

## POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2026

### CANAL AND RIVER WALK

Setting the date for the next walk for Friday May 22<sup>nd</sup>. It will start from the Water of Leith visitor centre on Lanark Road and end at either Tollcross or Ardmillan, depending on stamina (or need for a refreshment).

Starting time 11.00am  
Buses stop almost opposite the visitor centre 20, 34, 36 and 44.

The route will be along the Union Canal to Kingsknowe, then down to do a section of the Water of Leith, before rejoining the canal again. Approximately 6.7 – 7 km, with some stairs and downhill paths. Finish points can either be Bennetts Bar in Tollcross, Blue Blazer, by Bread Street, or if you want to finish a bit sooner, the Diggers at Ardmillan.

### BESIDE THE SEASIDE...

If you DO like to be beside the seaside, the Scottish Seabird Centre at North Berwick have a beach clean and nurdle hunt organised for Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2.00pm – 3.00pm (same day as our walk).

[www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/scottish-seabird-centre-27651858487](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/scottish-seabird-centre-27651858487)

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Leith Food Festival runs from 30<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May at Leith Links in featuring global street food, live entertainment, chef demos and family friendly. Explore food from over 30 different countries from around the world and enjoy speciality rum, gins and wines from independent bars.

<https://leithfoodfestival.com/tickets>

# Galley Radio



Merchant Navy Association – Edinburgh & Forth Branch

SPRING 2026

Welcome to a rather bumper edition of **Galley Radio**. It has been a busy season for the branch with many events attended, filling the Spring edition.

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.

### BRANCHING OUT

In February, our Treasurer, Allan Dickson, attended a **STEM** event, a science fair held at Linlithgow Primary School, talking about careers in the Merchant Navy. STEM is an educational framework that integrates **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics** in to a cohesive approach rather than teaching these subjects in isolation.

He was demonstrating the principles of a centrifugal separator, the operation of a mechanical seal and roller bearing. Not to leave out the navigation side of the business, a chart of the River Forth, a plotter and dividers were included.

There was a reasonable amount of interest, but it was hard going to attract an audience when you are up against robots! The National Robotarium from Heriot Watt University was there with their Boston Dynamics SPOT robot on display. If you watched a fairly recent TV adaptation of “War of the Worlds”, the robots featured were heavily based on the SPOT robot design.



From an engineering viewpoint it was impressive to see one of these up close. It was fitted with an articulated arm, consequently it was unable to stand upright or jump, but it climbed stairs, forward and backwards, was able to pick up and move objects and avoid obstacles when walking. Capable of running at 10km/h, carry up to 60kg and able to be fitted with various payloads, such as a gripper arm and LIDAR surveying options. It is controlled remotely by an operator who can control all aspects of its movement, or in semi-autonomous mode, where the operator chooses where it wants the robot to go and it will find the best way there. They are surprisingly loud, with cooling fans, articulated joints and the feet as they make contact with the ground.

## POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2026

### MUSIC TO MY EARS

5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> June sees the return of the Leith Jazz and Blues Festival. At various venues in and around Leith, it is always best to book early as some venues have limited space

[www.leithjazz.com](http://www.leithjazz.com)

### NO BURNT EARS

After the March meeting there was some reminiscing about the fire fighting courses taken at the McDonald Road Fire Station in Edinburgh.

Part of the site has been turned in to the Museum of Scottish Fire Heritage detailing the history of fire fighting.

On June 11<sup>th</sup> there is an early evening talk from 6.00pm to 7.30pm titled "Through Smoke and Time", where you will be regaled with the history of Scottish fire fighting. Cost is £5 and includes a cuppa and a biscuit. Book early as there aren't many places left.

[www.museumofscottishfireheritage.org/whats-on/](http://www.museumofscottishfireheritage.org/whats-on/)

### THE COOS LICK

The Royal Highland Show is back 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June at Ingliston, Edinburgh. If you are in to all things agricultural, or just fancy something different. The roads will be chaos, so take the tram.

[www.royalhighlandshow.org](http://www.royalhighlandshow.org)

In a chat with the staff after the event, the Robotarium have developed a tentacle type robot that is designed for internal pipeline inspection and repair for the oil and gas industry. It is 1 metre long and about 5cm diameter. It is known as "soft" robotics, as it is moulded silicone and uses "tendons" to move instead of limbs like solid robots. Perhaps in the future we will see robots like these in use on ships instead of divers, or having to open up coolers or condensers for inspection or repair.

For those interested there is a video of this along with more information on their website [www.thenationalrobotarium.com](http://www.thenationalrobotarium.com)

Article and photos courtesy of Allan Dickson

### TECHNOLOGY AT ITS FINEST...

Travelling home on leave by train, the chief engineer was intrigued by a tiny metal device in the ear of a man sitting opposite. Noting the chief's interest, the man withdrew the device from his ear and displayed the tiny sphere in the palm of his hand. "Japanese technology," he volunteered. "The smallest hearing aid in the world. Would you believe me if I told you that it contains forty two diodes, a moving coil microphone and a ferromagnetic diaphragm?" Replacing it in his ear, he awaited a reaction. "Marvelous!" said the chief engineer, "Was it expensive?" "Certainly," said his travelling companion, glancing at his watch. "It is precisely twenty past three."

### SAILING FOR FREEDOM

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, our Branch Chairman, Ned Kelly and his wife were invited to attend a commemoration service in Katwijk, Holland, on behalf of the British Merchant Navy Association, to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> year of Freedom, where the Dutch Merchant Navy played a crucial role during World War II. Among the guests were Princess Margriet of the Netherlands, Godchild of the Dutch Merchant Navy, with speeches provided by Professor Dr. Wim van de Donk, Chair of the National Committee for 4 & 5 May, Luitenant General (Retired) Hans van Griensven, Chair of the Dutch National Veterans Platform and Hubert Nijgh, Chairman of the Dutch Foundation of Merchant Navy Personnel 1940 – 1945, where they highlighted the indispensable role in supplying the Allies with food, fuel and armaments, despite torpedoes, mines and air bombardment, celebrating the courage and perseverance of the Dutch sailors who spent six long years at sea under life threatening conditions. After the service, there was a visit to the local Katwijk Museum where they were able to view poignant photos, paintings, personal items and authentic ship models, including an impressive model of a convoy at sea. The evening reception included a dinner and a concert by the Marine Band of the Royal Netherlands Navy.



Princess Margriet at the Katwijk Museum viewing some of the ship models.

## POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2026

### SING FOR YOUR SUPPER

18<sup>th</sup> July at Trinity House in Leith you can join traditional Scots singer Joss Cameron and learn about the history of sea shanties before having a go at singing your own seafaring songs. The event includes a tour of the historic building. Cost is £15 and is from 10.00am to 12.00 noon. Booking is required

[www.edinburgh.org/event/sea-shanty-workshop/](http://www.edinburgh.org/event/sea-shanty-workshop/)

On this note, it might be possible to organise a tour of Trinity House outwith regular visiting times. Something to discuss at the next branch meeting.

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June, as part of the Leith Festival, the building is open to the public from 11.00am to 4.00pm and access is free

However, there are still a few "Family Tours" of Trinity House available on each Wednesday in August if your singing voice isn't up to a shanty or two.

[www.edinburgh.org/event/trinity-house-family-tours/](http://www.edinburgh.org/event/trinity-house-family-tours/)

As with many of the Allies, their merchant fleet was advised not to return to home ports for fear of capture and either re-use or destruction of the vessels by the Germans. On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1940, Queen Wilhelmina issued a decree imposing a compulsory service for sea going personnel for the duration of the war. From fishing vessels working out of British ports, to coasters evacuating troops from Dunkirk, passenger ships as troop carriers, tugboats towing artificial harbours on D-Day along with the cargo ships and tankers in the many convoys. This compulsory service ended on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1946. Men could once again return home to

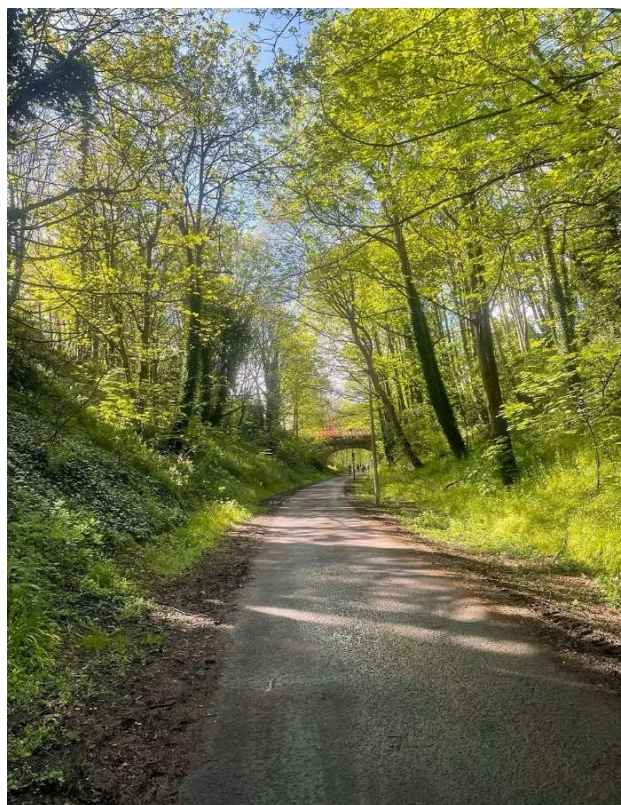


Torchlit procession in Katwijk

Special thanks were passed to Hubert Nijgh for the invitation to the event and for the superb hospitality shown during the visit.

### A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March the weather gods were kind to us on our first organised walk. The gathering was in Leith where five of us assembled. The thick fog on the Forth had begun to clear and the sun was gaining strength. You could almost believe it was summer! Our path was down the former railway line which ran from Slateford Junction to West Granton, Newhaven and Leith.



Opened in 1861, but closed in 1962 as part of the Beeching cuts, it is now conserved as part of a pedestrian and cycle path. The tree lined, well metalled path led us past Trinity, Pilton, Crewe Toll and Craighall Retail Park. The smell of wild garlic prevailed throughout most of the walk and several recipes were discussed for the plant.

We had to keep an eye and an ear open for fear of being mown down by numerous cyclists on the path, often at breakneck speeds on electric bikes. We finally reached our destination at Roseburn, where the local hostelry provided refreshments to slake our thirsts. The combination of good weather, good company and a fine walking route made for a successful day. Fingers crossed for a similar success on the next walk. Thanks to all who participated on the day.

## EDINBURGH SCIENCE FESTIVAL

## POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2026

### MINE'S A PINT

The Indie Beer Festival takes place on Friday and Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June at the Pitt Venue, 20 West Shore Road, Granton, Edinburgh. You will be able to sample some of the produce from a selection of Scotland's independent breweries.

General admission is £8 or include a Drinks Token Bundle for £28 (includes a festival glass)

[www.citizenticket.com/events/the-pitt/indie-beer-scotland-2026/](http://www.citizenticket.com/events/the-pitt/indie-beer-scotland-2026/)

### SCOTTISH FESTIVAL OF MOTORING

At the Royal Highland Showground at Ingliston, Edinburgh on 19<sup>th</sup> July. All kinds of makes and models of cars, motorcycles and trucks. With exhibitions, experience rides, drifting, music and food.

[www.festivalofmotoring.co.uk/](http://www.festivalofmotoring.co.uk/)



On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April, the MNA Edinburgh & Forth Branch were invited to attend the Science Festival Church Service at St. Giles cathedral on Edinburgh's Royal Mile, where several branch members were in attendance, Iain May, Alon Palmer, Jim Garson, Mike Ashworth and Sandy Mitchell. Also in attendance was Alon's wife, Liz.

The Edinburgh Science Festival is the UK's largest science festival, held annually over two weeks during the Easter holidays. It features events for all ages, including specialised children's activities and adults-only science nights. This year, the festival theme was "Going Global", highlighting

international partnerships and Scotland's role in scientific research. The festival ran from 4<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> April with over 117 organised events.

### GOLF DAY

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April saw our second branch golf outing to the wonderful Glencorse Golf Club. The weather gods shined on us that day, with a fresh start, but turning warmer as the round progressed. All thoughts of the rain-soaked event last year had disappeared. The only thing missing were the sherpas to get us up some of the hills on the course and the oxygen masks at the top.



We had a new winner of the trophy this year in the form of Chris Muir (ex-CalMac) and the "Winner" of the wooden spoon (despite a last-minute effort) was Sandy Mitchell.



Needless to say, we'll be sending Chris a bill for his branch membership fees so that the win can become "official".

Many thanks to all who attended. It was a resounding success. Many thanks to Steve Hirst for organising the event, the soup and sandwiches were greatly appreciated.

### APRIL FULL.....Another Scottish engineering marvel

An anonymous Scottish inventor has created the first ever engine that runs off fully sustainable Haggis milk. The system converts the high alcohol content in Haggis milk, caused by their diet of whisky, into a fully operational engine able to run for over a year off just one fill. The inventor wants to remain anonymous in fear of the oil industry trillionaires will attempt to stop production at any cost.

Just another of Scotland's wonderful inventions that the world will never see.



## POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2026

### OLDIES AND GOLDIES

We are all used to dealing with old relics at our meetings, but there is a chance to have a look at some REALLY old stuff. The National Museum of Scotland offers tours of its Collection Centre, near Granton, where they store and research their collections.

One of the tours is Scottish History & Culture, featuring treasures from our archaeological collections and industrial objects from more recent history. Once a month, on a Tuesday you can join a tour for 1 ½ hours. Costing £15 for adults or £12 for over 65.

We would make sure some of our "older" members make it out in case they are mistaken for ancient relics!!

[www.nms.ac.uk/events/collection-centre-tours#tickets](http://www.nms.ac.uk/events/collection-centre-tours#tickets)

### ANZAC DAY

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April, a service was held to commemorate the sacrifices made by the Australian, New Zealand and British forces during World War I. Held at the Scottish National War Memorial at Edinburgh Castle, the service was led by the National President of the Royal British Legion Scotland, where wreaths were laid at the memorial.



The ranks were swelled as we were joined by our colleagues from the Glasgow branch on the day. Special thanks to David Gatenby (left of picture) who laid the wreath on behalf of the Edinburgh and Forth Branch of the Merchant Navy Association. Thanks and congratulations to all for a superb turnout.

### A FINE HAUL NETTED FOR FORMER FISHERIES RESEARCH VESSEL

The SS Explorer Preservation Society is delighted to announce that it has been awarded a grant of £157,115 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to enable them to protect and preserve SS Explorer.



Photograph courtesy of C. Williamson

SS Explorer, built in 1955, is Scotland's first purpose-built Fisheries Research Vessel, the last vessel with a riveted steel hull built by Alexander Hall & Co's shipyard in Aberdeen with one of the last triple-expansion steam engines built in Scotland, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Ships. It was registered in Leith, but worked for scientists based at the Marine Lab, Torry, near Aberdeen until it was decommissioned in 1984. Saved from the scrapyards by Aberdeen Maritime Museum, when plans to display the ship in

Aberdeen failed, it came into the ownership of the SS Explorer Preservation Society (SSEPS) and moved to Leith Docks.

The vessel is currently berthed in the Edinburgh Dock in the Port of Leith. The funding award from The National Lottery Heritage Fund will make it possible to continue to preserve SS Explorer, protect the vessel against further deterioration, expand their community outreach and strengthen the organisation for the major works programme required to achieve their vision. They will also commission a feasibility study addressing the sustainability of the ship in its future role as a museum ship and visitor destination.

Richard Morrison, Chair of the SS Explorer Preservation Society said, "We are absolutely delighted to have secured this funding from the Heritage Fund and would like to thank National Lottery players who made it possible. Our volunteers and supporters work incredibly hard and share a vision of Explorer playing a role that goes beyond being a historic ship and heritage attraction. Fascinating and important as her history is this project is just as much about her future as an asset to Leith. A learning resource, an opportunity for people to get involved, to learn new skills, and to make new community connections."

Learn more about the FRV Explorer at... [www.theexplorer.scot](http://www.theexplorer.scot)

## POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2026

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### BONNIE DUNDEE

Our trip to Dundee back in 2024 was curtailed due to inclement weather, so it was suggested that we look at another possible date to visit the Discovery and/or HMS Unicorn.

### ALL AT SEA

Similarly, a trip on the Forth was another possible outing which has never been realised, so it was suggested that a sail under the bridges, a trip to Inchcolm or even a trip to the Isle of May might be considered again.

### NATIONAL FISHING REMEMBRANCE DAY

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May was a day of reflection and commemoration for those who have lost their lives in the UK fishing industry. A day for raising awareness of the dangers of commercial fishing while honouring the men and women who have died at sea bringing home the catch. Fishing remains one of the most dangerous peacetime professions.

One such example of this is from 1968, where the Hull fishing fleet lost 3 ships, 58 men and almost its entire fishing future. This is the Hull disaster that broke a community and changed a nation. It began on Jan 11<sup>th</sup>, 1968, the *St. Romanus* left Hull with no trawler radio operator. This was a very common money saving tactic by the trawler companies. Just hours later, it was already in trouble, but nobody knew, not a single distress call was made.



Hull was grieving, but disaster struck a third time. On Feb 4<sup>th</sup>, hurricane force winds smashed in to the *Ross Cleveland*. Its final message was, "We're going over. Help me please." Moments later the ship capsized and only one man survived.

Just 2 weeks later, the *Kingston Peridot* was hit by Arctic storms near Iceland. The captain radioed warnings about mountainous seas, but help never came. All 20 crewmen were lost at sea.



Families were devastated but furious. These ships sailed with broken equipment, unsafe manning levels and no long range radio contact. Men were dying, not just from storms, but from neglect.

So, when the women of Hull rose up, known as the "Headscarf Revolutionaries", they gathered 10,000 signatures in a matter of days and stormed the trawler owner's offices and demanded mandatory radio operators, better safety gear and stricter weather rules. They won and the fight, reshaped Britain's fishing laws and ensured that these 58 men would never be forgotten.

### PLAY MISTY FOR ME...

Out of all the Scandinavians, the Danes seem to have the better sense of humour, but there is still often a need to 'translate' some things when telling a joke or a funny story. One such example was on a sailing yacht on a race to Copenhagen, where it was becalmed off the Kattegat through a long foggy night. As dawn rose, on a glass-like sea, they found they were in the middle of a Danish fishing fleet. One of the crew yelled across to the nearest trawler a typical banality, "Did you have a good fog last night?" The large and jovial captain placed his hands on his belly and shouted back, "Alas, alas no. Ve haf no vomen on board."

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## SYTTENDE MAI



Syttende Mai celebrates the signing of Norway's Constitution on 17 May 1814. It is considered the most joyful national day in the world — not a military parade but a children's parade with thousands of schoolchildren marching through every town waving Norwegian flags, wearing traditional costumes.

This year, as part of the celebrations, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission organised a short service at the Eastern Cemetery in Edinburgh, in the shadow of the Easter Road football stadium, to pay tribute to Norwegian serviceman, Ingvar Edvardsen.

Our thanks to Elaine Edwards from the Commonwealth Graves Commission for inviting our group to the event.



## COASTAL COMMAND MEMORIAL SERVICE

Coastal Command was founded in 1936, when the RAF was reorganised into Bomber, Fighter and Coastal Commands and played a vital role in World War II. The important contribution of the Coastal Command was the protection of Allied convoys from attacks by German U-boats and aerial strikes from the Luftwaffe. They also attacked German shipping which carried war materials from Italy to North Africa and Scandinavia to various theatres of war.

Our branch was invited to attend the memorial service at North Berwick on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May and gathered at the memorial plaque, beside the Scottish Seabird Centre. East Fortune was the local Coastal Command base. Established in 1942, the base specialised in training for coastal command aircraft. They were equipped with various aircraft, including the Bristol Beaufighters, and de Havilland Mosquitoes, focusing on low level navigation, ship identification and maritime strike.

The station's legacy continues today, with surviving hangars and runways reflecting its historical importance. It is now the Museum of Flight and among the many aircraft on show is Concorde and a Vulcan bomber.



Our thanks to Ian Edmans, Squadron Leader for RAFAC, OC 132 (North Berwick) Squadron ATC for inviting our group to the service. A very poignant event. Our thanks also to the East Lothian Yacht Club for hosting the event.