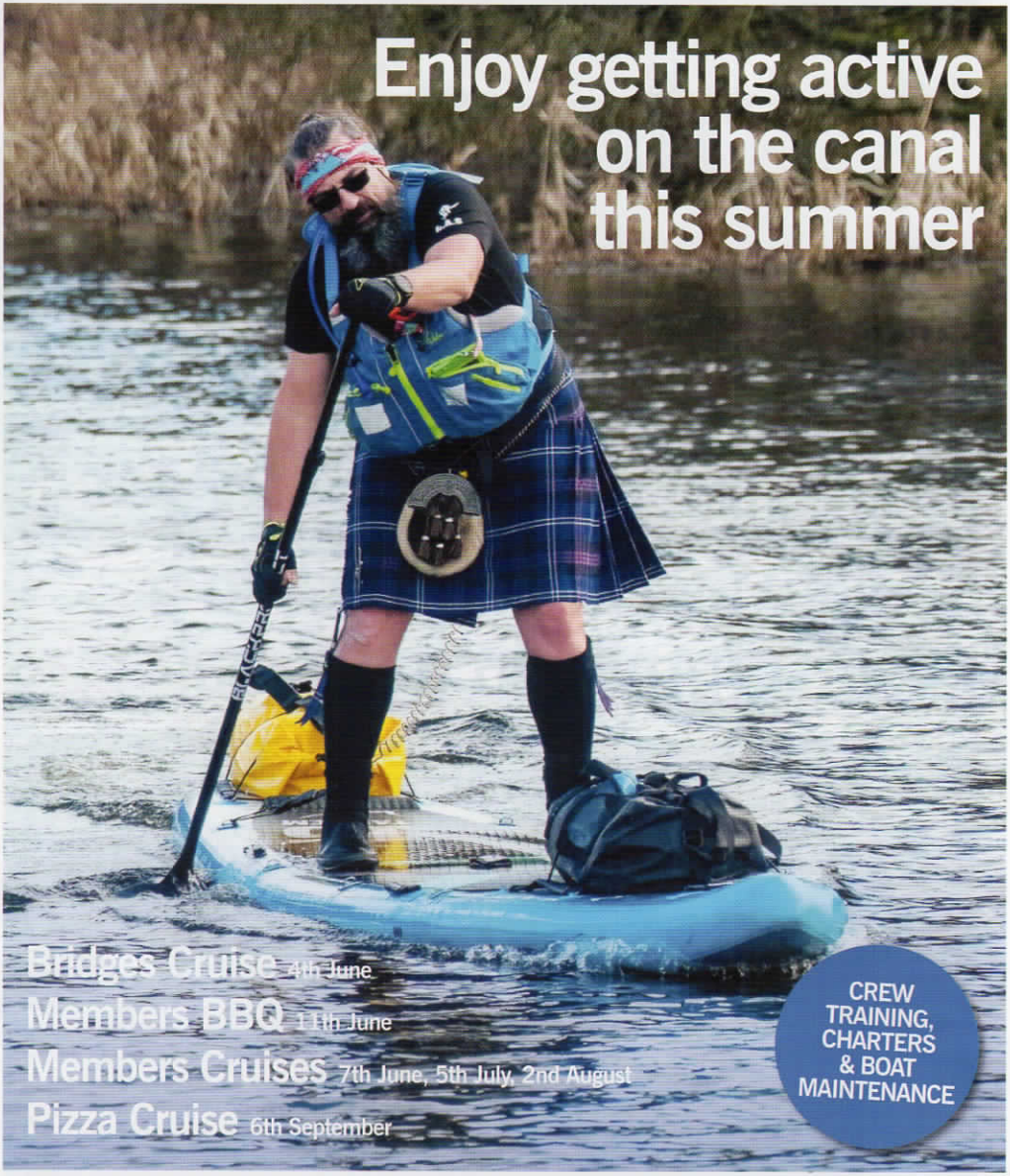
Forth & Clyde Canal Society

CANAL NEWS

Summer 2023 £1.50 FREE to Members ISSUE 181



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

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT



Voyager actually failed her MCA inspection as our repaired prop shaft was not accepted. A new prop shaft has been manufactured and installed and Voyager is now back sailing again, but we still, at the time of printing, are waiting on the new Passenger Certificate from the MCA

Society looking forward to a good summer on the canal

WELCOME to this edition of Canal News which you should receive as we approach what we hope will be a good summer, weather and sailing wise.

We have completed our first charter of the year as I write, for primary 5 children from Saracen Street Primary School, sailing from Applecross Basin up to the new bridges at Stockingfield Junction. The two trips went well, as the additional new bridge at Garscube worked ok for the trips but failed on Saturday, delaying by about 2 hours Gipsy Princess' return to the Stables.

A lot of work has been carried out on Gipsy Princess, most of which will go unnoticed as it has involved removal of parts and then either cleaning and refitting them or new material in lieu of the old. The weather has delayed the painting, which will hopefully be completed shortly.

Voyager has had a few repairs carried out, a new pressure switch for the water supply and, after a fault developed in the toilet, a new push button system has been installed as we have been unable, to date, to obtain a new part to replace the faulty unit.

Voyager is again, as I write this, about to be slipped as part of her annual MCA inspection and I have just seen the expected cost which has to be paid prior to inspection and you think your car's MOT costs are dear, they are peanuts in comparison.

Once again, I must thank Jim, Willie and Dave who have been doing most of the work on the boats and the others who have helped from time to time, and the paperwork team

members whose work goes mostly unseen but is equally important to the smooth running of the Society.

The crew training has commenced once more this year and we had a very good turnout with three new members attending, hopefully this will translate into a sizeable pool of volunteers to crew the charters.

Charter bookings are coming in, and bookings have been made for use of the slipway by third party boat owners who wish to carry out hull work, be it repairs or painting.

The normal members' evenings on the boats are on the first Wednesday of the month, meeting at 7:15pm for a 7:30pm departure. The last monthly trip will be on Wednesday 6th of September, and it will be a pizza evening again this year.

There are two members' events planned, the first being on Sunday 4th of June departing from The Stables at 11am, for a trip to the Glasgow Branch to see the new bridges. The second is a week later, on Sunday 11th of June. A member's BBQ beside the boats at The Stables. If the barbecue is all going well, we should be able to commence cooking from 1pm. Just remember to bring your own food and BBQ tools. Tea and Coffee will be provided.

Once again members' help is required for the society to function, be it attending social events, maintaining the boats, crewing charters, assisting at the slipway, or, as a certain supermarket advert states, "every little helps".

Stewart Procter
Chairman

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Editor's Note

Welcome to our summer issue. We have plenty to enjoy on the canal with a series of members cruises and, as Stewart says, plenty to do keeping our boats and slipway running.

In this issue we continue with our Society at Work series with an article by Jim Miller on getting Gipsy Princess back in operation. Our President Guthrie Hutton continues our series on early canal campaigning.

Our wildlife photo story brings you a bouquet of spring and summer blooms. The Gartsherrie Branch Canal features in our "lost canals" series.

Our Society News piece gives a good feel for all the hard work that goes into all our canal activities. Please do help if you can, and enjoy getting active on the canal this summer

Paul Carter, Editor

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NEWS IN BRIEF



The Fairy Queen at Hillhead Basin more than a century ago

Get Canal Active

Our Society has plenty of activity to offer this summer. Our charter season is already well underway with school cruises, town twinning outings, hen parties and whisky tasting cruises already done or planned.

We have monthly members cruises, plan a long cruise to see the new Glasgow pedestrian canal bridges, and a canalside members BBQ in June. Crew training, boat maintenance and other activities to keep our boats and Society going continue all year.

Please do get involved. See Chairman's Chat and Society News for more details.

Canal notches up Quarter Century

Construction of the Forth and Clyde Canal started at Grangemouth on 10th June 1768. Just 5 years, nineteen miles and twenty lock chambers later our canal was carrying traffic from the North Sea to Kirkintilloch.

Jean Lindsay reports in her 1968 book 'The Canals of Scotland' that "By August 1773 the canal had been completed from the Forth to Kirkintilloch, where boats of 50 tons burden were arriving with cargoes from Bo'ness. In addition the Townhead Reservoir (Banton Loch) had been filled, and a basin had been laid out at Stockingfield, 2 miles north of Glasgow."

Hillhead Basin in Kirkintilloch became effectively an east coast port for two glorious years. The canal was then completed to Stockingfield by 1775, the Glasgow Branch by 1778, and Bowling by 1790.

Ten Year Plan

More than twenty years after the Millennium Link, Scottish Canals is developing a ten

year plan for major lock gate refurbishment and replacement along the Forth and Clyde Canal. They are considering use of new fibre reinforced plastic gates, never before used in Scotland.

The work will be undertaken over the next ten years. It is intended to give at least another twenty years lease of life to our canal.

Falkirk Repairs

Diver surveys and special construction work is being carried out on several locks on the Falkirk Flight to prepare for the cruising season.

This includes work to replace Lock 8, Merchiston, damaged by a car during a police incident. Carron Sea Lock No 2 is undergoing extensive repair by MacKenzie Construction, we understand caused by a sewer collapse.

The Falkirk Flight from The Falkirk Wheel to The Kelpies is closed to navigation till June to allow for these repairs.

Castlecary Repairs

Scottish Canals have also been busy at Castlecary with lock gate sluice repair work at Lock chambers 18 and 19 Castlecary and Lock 20 Wyndford. Wyndford has particular importance as it is the eastern terminus of the canal's summit reach. The lock gates are therefore holding back 18 miles (30km) of canal water, all the way into Glasgow.

Glasgow Flight

Glasgow and the west have not missed out on repairs. Scottish Canals have carried out survey works and repairs to lock gates and chambers at Locks 31 and 32 Blairdardie. They are also carrying out extensive work at Lock 36 Duntreath. Lock dewatering and fish rescue was carried out prior to the works. The towpath is closed until the end of May with a lengthy diversion in place, and the whole flight is closed until completion of the repairs, hopefully before June.





Lock repairs at Blairdardie

NEWS IN BRIEF



Banton Loch

Water levels in Banton Loch have been kept particularly low at the beginning of the cruising season. Locals are concerned at the unsightliness and smell of extensive exposed silt flats. Notices warn people of the dangers of venturing close. Not good.

Last year water levels were also kept low and Scottish Canals had to restrict lock movements during the cruising season as a result. Why again?

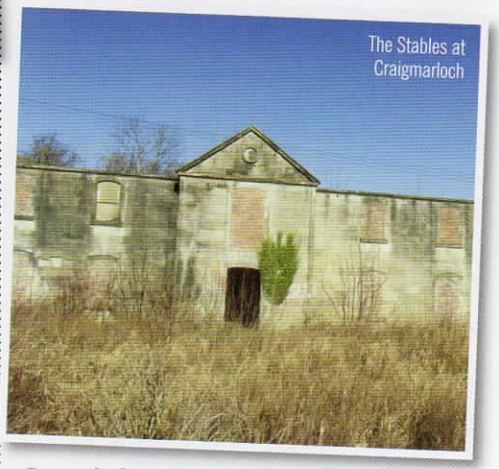
Canal Festival Back On

After the Covid break, Kirkintilloch's popular Canal Festival is back on, over the weekend of Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th of August. Live music, boat trips and family fun for all promised. Our Society, along with the Seagull Trust, will be running boat trips.

Also, East Dunbartonshire Council (EDC) is chartering our boat Voyager for triips from NMonday to Thursday. Monday to Thursday will be day time trips, theme still being worked on by EDC, but the Thursday will be the ever popular fish tea trip in the evening. Bookings for these trips must be done through EDC's website.

Craigmarloch Stables

There is also local concern in Kilsyth about the deteriorating condition of the shell of the old canal stable block. Trees are growing within the shell and bushes are even growing out of the masonry. Our Society campaigned successfully forty years ago for essential stabilising works carried out by Strathclyde Region but the building is again heading towards danger. Before Covid, Scottish Canals held a major consultation event in Kilsyth regarding the future of the old stables, but nothing has been heard since.


The Stables at Craigmarloch

Auchinstarry enjoys fun in the sun

The new roman Fort playground at Auchinstarry, featured in our previous issue, was mobbed over the Easter weekend. It has also been hugely popular throughout Spring, whenever the sun has shone and the kids have not been at school.

Auchinstarry Marina and the Boathouse Inn were also packed over Easter and the local paddleboard/canoe hire folk have been doing a roaring trade. On our front cover we picture an intrepid kilted charity paddler, heading past Auchinstarry all the way from Glasgow



Below: Getting friendly with local Roman Commander's wife Vibia at Auchinstarry



New National Transport Trust Red Wheels marking the Caledonian and Crinan Canals. A new wheel for the Maryhill Aqueduct on the Forth & Clyde is expected this year. See our next issue.

to Edinburgh. Brave man. Paddleboarding was not even heard of when we started the Forth and Clyde Canal Society over forty years ago, but folk can now hire paddleboards at Auchinstarry.

New CEO

Scottish Canals has a new CEO. John Robertson was appointed from a short list of nine (over 60 applied) on 21st March and will take over the helm in May. He has joined from NHS Tayside and in his 30 year public service career has led several high value capital and revenue projects. John says that "I aim to further maximise the canals potential" providing the arena for better health and wellbeing, tourism, leisure and capitalise on Scotland's 140 miles of historic monuments and heritage.



New Scottish Canals CEO John Robertson

FEATURES

Society at Work

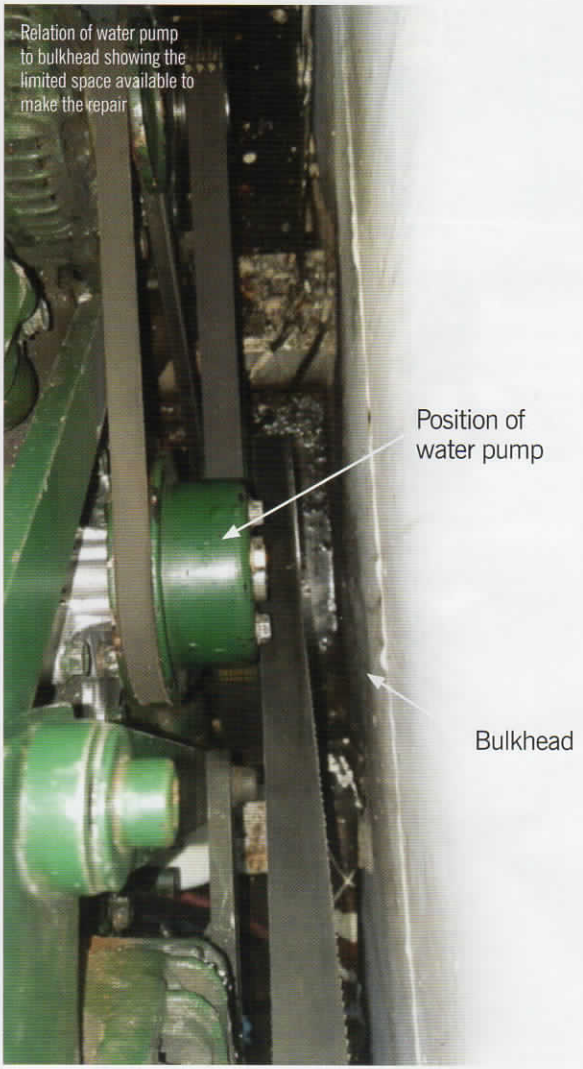
Jim Miller continues our new series with the tale of replacing Gipsy's engine water pump, including use of a handy hammer

AS GIPSY Princess now has her MCA license to carry passengers renewed it was decided that the issue of the leaky engine water pump should be addressed. To this end a new water pump and gasket were purchased.

Replacing an engine water pump is normally a straightforward job but not so on Gipsy. The main problem that we had was one of access (see picture) we had approximately 50mm in which to work.

To start the job, we had to slacken the adjustment screws on all 3 alternators to allow the drive belts to be removed. This was relatively straightforward however the difficulty began with attempting to remove the water pump itself. 14 of the 15 securing bolts could be removed however the 15th (very bottom bolt – see next picture) could not be withdrawn without first removing the bottom drive pulleys. At this point we left to consult the internet for information regarding the removal of the pulleys.

Various web sites were checked, and drawings pored over but some sites gave conflicting information. A member of the team (Willie Boyle) used his initiative and called Beta Marine (engine manufacturer) and spoke with



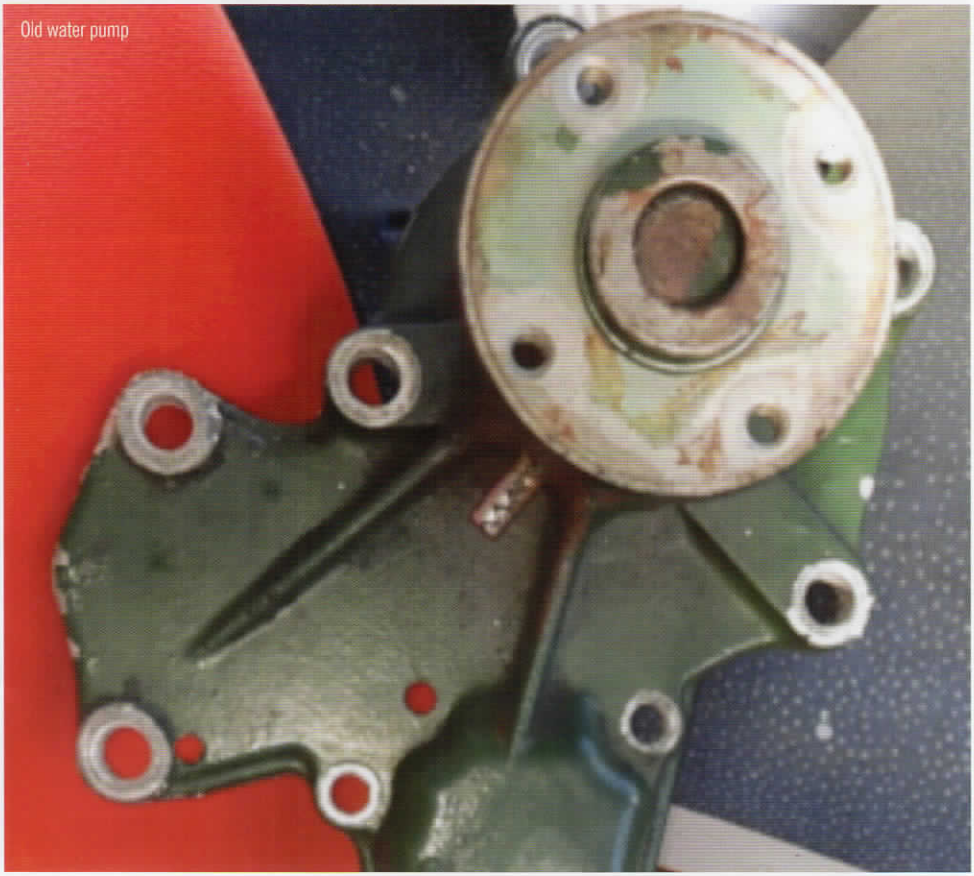
Relation of water pump to bulkhead showing the limited space available to make the repair

the maintenance manager who advised him that after removing the 4 allen headed bolts hit the pulley with a hammer and it should fall off!

While the above was good advice, the problem was how do you swing a hammer in a constricted space? As we considered this dilemma some penetrating oil was sprayed around the pulley in way of the faying surfaces. We sourced a piece of wood that we could thread through the brackets and other components and hit the protruding end with the hammer. We were rewarded by a tinkle as the pulleys came off and hit the deck.

The rebuild was a very straightforward affair with the most difficult part being the replacement of the drive belts.

Finally, we replaced the anti-freeze (5 litres), checked all bolts were tight and started the engine.



Old water pump

FEATURES

From Wellie boots to suits: How campaigning got political

Guthrie Hutton continues our series on canal campaigning

THE EARLY canal rallies were a wonderful combination of enthusiastic derring-do, hard work and silliness. The boats were unsophisticated, grubby and scarcely inviting, and yet we did invite people to sail on them and they queued up to do so. The canal was a mess of weed and floating rubbish, again not inviting, but it was the 1970s and we were selling optimism, a rare commodity at the time.

Then in 1976 the political landscape changed, local government was reorganised as a two-tier structure with town and county councils replaced by district councils to manage local affairs and regional authorities to oversee the bigger picture. We can argue about the relative merits of the system, but there was little doubt it worked in the canal's favour. Two regional councils, Strathclyde and Central, had responsibility for the canal along with six district authorities of which Falkirk, in Central Region, was the only one outside Strathclyde. New planners with new ideas were recruited to run new planning departments; it was hard for them to ignore the appalling state of the canal.

At the time the only practical strategy was to arrest decline, but how? Should the whole thing be filled in to a 'safe' depth as favoured by Clydebank, or was there another way? With so many authorities it could have been like herding cats, but Strathclyde Regional Council took control, drove the process of public consultation and drew up a set of planning guidelines in a Forth & Clyde Canal Local (Subject) Plan, There were to be no more blockages, new crossings would be set at a height above the water and improvements should be made when opportunities occurred.



The plan didn't go far enough for us, so we objected and had to present our case to a public enquiry in Falkirk Town Hall. It was a strange occasion because by that time we had all got to know the planners quite well and, despite being on opposite sides, had an amiable lunch together.

The plan was eventually adopted and monitoring committees were set up, one for elected representatives and one for planners and officials of public bodies. By that time the Forth & Clyde Canal Society had been formed and was also invited to be on the committees, as were colleagues from the Falkirk and District Canals Society, reflecting Falkirk District Council's slightly anomalous situation outside Strathclyde. This was a new situation, nowhere else in the UK were voluntary canal societies able to directly influence official decision-making in this way. So at different times Donald Mackinnon, Richard Davies and myself donned suitable clothes and stalked the corridors of power. Meanwhile colleagues out

on the canal were running boat trips, holding rallies and organising work parties, and in doing so creating the arguments that we could deploy at meetings, it was a winning formula.

Some improvements were implemented under the plan including a huge clean up of Maryhill Locks funded by Strathclyde and a rolling programme of installing new lock gates made at the Scottish Maritime Museum. New bridges were built at Temple, Craigmarloch and for the Kirkintilloch by-pass road. Later, under the Glasgow Canal Project, bridges at Glasgow Road, Ruchill and Firhill were reinstated and other improvements were carried out under the Clydebank Canal Project – all based on provisions in the Local Plan.

This incremental progress provided a backdrop for the Millennium Link project when it was launched in October 1994, but not long after that, local government was again reorganised. It could have derailed the bid, but Glasgow City Council took over as lead authority from Strathclyde, ensuring that momentum wasn't lost. New committees, based on those established under the Local Plan, were formed to push the Millennium Link project. They included planners from the Lothians and Edinburgh responsible for the Union Canal who were surprised to discover voluntary sector representatives already involved and well versed in the issues.

And there was one last big issue that had to be dealt with: the upgrading of the A80 to motorway standard. There were two options, remaking the existing dual carriageway or building a new road through the Kelvin Valley. Again the society lodged objections, and had to present our case at a public consultation forum. Although not given the staus of a full public enquiry, it felt like one and was one of the least enjoyable days of my campaigning years, but the decision went in our favour - clearing the way for the Millennuim Link to proceed.

Looking back over these events, it seems remarkable that those early rallies led to strategies being put in place that helped to drive a Local Plan that laid the foundation for the project that eventually reinstated the canal. And people said we were crazy!



Canal volunteers in the early 1970s

FEATURES

Enjoy the power of flowers this summer on the canal

Pictures by Kilsyth photographer Malcolm Gillies



THE CANAL is blazing with colour at this time of year. Lillies on the water, flowers along the towpath, blossom on the hedges. Blooming lovely.

Whites and yellows dominate the Spring colours. Lower growing plants like wood anenomies, celandine, daisies, primroses and hawksbits grab their time in the sun before the taller herbs take over. It is not all white and yellow however, blue squill and violets demand their share of attention from the pollinators, and look out for stunning orchids.

The mass flowering of bluebells in our countryside woodlands heralds a change to taller plants, with mainly blue and red flowers in the summer. Bush vetch, knapweed, foxglove and willow herb all add to the show. Whites are not missing however, like oxe eye daisies, the many unbellifers and valerian with it's subtle pink tinge.

Water lillies are a real treat on the canal (but not on your propeller). Kingcups or marsh marigolds grow along the canal bank, along with tall yellow flag irises, reed sweet grass and reed mace, known to many as bullrush.

The importance of blossom is not to be sniffed at, with the scents and sights of canalside hedges festooned with may blossom, blackthorn and elderflowers adding to the show. Wild roses and rugosa add a welcome splash of pink and red to the sea of frothy cream and white.

Invasive species from overseas can be a problem in places. Monkey flowers are lovely to look at and do not cause too much of an issue. But himalayan balsam is a real threat, taking over lengths of canal bank and eliminating native wildflowers. It is at least quite good to look at but the scent is heavy and pungent. Japanese knotweed is another take over merchant, even a tiny piece of root can start another large colony.

The pollinators love all the blooms. Butterflies like red admirals, peacocks, frittilaries, green veined whites and orange tips are like flying flowers themselves as they head in for the feast. Bees and hoverflies too. Even beetles and flies arrive for their share of nectar, paying back by taking pollen from flower to flower.

Seeds and fruit are the intended outcome of all this activity. Goldcrests devour thistle seeds, blackbirds love the elderberries, fieldfares and redwings flock in from the arctic in autumn to devour the haws. All this devouring helps spread the seed, along with a helpful dash of fertiliser. Rosehips? Well, as postwar schoolkids we could get a tanner for a pound weight at the cottage hospital, where they boiled them up for syrup rich in vitamin C. We could get quite a few gob stoppers for a tanner.

We have tried to name check all or most of Malcolm's pictures. See if you can pick them out. Better still, enjoy a stroll beside the canal to see and smell all the blooms and blossom for yourself.

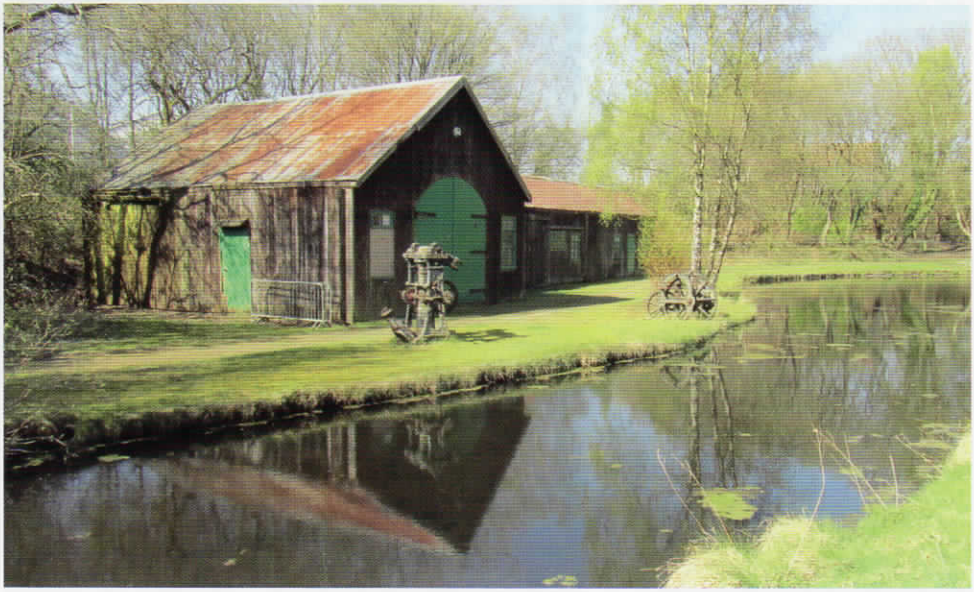
Please do send Canal News your wildlife stories and pictures.



FEATURES

Gartsherrie Branch Canal

Continuing our occasional series on Scotland's lost canals & lades



ONCE a hard-working branch of the Monkland Canal, the remaining section of the Gartsherrie Branch is now a picturesque part of Summerlee Heritage Park, Coatbridge.

With the imposing title of 'The Gartsherrie, Hornock and Summerlee Branch Canal' this little waterway was only over just a mile long. It stretched north from the Monkland Canal at the amazing 'Bridges' site on the A89 in central Coatbridge. This is an impressively congested coming together of road, rail and pedestrian bridges over the original Monklands Canal, now infilled and a public recreation area at this point.

According to a letter and account in North Lanarkshire Archives, the branch was completed by June 1829. It had been built largely on the bed of the, now culverted and diverted, Gartsherrie Burn. The original purpose of the canal was to serve coal mines, but this rapidly became added to by a major ironworks trade. The Gartsherrie Ironworks were set up in 1830 by the Baird Brothers at the branch terminus and Summerlee Ironworks were set up halfway along in 1836, closing in 1930.

Guthire Hutton's book 'Monkland, the canal that made money' published in 1993 by Stenlake, gives some detail and pictures, including bare bottomed boyes swimming in the branch. Guthrie tells us that "the rapid expansion of the (ironworks) industry was due first to David Mushet's discovery of blackband ironstone near Coatdyke, then the invention of the hot blast process of iron smelting by James Beaumont Neilson and finally to the flouting of his patent by the Bairds".

Today about 700m of the branch canal route can be traced in Summerlee Heritage

Park. About half of this has been converted to walkways and a boat themed children's playground. The other half is still a proper canal, full of water, with towpath beside and restored side basin, Howes Basin. It is all very attractive with canal side trees, swans and ducks, all in the middle of busy Coatbridge.

The replica "Vulcan" is berthed here, resting on a cradle slightly proud of the water. It is an imposing sight. The original Vulcan, the world's first iron boat, was built a few miles away at Faskine on the Monklands Canal in 1819, designed by Henry Creighton. The boat carried passengers on the Forth and Clyde Canal until 1830, then cargo until scrapped in 1873, after 54 years in service. The replica Vulcan seen here was built for the Glasgow Garden Festival and re-sited at Summerlee in 2016. See the late Frank Quinn's detailed article in Canal News issue 169, Spring 2019.

Summerlee, Museum of Scottish Industrial Life, is well worth a visit. The large exhibition hall is full of Scotland's old industrial machinery, you can get a ride on the working trams, take the kids down the very realistic replica mine, visit the row of cottages down the ages, and even get an ice cream from the vintage ice cream van. Plus of course a café and all necessary facilities. Not to mention a little slice of canal history.

Free admission, open 7 days (but check), Heritage Way, Coatbridge. 01236 638460. Enjoy.





SPLASHBACK From The Canal News Archives

Forty Years Ago

'Ferry Queen Sails Again' was our June front page story, with Strathkelvin's Provost Gerrard McCormack 'relaunching' the boat with a bottle of champagne, piper and cruise to Bishopbriggs. TV and Press coverage was very good. Our September lead story was 'The Other Marathon' covering the upcoming annual two-day canal inflatable Drambuie Marathon from Glasgow to Edinburgh. To canal enthusiast's dismay the Scottish People's Marathon had been moved to the same date, potentially eclipsing our big effort.

Thirty Years Ago

'Carnage on the Canal' was our July front page lead, covering wildlife rescues by Hessilhead Wildlife Trust. Swans were the main victims helped, with injuries caused by flying into overhead cables, getting caught up in abandoned fishing tackle and having bricks thrown at them. 'Scottish Blend Hogshead Rally' in our September issue covered a gruelling one-day inflatable race right along the Canal from Bowling to Grangemouth. Teams came from all over Scotland, plus London, Yorkshire and Leicester.

Twenty Years Ago

'Guthrie for Vice!!' was our intruiging front page title. Dissapointingly it simply reported on Guthrie Hutton taking on our Vice President role.

Nothing lip smacking at all. Rather wonderfully Guthrie is still our President, see his article on early canal campaigning on page 10 of this issue.

Our September issue front page was headlined 'Boat Fund' dealing with fund raising to construct our flagship Voyager. Curiously this was called the 'More than Boats' project. Maybe the 'than' should have been ommitted.

Ten Years Ago

Our May issue covered our new fleet member 'Maryhill', Paul's Paths No 19 from Summerlea to Drumpellier, and Newby's View of canal society activities by Harry Silvers.

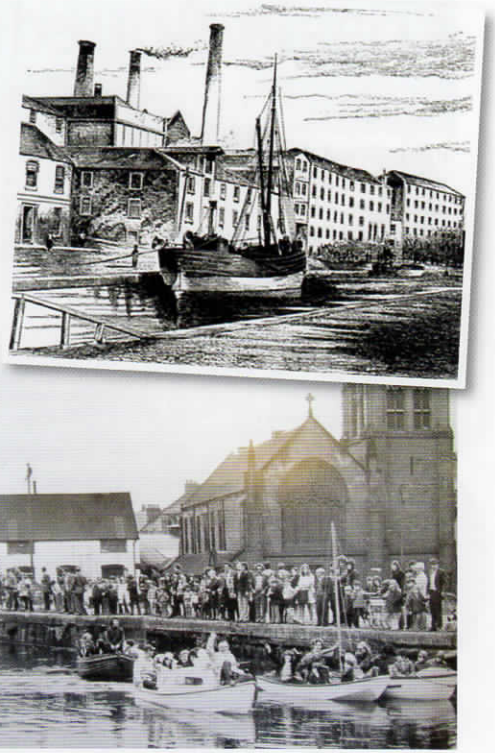
Fun Day at The Stables, the Largo Canal, Canal College, School Trips and Paul's Path from Westerton to Kilpatrick all featured in our August issue.

From the Photo Archives:
Ferry Queen being lowered into the canal



Raiders of the lost canal archives

Wanted, a Canal Society Indiana Jones. Read the story so far...



WAY BACK in the mists of time, well pre-Covid anyway, our Society hosted the CanalCraft project. One of the outcomes from this project is a digital record of our FCCS archives and other canal material. These are now contained on two hard drives, currently gathering dust.

Enter stage left and apparent saviour, Scottish Archivist Miriam Buncombe. Miriam contacted the Society to enquire about the availability of our archives to the public. This seemed a great opportunity to hand over the hard drives to Miriam and then get on with fixing and running our boats.

Miriam kindly came over to meet with us in April at our kirkintilloch Marina office. We went through the digital archives and two things quickly became apparent. The first was that Scottish Archives do not host other organisation's archives. Instead they put a page on their website signposting enquirers to archives such as ours.

The second was that our digital archives are not in a good enough condition for Scottish Archives to signpost them. Basically they need to be much better organised in a clear and logical way or they cannot be readily used. After the meeting Miriam very helpfully sent us a long email with detailed suggestions.

The digital archives cover two main themes. The first theme is basic FCCS and canal history. This includes scans of all issues of Canal News from issue No 1 in 1980, nine oral history interviews with long time canal activists, and canal picture archives.

The second theme is the CanalCraft project itself, including small boatbuilding workshops, other workshops such as journalism, celebratory events and personal achievement certificates.

All good stuff. But to put this satisfactorily in order for public use would divert existing volunteers away from our core activity of running boats.

Which brings us to to you, dear reader. We have at least one hundered 'armchair' members who have joined to show your support, without being able to help run the boats. We value your membership. So, would any of you like a challenge and become the Canal Society's very own Indiana Jones, a real life raider of the Lost Archives? If so, initially please get in touch with the Editor.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Luggie Aqueduct concerns

THE QUESTION of visitor experience at the Luggie Aqueduct in Kirkintilloch has arisen. It is believed that many towpath walkers pass across the top level without realising its distinctive 3-level nature. The Aqueduct is an original Forth & Clyde Canal feature, but remained as a straightforward river crossing until 1848, when the Campsie Branch Railway opened and was inserted between the Canal and the River Luggie, to create a 'double-decker' structure. This survived the railway closure of 1966 and the middle level is nowadays a footpath, providing access to Luggie Water Park.

There was until recently a direct pathway from the top of the Canal Aqueduct to the lower (ex-railway) level that enabled people engaged in leading transport history-related walking tours (and interested people generally) to move very readily between levels – but this has been blocked off by a fence at towpath level. Restoration of this path would render the Luggie Aqueduct much more visitable as a historic feature. It is possible at the present time to move between levels by means of a circuitous route via Canal Street (which connects with the towpath just east of the Aqueduct), but this will not be obvious to visitors, who would surely appreciate a more direct route.

The three levels (Canal/former railway/ Luggie) are much cherished by Kirkintilloch people.

Don Martin

Don is a well kent Kirkintilloch historian and FCCS veteran.



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.

PLEASE CHECK WEBSITE FOR CURRENT COVID-19 GUIDELINES

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

SOCIETY NEWS



Voyager on the slipway

Voyager update

Before Voyager was slipped in April she had both her propulsion engine and generator engine serviced. Following slipping she was power washed and areas were treated for rust where required.

Our volunteers then painted the keel plate (a dirty and messy job), the hull below the waterline, and then the rest of the hull. The vital MCA inspection was scheduled for Thursday 20th April. In good faith last December we had a repair carried out to the prop shaft after noticing some wear when it was removed to replace the cutlass bearing, reported on in the last issue.

Unfortunately, when the MCA surveyor inspected the boat we were advised that, due to new legislation, passenger boats can not have the prop repaired, it must be replaced. At the time of preparing this copy of Canal News we are having a new prop shaft manufactured, at a cost of just under £2k, never mind the hard work of our volunteers to remove the old one and refit the new one, once we have it. By the time you receive this copy of Canal News it is likely that the new prop shaft will be fitted and Voyager will be cruising again.

Gipsy Princess

Gipsy had her MCA inspection carried out towards the end of last year and is ready for this seasons cruising having had her engine serviced. This is the first time in two years she will be sailing, and she already has a number of charters planned. As usual there continues to be ongoing maintenance, a lot of it completed before the cruising season started, but there are one or two remaining items which our band of dedicated volunteers will carry out when the boat is not cruising.

Maryhill

Maryhill has recently had her engine serviced and is ready to go cruising. We have one or two charters lined up for her although, like Voyager and Gipsy Princess, she has her own safety inspection to go through in August. Unlike the two passenger boats she gets Boat Safety Scheme Certification, as all privately owned boats do.

Thanks to all our volunteers for all the hard work they do on our three boats. Without their dedication we would not be sailing!

We have received some additional help this year in the form of some new volunteers who responded to our poster advertising campaign. We have also gained some new members through the same medium.

Charters

We started the season in March with a charter to Scottish Canals to take Saracen Primary School in Glasgow for a cruise where they were given information on the history of the canal, and also saw the new bridge structures at Stockingfield, but more of that elsewhere. The one charter in April had to be postponed due to the work on Voyager, but we managed to reschedule it. May, June, July & August sees several charters booked, and we have been asked to go to Kilsyth to provide boat trips for the Kilsyth Gala Day at Auchinstarry Marina on 18th June.

August sees the return of the Kirkintilloch Canal Festival, 21st – 27th, where Voyager will be chartered to East Dunbartonshire Council to run cruises from the Monday to the Thursday and, in conjunction with the Seagull Trust, we will be running public boat trips on Voyager and Gipsy Princess on the Saturday and Sunday.

The last cruise for the season will be the members pizza cruise on Wednesday 6th September.

Slipway

Once Voyager comes off the slip Gipsy Princess will go up to have her hull rust treated and painted then, from Sunday 14th May, private boats start to use the slip, right through to the middle of October. One of the first ones had to be cancelled due to the west end of the canal towards Bowling being dewatered but we managed to fill that slot very quickly.



Tommy's talk

SOCIETY NEWS


Canal Walk for Heritage Manth

Crew Training

Crew training started on the 29th March, and the new format for this year is proving quite successful. Three members who joined us last year have started their training with a view to gaining their Boatmasters Licence.

Members Cruises

The first members cruise was to have been on the 3rd May but had to be postponed until after Voyager was repaired. Another training evening on Gipsy Princess was scheduled in its place.

Members cruises will resume on the first Wednesday evening of the month from June through to September. We will look at the availability around charters and try and fit in a replacement members cruise for the one postponed in May.

Events

Sunday 4th June – Members cruise to view new pedestrian bridges in Glasgow
10:30am at Voyager for an 11:00am departure
Please note this trip will probably be at least 4 hours so bring your own lunch. Teas & coffees will be provided.

Sunday 11th June – Members BBQ at our moorings opposite The Stables
Barbecue will be ready to start cooking at 1 pm. Bring you own food. BBQ utensils will be provided. Teas & coffees will be provided.

Wednesday 6th September – Members Pizza Cruise. 6:45pm at Voyager for a prompt 7:00pm departure. Pizzas provided by Nonna's Kitchen.

Tommy's Talk

Members enjoyed a wonderful talk by Tommy Lawton taking canal history from Charles II, wondering how his fleet could avoid Cape Wrath, all the way to today.

Membership

The membership subscriptions for 2023 have, in the main, been paid. As usual there are a few stragglers and this article will be the final reminder to members who have not yet paid. Our constitution states that anyone who has not paid their memnership within six months of the due date will have their membership cancelled without being contacted. Those members who have not yet paid their membership will get a bit of a reprieve this year as your membership secretary has been very busy, and will not have

time before this issue of Canal News is posted out to analyse the payments and identify who has not paid. This will be done prior to the issue of the Autumn / Winter copy of Canal News and members notified. Anyone who receives a letter must arrange to pay their membership prior to the AGM in November, or their membership will be cancelled.

Since the start of 2023 we have had eight new members join us and, with one or two exceptions, all are joining in with maintenance and crew training. I think a lot of this is because of a poster/leaflet prepared by new committee member Scott Castel which has been put up in a number of places.

Finance

Unfortunately a lot more has been going out than coming in since the new financial year started in October, most of it to do with the inspection and maintenance to our two passenger vessels, Gipsy Princess and Voyager. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) have again raised their fees, and the survey cost for each boat was just under £1.5k. Thankfully there was not a lot identified on Gipsy Princess in November 2022, but when Voyager was surveyed in April we were told by the MCA surveyor that we had replace the prop shaft. We had, in good faith had a repair carried out in December but were advised at the survey that this is not permitted on passenger vessels. We managed to have a new shaft manufactured in under a week but the cost of this, plus the repair, came to approx £2.4k, a cost we weren't expecting.

We have bookings for a number of charters for this year so should manage to recoup this cost. Also, we are still working on finalising the insurance claim following the break-in to the containers a little over a year ago. Two payments have been made for replacement items, and a cash settlement for items we would not replace after the second incident. We have just purchased some high value items as part of the first claim and our finances will improve after we have been reimbursed for these.

Heritage Walk

March was Heritage Month for East Dunbartonshire and they held a packed programme of events, talks and walks. Fifteen folk took part in our canal heritage walk, led by Canal News editor Paul Carter. The walk explored the history of the canal itself, local shipbuilding and canalside iron foundries.



Caught on Camera

Our camera by the containers near the slipway is ever alert to catch thieves and vandals in the act. However, they caught this startled wood pigeon, flying in panic from an inquisitive roe deer.

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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