

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

Some new ideas have been mooted recently in respect of possible outings. One is a “mini-cruise”, sailing overnight from Dundee to Newcastle on the vessel “Ambition”. Date for this is Friday 21st August. There are various cabins available and a single occupancy supplement. Sail from Dundee to Newcastle overnight and a bus takes you back the next day.

Similarly, there is a small day cruise on board the VIC 32, a steam puffer of “Para Handy” fame, sailing either from Tarbert, Loch Fyne on various dates in May, or Crinan on various dates in June & July

We have the opportunity to attend The Scottish Military Ball being held on Saturday 24th May at the Royal Scots Club, Abercrombie Place in Edinburgh. It is a black tie event (or your best ball gown) and is £90 per person. A table for 10 will be £810. It comprises of a dinner and dance and runs from 1900 to 0100. Ten people required if we want to take a table. Wives and sweethearts are welcome to join.

Galley Radio

Merchant Navy Association – Edinburgh & Forth Branch

WINTER 2024/5

Happy New Year to all. Welcome to the fifth issue of **Galley Radio**, where we cover some of the events that have happened during the Winter session.

As always, we still need assistance with providing material for the bulletins and look to our members to offer stories, ditties, anecdotes, or any up and coming news and events for including in the newsletter.

Christmas Lunch

The Branch Christmas lunch was held at DINE in Edinburgh on December 12th. It was an excellent meal and the company was well satisfied with their feast. Apres-lunch, some retired to the Blue Blazer to continue the festivities with a few sociable sherries.



Ship Visit

Friday 20th December saw us back in Leith to visit the Northern Lighthouse vessel, “Pharos”, preparing to go in to drydock. Our thanks to Alistair, the Skipper, Jamie and Callum for taking the time to show us round their well kept vessel.



Happy days....

At times you would wander around the engine room at sea, ‘checking the job’ so to speak, thinking you were the only one there. One of those times, thinking I was alone, protected by the machinery noises with the ship steaming at full speed, I broke wind, privately, certainly not quietly. From nowhere, the No.1 fireman materialised, remarking in his inscrutable Chinese way, “Me think your belly plenty happy, Numba Four, your backside make plenty sing-song!”



POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025 contd.

Another suggestion for a day trip is to visit the Isle of May on the "May Princess" out of Anstruther. Trips run from the beginning of April to the end of September. Lasting for 4.5 – 5 hours, it includes a 2.5 – 3 hour visit ashore. Departure times depend on the tides. There is also the chance to visit the Scottish Fisheries Museum whilst in Anstruther and the option for a decent fish supper afterwards.

Union Canal boat trip from Linlithgow. Options for a 2 ½ hour trip, or at certain weekends, a trip to the Falkirk Wheel.

Maid of the Forth, South Queensferry, with options for the 3 Bridges tour, Jazz/Folk evening, or landing on Inchcolm Island

Glenlee sailing ship and the Transport Museum in Glasgow

Maid of the Loch at Balloch, Loch Lomond

Suggestions are always welcome for new potential visits.

How many inches in the Forth?

The "Inch" we are speaking of comes from the Gaelic (Innis), meaning "island" or "meadow". Forth is derived from the old Gaelic (Foirthe), meaning "slow running". The Firth of Forth is 55 miles long by 19 miles wide at its mouth, between Fife Ness and Dunbar. The tidal limit can be said to begin at Stirling.

The first down river from Stirling is **Tullibody Inch** near the small town of Tullibody, which was originally farmland, but was abandoned due to subsidence from coal mining which resulted in flooding. Similarly, **Alloa Inch** was just a mudbank which would flood at spring tides until in 1800 when a 9 foot embankment was built around the island allowing it to be farmed for another 180 years. A combination of subsidence from mining and collapse of the embankment led to the farm being abandoned in 1982.

The next "unofficial" island could be **Preston Island**, a man-made island begun after the discovery of coal near Valleyfield where Sir Robert Preston sunk a coal pit and built a saltworks in 1800. Coal extraction from the mine failed, but the saltworks continued until 1840. In 1982 the island became surrounded by ash residue pumped from the nearby Longannet Power Station. Rosyth Castle was on an island before the surrounding land was reclaimed for the naval yard at Rosyth in 1909, prior to the start of World War I.



Inchgarvie, "Innis Garbhach", meaning Rough Island lies beneath the Forth Rail Bridge, where the channel narrows to just a mile wide between North and South Queensferry. The island occupies a location which was key to the defence of the upper reaches of the Forth estuary and a castle was built here c.1490 by King James IV. This served as a state prison between 1519 and 1671. The island was sold to the Forth Bridge Railway Company for £2700 and in 1882, work began on the rail bridge with one of the huge cantilevers was centred immediately to the west of Inchgarvie and a pier built to allow foundations to be sunk and the structure to be constructed. Offices, workshops and sleeping accommodation all had to be built on the island to support the construction of the bridge. Defences were reconstructed once more to protect the Forth Rail Bridge and the nearby Rosyth Dockyard



from air-attack during the First and Second World Wars. **Inchcolm**, from the Gaelic "Innis Choluim", meaning Columba's Island. It was the home of a religious community linked with St Colm, or St Columba, the 6th-century Abbot of Iona. King Alexander I was storm-bound on the island for three days in 1123 and in recognition of the shelter given to him by the hermits, promised to establish a monastic settlement in honour of St Columba. Though the king died before the promise could be fulfilled, his brother David I later founded a priory here for monks of the Augustinian order; the priory was erected into an abbey in 1223. In subsequent history, the island has been a prison and defence garrison since Tudor times and the abbey was abandoned in 1560 after the Scottish Reformation. During both the First and Second World War, Inchcolm was part of the defences of the Firth of Forth. Inchcolm was the HQ of what were called in the First World War the 'Middle defences', the main element of which was a continuous anti-submarine and anti-boat boom across the river. The defences were intended to protect the naval anchorage between Inchcolm and the Forth Rail Bridge as there was no longer room above the bridge to moor all the ships based in the Forth.

Apologies and correction

In the last edition of Galley Radio, I unfortunately advised on the wrong name of the Pastor at the Swinton Kirk as the Rev. Alan Cartwright. It was in fact the Rev. David Dalglish. My apologies to the Reverend. Thank you David Reid for pointing out the error. Just goes to show, you can't believe everything you read on the internet.

Inchmickery is tiny, only 100 metres by 200 metres. During both World War I and World War II the island was used as a gun emplacement. The concrete buildings make the island look (from a distance) like a battleship. Its name comes from the Gaelic, "Innis nam Biocaire", meaning Isle of the Vicars, implying that there may have been an old ecclesiastical or Culdee settlement here, as in nearby Inchcolm.



Inchkeith is thought to have derived its name from the Gaelic "Innse Coit", or "wooded island", although it is hard to believe such a rocky and exposed island could ever have supported many trees. More likely the island was named after Robert de Keith who was granted the island by Malcolm II in 101 AD as a reward for fighting off the Danes. Since the 12th century, the island has been used as a garrison, prison and as an isolation retreat for those that had the "grandore", or syphilis. Similarly, in the 16th & 17th centuries it was used as a quarantine base for plague victims. They were asked "to remain till God provide for their health". The likelihood is that they all died. Fortifications on the island were increased and upgraded during the two World Wars. Anti-ship and anti-submarine booms were controlled from Inchkeith. In May 1940, the island was issued with 40 "Board of Trade, Rocket Flares, Red", for alerting in the event that an invasion was attempted. In 1957, all military use of the island ceased, and ownership passed over to the Northern Lighthouse Board, who performed a variety of renovations on the island from the early 1960s onwards. The 67m high lighthouse, built in 1804 by Robert Stephenson, was automated in 1986 by the Northern Lighthouse Board. The lighthouse is powered by nickel-cadmium batteries, charged on a time cycle of three times per week by one of two diesel generators. The island is now owned by Tom Farmer of KwikFit fame.

Fidra, or "Featheray" is thought to be derived from Old Norse due to the number of feathers found on the island. As with several of the islands, it had a large seabird population. The number of breeding puffins on the island has increased recently due to the removal of an introduced plant, tree mallow. It is likely that it was planted by lighthouse keepers for use as toilet paper, and for its medicinal qualities. There are the remains of a 12th century chapel and at one time there was a stronghold called Castle Tarbet. The lighthouse is another of the Stevensons design from 1885 and was manned until 1970 and is now automated, however, Fidra was the first unmanned lighthouse.



The Bass Rock is a 340 million year old volcanic plug, rising to 107m at its highest point. The church owned the island until 2 years after the Battle of Bannockburn, when it was granted to the Lauder family, distant relations to Sir Harry Lauder of music hall

fame. Over the years there has been a chapel, castle and prison on the island, with Covenanters, Jacobites and other political prisoners being held there. The lighthouse on the Bass Rock was built by David Stevenson in 1902, costing £8087, who demolished part of the 13th century keep and some other buildings within the castle to provide stone for building. The island's residents are now around 150 thousand northern gannets making it one of the largest colonies in the world. This is why the rock often appears white in the breeding season – that and because of the amount of "guano" they produce.



The Isle of May could be derived from the gaelic “mhaigh” meaning a plain, or from Old Norse meaning Island of gulls. The island has a long history of ecclesiastical activity founded as far back as the 9th century and there are remains of a 13th century chapel dedicated to St Adrian of May who was killed by Danish invaders in 875. Apparently, they killed St Monance during the same raid. The island has had its fair share of lighthouses, with the first being a coal fired beacon in 1635, burning around 400 tons per year. To cover this cost, a tonnage-based fee was charge of 2 Scot’s Shillings per ton for Scottish ships and double that for non-local shipping. The Northern Lighthouse Board bought the island in 1814 and a proper lighthouse was built by Robert Stevenson (father of Robert Louis Stevenson) in 1816. Another smaller lighthouse was built in 1843 to help ships avoid the North Carr Rock 7 miles to the north off Fife Ness, but fell in to disuse with the establishment of the North Carr Lightship in 1887. The main lighthouse became fully automatic in 1989.

There are various other small islands and skerries in the Firth that have not been mentioned, such as Cramond, Eyebroughy, Craigleith, Car Craig, Long Craig, Iron Craig, Ox Carr, Seal Carr and Haystack. Not to mention the growing colony of garden gnomes that have taken up residence on Swallow Craig, just off Inchcolm. Some say they have escaped from a local garden centre in Edinburgh. Will the mystery of Inchgnome ever be solved?



Dead reckoning...

The captain of a certain vessel was very proud of his ability to determine his position in thick weather, anywhere around the coast of Britain, from a bottom sample obtained by arming the lead. One day, approaching port in thick fog, he gave orders for a cast of the lead. The Scottish chief engineer was hanging about on deck, impatient to get to port and any delay increased that animosity that sometimes existed between Scottish engineers and English captains. As the lead with its sample was brought past him, he seized it from the sailor and wiped his best shore-going shoes very thoroughly on it. After this expression of feeling, the indignant rating carried on up to the bridge with the lead. The captain examined the lead, sniffed it and, to the amazement of the others on the bridge, seem baffled. Then his face cleared and he pronounced, “Gentlemen, we are now on the corner of Sauchiehall Street and Argyll Street”

MV Glen Sannox



The latest vessel to join the CalMac fleet is the MV Glen Sannox, a car and passenger ferry, constructed at the Ferguson Marine shipyard in Port Glasgow. The long delayed vessel finally entered service on January 12th this year. Our branch Treasurer, Allan Dickson, gives a little insight of his experiences on board.

I was second engineer for the handover of the Glen Sannox, this was pushed back in the few days at the end of each day as various final bits of paperwork were checked and the people who needed to sign were found. For the engineers the handover day was spent tracking down problems with the sewage system and tracing how all the systems were set up.



The initial few days were spent alongside getting familiar with systems and operating machinery. As those of you who have been involved with new builds it's all very well being in the shipyard getting familiar with the layout, but you don't really get the ability to operate systems and machinery properly until the vessel is handed over. On the Tuesday morning, slightly delayed, the vessel made its first sailing under CalMac Ferries Ltd command from Inchgreen to Troon. We conducted a number of berthing manoeuvres at Troon and again the following day, allowing the deck department to get familiar with the approach and mooring arrangements at the berth. On the Wednesday night the engineers carried out the first LNG bunkering by CalMac staff and in the port of Troon. It took around 4 hours as this was the first time setting up the hoses and connecting the

vessel to a road tanker.

While we only loaded 22mt of LNG and it's a small system, it is more basic than those of you who are used to LNG tankers would think. The storage tank is a C-type semi pressurised and is rated to 10bar. We have no compressors, vapour return, or pumps, the pressure of the tank is what forces the gas to the engines and our normal tank pressure is around 5 bar. The actual loading of the LNG is the shortest part. The laying out of hoses and ancillary equipment such as water sprays to protect the hull, hose chutes, trolleys, ESD hoses, connecting, pressure testing and purging at the beginning all takes time. Then at the end the liquid freeing, warming up, depressurising, inerting, disconnecting and packing all the equipment away takes more time.



Right now the Glen Sannox certainly has its challenges and problems but then all new ships do for at least the first year. But the vessel has been running between Troon and Brodick for a few weeks now and I was onboard for 2 of those. While there were some cancellations and delayed sailings the majority of these were due to weather rather than technical issues.

Article and images courtesy of Allan Dickson

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