Forth & Clyde Canal Society

CANAL NEWS

Summer 2021 £1.50 FREE to Members ISSUE 175

ALL HELP NEEDED TO GET BOATS CRUISING READY



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

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Society's work continues despite pandemic uncertainty



Preparing for hull thickness test

WELCOME to the summer (?) edition of the Canal News and I hope this finds you all well. (As I write this it's almost like sleet outside)

What has been happening on the canal this year? A lot of tree cutting and vegetation clearance on the canal banks between Bowling and Clydebank has taken place and made a big difference, the new bridge at Stockingfield Junction works is progressing and I believe the new works around the clay pits and Firhill are now open.

What about the Society boats? Well up to a few week's ago the aim was to keep them wind and watertight and that has been carried out by Dave Connell therefore a big thanks to him.

Since then, a fault with the bow thruster on Voyager has been resolved and the generator and main engine have been serviced. The foredeck, wheelhouse and aft decks have been painted.

Hopefully by the time you receive this copy of the News Voyager will have successfully passed both her 5-year hull thickness test and the MCA inspection.

Gipsy Princess still awaits volunteers to come and start the paint work above the gunnel line, we may well have self-drive cars, but we still await self-paint boats therefore your help is required to get her looking smart again prior to her inspection.

A lot of work has been carried out to update Voyager's and Gipsy Princess's boat Operator

Manuals by Bob Kohn which will make it easier to find the section and/or information that you may be looking for.

Work has also been carried out at the side of the slipway to remove the grass/mud which you used to sink into therefore a thanks to those who carried out the work.

We received a grant from East Dunbartonshire Council towards the maintenance and inspections of the boats and we are due to receive a refund of our fees to Scottish Canals from a fund called "Covid Business Support, Marine Support, Scottish Canals."

What lies ahead? Well, that will be determined by the restrictions which may be in place, hopefully by the middle of June we should be able to meet for some training, just have to wait and see.

Stewart Procter
Chairman



Editor's Note

We hope you enjoy this edition, with articles including history, wildlife and campaigning. Please do send in your news and pics for the next edition. Hopefully next time we may have Society activities such as cruises and meetings to report.

But we will not be able to cruise if we do not have boats to cruise on, too few members are helping with repairs and maintenance (see front cover).

So please heed our Chairman's pleas and do some serious volunteering, or it may not prove possible to keep all of our fleet cruising.

Thanks to Christine Hammell for cover picture showing Jim Pert doing second power wash after members had scraped loose rust off Voyager's hull.

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Rowing at Craigmarloch

University Rowers

Edinburgh University rowing club have been out on the canal between Auchinstarry and Wyndford. They have certainly brought a dash of colour and movement to an otherwise quiet canal this Spring. It is nearly fifty years since the Strathkelvin Canal Park Group, one of the forerunners of our Society, built landing stages near Wyndford Lock to host the rowing club. It is good to see them still using this stretch of canal after several generations. They are now based at the boathouse at Auchinstarry Marina.

Cruising Ready?

The Canal Society fleet needs continued work to keep it cruising ready, including maintenance and MCA inspection and certification. Covid restrictions and members personal concerns have resulted in the burden falling on very few individuals, which is unsustainable in the long term.

Stewart Procter's emails to members describe the work needing done, what, where and when. Please respond if at all possible. See Society News for further details.

Canal Projects Steam Ahead

Scottish Canals work at Bowling High Line and Stockingfield Bridge, described in our last issue, is steaming ahead. Stewart Procter joined an online presentation on these two projects, including the now completed refurbishment of the old Custom House.

It now has seven fully furnished bedrooms, all with different themes and looking very

NEWS IN BRIEF

smart. West Dunbartonshire Council have various plans for the whole riverside walkway from Clydebank to Dumbarton, including cleaning up the old fuel depot site at Bowling and a new section of the A814 road.

Silver Propeller

More Scottish sites have been added to the IWA's Silver Propeller challenge. Visit 20 sites (locations on IWA website) on any type of water vehicle and take a photo, to get a silver propeller plaque for your vessel.

Port Dundas, Glasgow, and Lochrin Basin, Edinburgh, are already on the list, now the Kelpies and Bowling Basin have been added. The idea is to encourage more boaters to visit Scotland's canals.

Magnet Fishing

The new agreement was launched at Leamington Lift Bridge on Saturday 24th April. Partnered by Official Magnet Fishing Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland and Scottish Canals, the agreement lays down safety measures, what to do with finds, and disposal of waste.

Waterways for All

Christine Hammell has written up these highlights from the Scottish Waterways for All Meeting which took place by Zoom on the 10th of March 2021.

The guest speaker was Dr Momchil Terziev from the University of Strathclyde. He was presenting on the subject of Decarbonising Inland Waterways Transportation. It was thought that this environmental project could attract funding. There were also opportunities for academia, Scottish Canals and contractors to work together. The group were particularly interested in the dredging aspect of the project. It was highlighted at the meeting that Scottish Canals had gained a 14% increase in the Revenue Budget. Questions were asked on how this would be spent, but at this point that



Magnetic attraction

NEWS IN BRIEF

information was not available.

Richard Millar was asked why the Lowland Gates survey was being done on the Forth and Clyde Canal if there was no budget to replace those in a poor state. He replied that this is to ensure that these projects were kept visible and ready to start when funding becomes available.

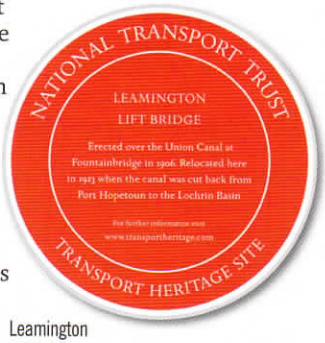
It is hoped that volunteering and training will get up and running soon and the Lowland Canal charities could be conduits for third sector funding for this.

There is an aim to encourage boaters to move more with a prize for the most travelled vessel. It was also suggested that a flotilla could be arranged when restrictions allow.

Lastly, two members of the group came forward to be involved in a new communications group to discuss how Scottish Canals can improve communications with SWfA and their customers.

New Wheel for Union

Leamington Lift Bridge on the Union Canal in Edinburgh will soon be graced with an historic Red Wheel plaque. The National Transport Trust has installed over one hundred of these south of the border, celebrating transport achievements over the centuries. They unveiled the first in Scotland by the canal in Paisley in August 2019 to celebrate the innovative commuter driven Glasgow to Paisley canal.



Leamington Lift Bridge plaque

Leamington Lift Bridge, the only hydraulic structure on the Union Canal, was first installed by canal owners North British Rail in 1906 and moved to its present location in 1922. The plaque will be unveiled by the Trust and Scottish Canals in July and more are planned, likely including Bowling.

Twechar Canal Centre

The centre is yet to be built, but a local outdoor pursuits organisation has had groups of kids out on the canal learning how to kayak, launching from Twechar's canal slipway.





Muiravonside Breach Healed

The major breach in the Union Canal at Muiravonside has been repaired and the canal refilled in March ready for May's reopening to navigation. The breach was caused by a one in 240-year storm on 12th August last year, cutting the canal in two. Additional climate change resilience works to the Union include improvements to weirs, culverts, emergency stop planks, monitoring and remote sensing, carried out by Mackenzie Construction for Scottish Canals.

World Water Day

The World Economic Forum has recognised Glasgow Caledonian University's work with Scottish Canals to record health improvements stimulated by the canal in North Glasgow.

Stockingfield Bridge Artwork

The new Stockingfield Bridge works hoardings have been turned into an art gallery by photographer Brian Sweeny, commissioned by Scottish Canals to capture life on the canal.

This open air exhibition will last for 6 months, to be followed by art works developed by local residents.

Murders and Mayhem

A new book on how body snatching, abductions and murders along Scotland's canals has been written by author and journalist Theresa Stewart. If you want to know all the gory details, check out 'Scottish Canal Crimes' by T.A. Stewart, available to pre-order from Perth publisher Rymour at www.rymour.co.uk.

FEATURES



Silvanus eyes the barbarians

Romans get ahead at Croy

A BOLD and striking new metal structure has appeared near the Antonine Wall on Croy Hill. The massive head of Silvanus, a Roman soldier, up to 6 metres (20 feet) high, gazes out over the canal at Craigmarloch and the Kilsyth Hills. Searching for 'barbarians' (that's us folks), the head was created by Big Red Blacksmiths and artist Svetlana Kondakova.

Beside the head is a new replica 'distance slab' incorporating a detail from the distance stone found nearby at Arniebog and now in the Hunterian. This depicts a local prisoner captured by the Roman Army, naked and bound (yes, us again), along with the sea god Triton. The replica was sculpted by stonemason students at City of Glasgow College.

The head and stone are just up the path from the small Dullatur Road car park. Follow the Antonine Wall up Croy Hill to enjoy the roman defensive ditch, site of Croy Hill Fort, great views and some excellent display boards. These include a photo of a locally found gravestone showing a legionary and his two sons, known locally as "the three Croy Kilties".

They also give Tacitus lines imagining the local response " to robbery, slaughter and plunder, the Romans have given the lying name of empire". And for good measure, W H Auden's lines (1837)

"Over the heather the wet wind blows
I've lice in my tunic and a cold in my nose
The rain keeps pattering out of the sky
I'm a Wall soldier, I don't know why"

These are part of rediscovering the Antonine Wall, a big new project by Historic

Environment Scotland and all the councils along the route of the wall, with funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund and Kelvin Valley and Falkirk Leader, plus land fill tax and local organisations.

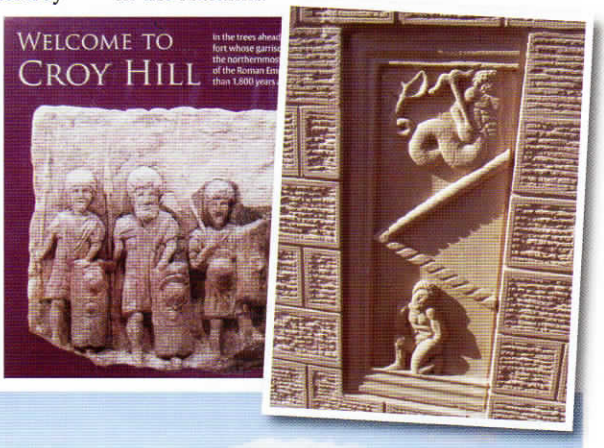
The aim is to reach out to communities along the Wall who are less engaged with this historic site, particularly in areas of deprivation. Read more in the March/April 2021 issue of History Scotland.

Project Manager Emma McMullen has told Canal News that they are nearing completion of five distance stones at Old Kilpatrick, Lambhill Stables, Twechar HLEC, Nethercroy and Cow Wynd Falkirk. The large sculptural head 'Silvanus' at Nethercroy is joined by 'Aurelius' at Lambhill. Most of these are easily accessible from the canal.

The project has also completed three roman themed playparks, Callendar Park in Falkirk (hoaching with kids on sunny days – ice cream stall just outside) Goldenhill Park in Duntochar, Clydebank, and Peel Park in Kirkintilloch. Another in Drumchapel should be completed by the time you read Canal News. A contractor has now been appointed for the Auchinstarry Quarry playpark.

Other sculptures with community groups include a gate guardian at Kinniel Estate and a heritage plaque at Bonnybridge.

Further projects include restarting the 21st Century Legion volunteers, a mural project with young people, creative writing and working with asylum seekers and refugee groups. The project will also be undertaking their Walk the Wall film, and the touring exhibition will launch at Perth Museum in the Autumn.





Silvanus' view, canal and Kilsyth hills

FEATURES

Craigmarloch Stables in danger... Again



Inside Craigmarloch Stables today

CRAIGMARLOCH canal stables are in danger of collapse yet again. The trees growing inside the building shell are now so tall they are growing above the top of the walls. Also, there are bushes actually growing out of the masonry. The trees and bushes threaten to weaken the foundations and rupture the masonry walls. Urgent action is needed to remove the trees and bushes and repoint all four walls from top to bottom. Otherwise, the building could crumble before proposed restoration work takes place.

Back in January last year a major consultation on Craigmarloch Stables was held by North Lanarkshire Council. Potential uses included holiday lets, John Muir Way hostel and workshops.

Great ideas, but all will be in vain if the building shell is allowed to crumble again.

We have been here before. Back in the early 1980's the west gable collapsed, leaving the building shell vulnerable to all round collapse. Our Society persuaded Strathclyde Regional Council to step in, and they did a great job. They rebuilt the collapsed west gable, bricked up the windows, and installed a concrete coping around the top of the walls to prevent water ingress. This work helped preserve the building shell to the present day.

Over the ensuing decades, proposals came and went, for a hotel, housing etc, but no actual action.

Back in Spring 2014 our Canal News carried a report on Scottish Canals new Heritage Strategy. We welcomed the strategy but expressed concern that Craigmarloch Stables

was not included. Our next issue carried a feature article titled "Stables in Danger", including a picture showing trees growing inside the building much the same as now.

Over the next two years action was taken by volunteers from the Scottish Waterways Trust, with assistance from Kilsyth Rotary and our Society. Trees were removed from inside and immediately around the building. The lower levels of the masonry walls were repointed. However, without full height scaffolding it was not possible to remove bushes growing out of the top of the walls, or repoint the upper levels.

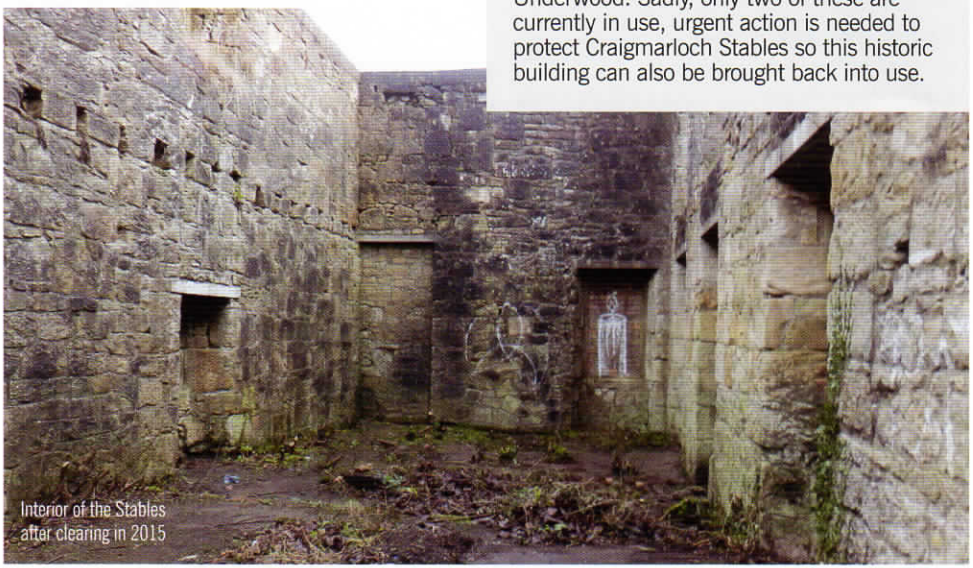
Tommy Lawton, who helped supervise the work, has sent pictures of the building with trees removed and expressed his disappointment that the building has been allowed to deteriorate again.

Forth and Clyde Canal Society have written and emailed Scottish Canals expressing our concerns. As we went to press Calhouna Bain of Scottish Canals responded by referring to the early 2020 consultation with partners North Lanarkshire Council. Scottish Canals are discussing funding for the building and will carry out further consultations, including our Society, in 2021.

We have responded by again asking for urgent action to remove the trees and stabilise the shell. We have heard informally that Scottish Canals are inspecting the structure in response to our concerns.

Swifts & Stables

New fast passenger boats started services between Glasgow, Falkirk and Edinburgh in 1830. Known as Swifts for their speed and sleek and slender lines, these light iron passenger boats could do Glasgow to Falkirk in just three hours. Up to five services were run by day and three by night, with coach connections to Stirling, Perth and Alloa. These boats could do up to 9 or 10 miles an hour, and it was all done by horsepower. They were pulled by two horses with a smartly dressed postilion mounted on the second. Teams of fresh horses were needed to keep up these speeds. So, stables were built at roughly four mile intervals, at Lambhill, Glasgow Road Bridge, Shirva, Craigmarloch, Wyndford and Underwood. Sadly, only two of these are currently in use, urgent action is needed to protect Craigmarloch Stables so this historic building can also be brought back into use.



Interior of the Stables after clearing in 2015

FEATURES

Going wild on the Forth & Clyde

We've had some great wildlife pictures and stories coming into Canal News this Spring



Canal Otters

Christine McKay sent in these great pictures of an otter enjoying her old 'Craft Daft' mooring at The Stables near Kirkintilloch.

Otters have made a comeback along the canal and neighbouring lochs and burns in recent years. Otter spraint could regularly be seen and smelt (not unpleasant – fragrance of otter) on prominent canal side logs and boulders near Kilsyth. An otter holt was found in a hollow old tree and cubs have been spotted.

Ella McLachlan, interviewed in 1997 for our booklet 'Cruising on the Gipsy Princess', grew up in the canal banksman's cottage at Kelvinhead. As a wee girl in the nineteen twenties Ella had vivid memories of the canal and its wildlife, including "the most beautiful animal I saw was an otter, which disappeared down into the Bog and the Kelvin with me in hot pursuit!". (See Ella's interview on page 15) So it is good to see the otters return after a long absence. It is also good news for water voles which largely disappeared from the canal due to predation by American mink.

Mink tend to move out when the larger otters move in, and otters are too big to get down water voles burrows.

So maybe we will get water voles back too, after all there is a small population in wetlands a few miles south of the canal near Kirkintilloch.

Bird Life

Rob Kay has sent us some wonderful pictures of courting great crested grebes. He photo'd this pair at Banton Loch which is the main canal water supply reservoir for the east end of the canal. In recent years we have had two or three pairs nesting on the loch, after many decades absence, another comeback story.


Courting Grebes


Gadwall pair


The one that didn't make it

Great Crested Grebes had a starring role in the founding of the R.S.P.B. The grebes were being hunted to extinction in the UK to provide posh plumes for fashionable Victorian ladies' hats. Other Victorian ladies were so horrified they set up a society to protect birds, which went on to become todays RSPB, a national conservation charity with well over a million members.

Grebes build their nest among vegetation or branches growing in the water, often a floating heap of water weed and other plants. So, Banton Loch's highly variable water levels could present a problem. But grebe chicks have been seen riding around on their parents backs in recent years, so let us hope the same this year. Scotland has only a few hundred breeding pairs, so our canal grebes are precious.

Rob also sent in some pictures of a pair of Gadwall on Dumbreck Marsh ponds, a canal side nature reserve on the edge of Kilsyth. There are less than two hundred pairs breeding in Scotland so, again, they are precious.



Amphibians

The canal and surrounding fields and ponds are a haven for toads, frogs and newts. This Spring some villagers from Banton village, about 1km north of the canal, set up a 'toad patrol' to protect hundreds of toads and frogs migrating to Banton Mill Pond, a favourite breeding spot.

Nearly nine hundred toads and frogs were taken across the road or rescued from road gullies. Eventually the pond was purring with breeding calls and rippling with excitement. Unfortunately, over 40 were killed by traffic, but the carnage would have been far worse without the patrols' efforts. Rob Kay sent us this picture of one unlucky amphibian that did not make it, the local herons have been enjoying a bonanza.

FEATURES

White Cart Bascule Bridge opens for big barge

By Christine Hammell







WHEN Paul, our Canal News Editor, asked me if I had any articles for our magazine my immediate thought was, I haven't been anywhere.

However when I looked at the photos on my phone I was reminded of a wee visit to the White Cart Water in my home town of Renfrew. On the 1st and 2nd March the Bascule Bridge which carries the Inchinnan Road over the White Cart Water was being opened to allow the passage of a vessel.

This is now a rare event and attracts locals to watch the Bridge lift. In years gone by it was a fairly regular event and was heralded by the back up of traffic along the street where I grew up in the 1960s and I would run along Inchinnan Road to watch the boats pass by.

I think this may have been the beginning of my interest in boats.

I had never given much thought to where the Cart emerged so I had a look at Google maps. White Cart Water flows from Eaglesham and Black Cart Water from Castle Semple loch . They then merge at Renfrew to become the River Cart before flowing into the River Clyde.

In the absence of Canal trips I'm glad of the rivers around my home.

Editor's note: This led Christine on to searching for the Forth & Cart Canal, see page 16.

CANAL MEMORIES



Wee Ella on the punt



KELVINHEAD jetty was once a lively place, with a working jetty and two canal workers' families living in Jetty House. In 1997 the Editor interviewed Ella McLachlan of Kelvinhead. Ella remembered her days as a girl growing up in the house beside the canal.

"I was born in the house down at the jetty in 1925. It was a lovely place to grow up and I also spent a year there with my husband John after we married in 1947. Families continued to live there afterwards and I think the houses were pulled down in the nineteen sixties. I don't know when the houses were built, but my granny lived there.

Jetty House had two houses in it. It was set just down a bit from the towpath. Each house had a porch, a big kitchen living room with fixed beds, another room with fixed beds and a bedroom upstairs. There was no piped water or inside toilet. We had a washhouse and a dry toilet round the back.

I would take two pails up to Peggy's Well every morning and evening. It was beautiful crystal water. We would also clean out the well and lime it to keep the water clear. The well is filled in now. For cleaning water we would go down the jetty steps and draw a pail from the canal.

The clay boats called in to the jetty to dump supplies of puddle clay and sandstone blocks. My dad, Eddie Reid, would then load the clay and sandstone into a punt and pole along to wherever he needed to repair the canal banks. I used to take trips on the punt with him, along to Castlecary. Sometimes my pals and I would pinch the punt for a trip to get chestnuts from the other side of the canal. I got a lot of rows for that.

Lots of different kinds of boats came past the door. There were horse drawn barges, steam puffers and fishing smacks. Sometimes the fishermen would throw us a parcel of herring as they came past. Some of the horses were great characters. One horse always used to jump in and swim down the middle of the canal and come out at the jetty.

Lots of horses had to be used when the ice was thick. The Clyde Forth was used as an icebreaker with ten horses or more. They would take the boat backwards then charge at the ice to break it. Sometimes I got trips on the Clyde Forth down to Craigmarloch.

I helped with our animals. We kept ducks and hens and goats. Sometimes I had to get the ducks in off the canal or the Kelvin. I had duck egg and toast every morning for breakfast. It tasted wonderful. Granny had some cows as well and we called the little wood along the canal the 'cows planting'.

There was a lot of wildlife too – swans and coots and herons and geese. There were weasels and water rats and foxes and lovely roe deer. The most beautiful animal I saw was an otter, which disappeared down into the Bog and the Kelvin with me in hot pursuit."

Taken from "Cruising on the GIPSY PRINCESS" FCCS 1997.

FEATURES

Forth & Cart Canal

Christine Hammell continues our occasional series on Scotland's lost canals and lades



WHEN I was looking online for information about the River Cart I discovered the long since closed Forth and Cart Canal.

It was first used in1840 and was only 0.5 miles long from it's entrance on the River Clyde (across from the mouth of the River Cart) to where it joined the Forth and Clyde Canal near Whitecrook.

The line of the canal ran from where Cart Street and Argyll Road in Clydebank are now built. It was hoped that this would provide a shortcut from the River Clyde onto the Forth and Clyde Canal and onward to the River Forth .This would save boats navigating from the Mill town of Paisley via the Cart Navigation having to travel downstream to Bowling to join the Forth and Clyde Canal there.

The Forth and Cart Canal had one single lock and a staircase of two locks (67feet long and 15 feet wide) which used less water than the larger locks at the Western end of the Forth and Clyde Canal at Bowling . The Forth and Clyde tookover the Forth and Cart in 1855 but even by then it was in a poor state and the annual traffic was down to around 40000 tons

. The ambitious plans to bring the Forth and Cart back into use was going to cost about £3100 but by this time the railways were carrying the coal that Paisley needed.

This led to the Forth and Clyde, Forth and Cart and Monklands Canals being taken over by the Caledonian Railway in 1867 and the closure of the unprofitable Forth and Cart Canal in 1893.

Over the years the building of railway lines and roads have removed all but a very short stretch of the Forth and Cart Canal wall which is visible at the approach to the underpass that crosses under the A814 from Argyll Road to Cart Street.

On my walk to photograph a possible small section of wall I noted the short section of Canal Street which I have photographed too. A local tells me there is no street name sign for Cart Street.

Sadly any plans to reinstate even a small part of the canal as a water feature ,at West College Scotlands Clydebank Campus ,were shelved as investigations have shown no evidence of any substantial remains of the canal.

Planning restrictions that protected the line of the Forth and Cart Canal were then rescinded and so finalised the abandonment of the canal.



Captain McMonagle's Fish and Chip 'barge' on the Forth & Clyde Canal near the entrance to the Forth & Cart Canal

FEATURES

Canal History: Pictures from an Exhibition (Part 4)

By Guthrie Hutton



Kilbowie Road c1900. Photo courtesy of Clydebank District Libraries

THE SAGA of Paul's exhibition pictures continues with Kilbowie Road Bridge at Clydebank and Townhead Bridge, Kirkintilloch,

The old bascule bridge at Kilbowie Road is seen crowded with horse-drawn and pedestrian traffic in a picture from before the First World War. In 1916, the old bridge was replaced with a swing bridge engineered to allow trams to cross the canal, although unusually only single deck vehicles used this route owing to the proximity of a railway bridge.

Clydebank's other canal bridge at Dalmuir was replaced with a large swing bridge in 1915. It was on the route of Glasgow's last tram, the No. 9, between Auchenshuggle and Dalmuir West.

It wasn't trams, but buses and other large vehicles that began to struggle with weight restrictions on the little bascule bridge at Townhead, Kirkintilloch, so it too was

Opening of Hillhead (sic) Swing Bridge,



replaced. The picture shows the inauguration of the new swing bridge in June 1933. (In the exhibition, and I do hope I am not upsetting anyone, the picture was incorrectly captioned as Hillhead Bridge).

When the canal was closed many bridges were replaced with drowned culverts, which allowed water to flow, but blocked it at surface level.

One of the worst of these culverts was at Townhead, which because the bridge had spanned the canal at a reasonable height, was like a huge dam in the middle of the town.

It looked ugly, rubbish and weed accumulated against it, and that caused a bad smell. The society campaigned hard for its removal.

The drowned culverts at Kilbowie and Dalmuir were more difficult because they were close to water level and afforded little room for fixed bridges, hence the drop-lock at Dalmuir.

SPLASHBACK From The Canal News Archives

Forty Years Ago

'Govan Ferries coming to Canal' was our front-page story, saying "Our Society has saved them from the breakers yard and will ensure their preservation for many years to come". The Clyde Port Authority transferred the ferries to the Society for a nominal sum and £1,000 (£10,000 today) was raised by members for restoration.

We soon produced a special supplement 'Govan Ferries on the Canal' celebrating the successful move down the Clyde to the canal at Bowling.

The Society operated one of the boats as the 'Ferry Queen' for many years as a trip boat between Kirkintilloch and Glasgow. She is now back on the Clyde with the tall ship Glenlee beside the Riverside Museum.

Thirty Years Ago

Our front page lead 'No entry Sign for Bowling' highlighted concerns over proposals for an exclusive marina at Bowling including restrictions to public access. Bowling is now enjoying a major regeneration including the old Custom House and Highline Bridge.

Other stories included a canal clean up at Kirkintilloch, Auchinstarry Canal Festival, new edition of our Guidebook, and cruises on the Gipsy Princess and Nolly Barge.

Twenty Years Ago

Our 100th edition front page proudly proclaimed 'Your 100th Canal News Welcomes the Re-opening of the Forth and Clyde Canal'. Stories inside included ' Fish and VIP's, the Canal Re-opening' headlining Guthrie Hutton's four page account of the victory flotilla from Falkirk to Bowling. 'Royal Opening' covered Prince Charles visit to the Carron Sea Lock. 'Thousands of People Lined the Banks of the Forth and Clyde Canal to Celebrate the Official Re-opening' the headline said it all. Momentous.

Ten Years Ago

Gipsy Princess's twenty first birthday was the front-page story of our May edition. Local MSP Cathie Craigie, who had launched Gipsy Princess 21 years earlier, cut the cake and unveiled one of the eight new canal interpretation panels. In August 'Three Men in a Boat' covered the Beechgrove Garden T.V. team's cruise to Maryhill on 'Maryhill' as part of local canal side regeneration.



The Ferry Queen being lowered into the water

Upgrade at The Falkirk Wheel

SCOTTISH Canals has introduced a nine-hole outdoor Mini Golf course with waterway-themed holes as part of new activities. The Mini Golf experience is available as part of a range of fun activities for all ages at The Wheel which now includes paddle boarding, bumper boats, waterzorbing, and segways.

The new lighting upgrade at The Falkirk Wheel has been installed in line with Scottish Canals' Environmental Strategy 2015-25 and uses LED and low energy lighting.

The installation runs through the Roughcastle Tunnel, along the aqueduct, arches, and The Wheel structure itself. It has also been extended over the Mini Golf experience.


Catherine Topley, CEO Scottish Canals

Catherine Topley, Chief Executive Officer at Scottish Canals, said: "We are delighted to be able to reveal our upgraded lighting installation alongside our new mini golf activity. Scottish Canals is offering an experience like no other for families, schools, youth groups, days out, birthdays or corporate events at The Falkirk Wheel."

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SOCIETY NEWS

With thanks to Robert Irvine

Welcome Grant

East Dunbartonshire Council have given our Society a very welcome grant of £3,000. This is a "Full Award for boat repairs, licencing and maintenance".



Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) Licences

Voyager and Gipsy Princess both need their MCA Passenger Licences renewed, having been in abeyance during the Covid lockdown year.

Voyager was taken up the slip on the 11th of May for hull cleaning prior to her 5 yearly hull thickness test on the 19th of May, following which the MCA surveyors will carry out an out of water inspection after which she will be put back in the water for a "light ship" test to confirm the figures between gunwale and water line.

Voyager will then be slipped to have her hull painted. Minor paint repairs will also be carried out, particularly where the fenders have been rubbing.

When Voyager is relaunched, Gipsy Princess needs to be slipped for welding repairs to her hull prior to her MCA inspection, following which she will need her hull and superstructure painted. When Gipsy will be slipped will depend on when private boats that have already booked a slot on the slip can make it through to The Stables.

Some boats are coming from the east and are dependent on Scottish Canals reopening the canal, some are coming from Applecross and Bowling and their transits will primarily depend on the works to the new pedestrian footbridge bridge at Stockingfield Junction.

Maintenance

Voyager has needed a variety of maintenance jobs carried out, including repairs to the bow thruster, engine and generator servicing, firefighting equipment (FFE) serviced, etc. The sacrificial anodes on the hull will be checked when she is out of the water.

Gipsy Princess also needs her engine serviced, her FFE has been serviced, and her sacrificial anodes will be checked when she is slipped.

Maryhill has had her engine battery replaced and requires improvements to her cooling system. Like the other two boats her engine needs servicing and her sacrificial anodes checked when next she is slipped.

All boats have needed rust removal, cleaning, and painting. A big job, and as Stewart says in his Chairman's chat (p2) "we may well have self-drive cars, but we still await self-drive boats". All help welcome please.

Slipway

Our slipway is again proving its worth. As well as being used to slip all our craft for

maintenance and inspection, it has also been asked for by six private boats at the time of going to press, from as far afield as Bowling, Applecross, Auchinstarry and Falkirk/Union Canal. The first of these was slipped on Monday 26th April and was launched on 11th May, the day Voyager was slipped.

Crew Training

Our comprehensive crew training programme has been put on hold due to Covid, for the second year running. We hope that crew training may be able to recommence later this year. Keep in touch for more information by our email alerts and social media.

Members Cruises

As with crew training it is hoped that we may be able to have members cruise later in the year with limited numbers, advance bookings, and social distancing.

Charters

Charters are also cancelled because of Covid although we are still receiving enquiries. A notice will be placed on the website and social media when we are able to start taking charter bookings again, along with information on any social distancing measures which would have an impact on numbers we can have on board.

New Members

A big welcome to all our new members who have appreciated the canals during lockdowns. We gained 10 new members in 2020, 5 before the first lockdown, and a further 5 between April and December. There are also a further 6 new members who have joined us up until May in 2021.

We currently don't have a number for the full membership as we are still waiting on some existing members to renew their membership although if everyone re-joins that will be 186, including all our new members.

Finance

Currently the financial situation looks good, with the receipt of the grant from EDC and the membership renewals coming in. That won't last, however, with two boats to have work done on them, to be inspected by the MCA, and no charter fees coming in.

Fortunately, the purpose of the EDC grant will absorb a good part of the works to the two passenger boats. While it would be helpful to receive some charter fees in 2021, we will survive financially, but need to start making an income before costs start to outstrip our income.

Society Archives

We are still trying to move forward on making our digital archives publicly accessible. But this is not as easy as you might think.

First there are the copyright issues with the many photographs made available to us, second the privacy issues regarding the veterans' interviews, and thirdly the technical issues of how we actually do it.

The obvious answer of using our website looks less obvious in detail. Partnering with the Scottish Archive Council and/or East Dunbartonshire archives looks more promising. Covid has stopped us having meetings to get a real grip on this. And, of course, the number of researchers likely to want to use the archive will probably be very small.

External 'Meetings'

Various committee members have been attending on-line meetings including Scottish Canals project updates and Scottish Waterways for All.

ABOUT US

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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

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

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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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