ongoing pandemic, it may be necessary to transfer some of this money back out for general spending, depending on how long it is until we can operate with some semblance of normality. This still leaves us with the minimum sum of £15k recommended by Wylie & Bisset LLP to allow us to operate with little or no income for one year.

In addition to the above figures, we also hold monies for our National Heritage Lottery Fund Grant 'CanalCraft'. This had an opening balance of £11,626.32 on 1st October 2019. We are already in receipt of 90% of the grant and will receive the final 10% of the grant in arrears after the project is completed. At the end of our financial year on 30th of September we show an overspend of £4,260.47 which will be refunded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund once they have received and assessed all the relevant paperwork and financial information.

I am happy to answer anyone's questions on the accounts at this time, or I can go over specific details on a one-to-one basis at a later date.

Independent Examiners Report and Appointment of Auditors

Also tabled is the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2019 prepared for us by Wylie & Bisset LLP. You will note this document also includes the Report of the Trustees for the year ended 30 September 2019. Christine Hammell takes the credit for the Trustees Report this year, and I had sight of it before it was sent to Wylie & Bisset.

The drop in the total funds available to the Canal Society is mainly due to the reduction in value of our fixed assets, namely our boats. See page 11 for how this is calculated.

If anyone has questions on the Independent Examiners Report I will be happy to try and answer them, but if not, I would like to propose that the report be accepted.

I would also like to propose that Wylie & Bisset LLP be retained for the financial year 2019/2020.

TREASURER'S REPORT Robert Irvine

Transactions between 01/10/2019 and 30/09/2020

Summary

CATEGORY	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	PROFIT/LOSS	NOTE
Gift Aid	£684.22	£	£684.22	1.
Accountant	£	£948.00	- £948.00	2.
Membership	£2,514.00	£	£2,514.00	3.
Donations	£399.64	£88.00	£311.64	4.
Insurance	£	£784.01	- £784.01	5.
Scottish Canals	£153.04	£2,031.64	- £1878.60	6.
Boat Operations	£4,106.00	£7,611.02	- £3,505.02	7.
Slipway Operations	£1050.00	-£76.99	£973.01	8.
Fuel	£	£25.90	- £25.90	9.
Events	£50.00	£50.00	£	10.
Sundries	£	£383.26	- £383.26	11.
Boatmaster's Licences	£	£95.00	- £95.00	12.
Lifejacket Servicing	£465.84	£485.47	- £19.63	13.
Sales	£160.00	£150.00	£10.00	14.
Postage	£	£475.82	- £475.82	15.
Printing	£	£1,056.00	- £1056.00	16.
TOTALS	**£9582.74**	**£14,261.11**	**- £4,678.37**	

Notes: 1. £382.52 from 'Just Giving' donations. Balance from members signed up to Gift Aid. 2. Cost of Wylie & Bisset to audit our accounts. 3. Membership subscriptions, although some are still overdue. 4. Donations from various sources. Expenditure relates to a refund to a member who had overpaid although payment was made twice due to non-cashing of a cheque. 5. This relates to Public Liability etc. for office and other non-boating activites. 6. Mooring Fees and Navigation Licences. Income is a refund on Navigation Licences due to Covid-19 preventing sailing in 2020. 7. Cost of boat operations, including insurance on each boat and slipping costs for maintenance and/or inspection. 8. Income from slipping of Society boats as well as for a private owner. Expenditure relates to returnable deposit to private owner and additional works to new container unit. 9. Fuel for grounds machinery. 10. Deposit for members' lunch in January 2020 and refund of same from members. 11. Mainly stationery costs for running the Society - paper, labels, evelopes etc. 12. Refund to Boatmaster for medical. 13. Servicing members' lifejackets. Initially paid for by the Society and refunded by members. 14. Sales of clothing. No profit added. Additional income from sale of old stock. 15. Posting of Canal News to members and posting of information to new members. 16. Printing of Canal News and information leaflets.

Your continued membership has helped offset the cost of the Covid-19 pandemic, and without this income we would have eaten into more of our capital. It is our hope that you will continue to support the Society going forward in 2021. A breakdown of any of the above items is available to any member by writing to the Treasurer requesting what section, or sections, they wish information on. It is not practical or economic, to provide a breakdown of all sections.

TREASURER'S REPORT Robert Irvine

Treasurer's/Membership Secretary's comments

THIS last year has been extremely hard for everyone, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members for their continued support of FCCS in the form of their membership payments despite not being able to enjoy the full benefit of the Society.

As you will note from my reports elsewhere in this issue of Canal News, we have lost some members, but in a change to the norm have gained more members than we lost.

On the other hand, we have spent more than has come in, and for the first time in my term as treasurer we have made a loss.

This would have been much worse had we not had the Santa Cruises for Nonna's Kitchen and one or two charters at the start of 2020.

Because of the current situation our auditors had the Society prove and confirm that we could continue to operate for a further year without getting into financial difficulty.

There are certain items of expenditure we must continue to pay whether we can operate, namely, insurance for the boats and mooring fees to Scottish Canals among other things, although Scottish Canals have given us a refund on part of the navigation licences as for much of the year no one could sail.

In this coming year, and assuming lock down restrictions permit, we need to spend money on the boats to maintain them and keep them from deteriorating.

Should anyone wish a breakdown of any section in the condensed income and expenditure report, or a copy of the signed accounts prepared by Wylie & Bisset LLP please contact the Treasurer by email and he will send a copy/copies by email. Unfortunately, it is not practical to post these out to members.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT Robert Irvine

At the start of our year in October 2019 we had 185 members, and during the course of the year we had 4 members who have cancelled their membership, by advising us they wished to cancel their membership, or we have been notified they have passed away. In the 12 months to the 30th of September 2020, we gained 9 new members, consisting of one Ordinary member, four Family members, and four Associate members (3 x Pensioner & 1 x Student).

The membership, on 30th September 2019, stood at 180 although, as in previous years, there are a number of members who have not paid their membership for any number of reasons. The committee has agreed that these members will receive a letter with this, the Spring 2021 issue of Canal News, asking if they wish to continue their membership, or that they inform us in writing that they wish to cancel their membership.

At last year's AGM we had 130 members who had signed up to Gift Aid. This number is now 135. Our submission for 2019/2020 resulted in a payment of £543, again a bit less than the amount we received in the previous year. This has been helped by the additional sums of just over £82 from 'Just Giving', and we have already received a further £48 since 30th of September from this source. I must add, as I will do in the next issue of Canal News, that if you are signed up to Gift Aid and your circumstances have changed, for example by the increase in the personal allowance which results in you no longer paying income tax, you need to inform the Canal Society so that we no longer make a claim on your membership subscription.

In relation to the General Data Protection Regulations, it is important that you advise the Canal Society of any changes to your details, as outlined on your membership record, which is issued with the membership renewal notice with the Spring issue of Canals News. Subject to discussion at committee it is unlikely that we will ask for a return in 2020 but, as usual, please return your membership record with any changes to the details recorded for you.

Finally, can I thank all members who included a donation along with their subscription, and a thank you to you all for your continued support which has been really important over this last very difficult year.

ABOUT US

Forth & Clyde Canal Society Officers

Chairman **Stewart Procter**

Secretary / Company Secretary
Christine Hammell 0141 561 1953

Treasurer / Membership / Bookings
Robert Irvine 01236 735533

President **Guthrie Hutton**

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

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JOIN US AND HELP SAVE THE CANAL

- Campaigning
- Boats
- Socials
- Walks
- Volunteering

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

Annual subs

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

Contact

The Membership Secretary
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Cumbernauld G67 2NT

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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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