

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

MERCHANT NAVY DAY

3rd September, 2025

Will be held at the Scottish Merchant Navy Memorial at the Shore in Leith. Event will begin at 10.45am. All welcome to attend.

Offshore Europe 2025

Conference and Exhibition will be held at the P&J Live arena in Aberdeen 2 – 5 September. Everything from the future of Oil & Gas to becoming a Citizen Scientist. Not just about oil and gas, as there are opportunities to find out about Offshore Wind, Hydrogen Gas and the potential skills and training for students, graduates and those looking to transfer skills for involvement in these industries. With over 800 exhibitors, it is a huge exhibition over the 4 days. More details on the event can be found on the following link:

<https://www.offshore-europe.co.uk>

Galley Radio

Merchant Navy Association – Edinburgh & Forth Branch

SUMMER 2025

A warm welcome to another edition of **Galley Radio**, where we cover some of the events that have happened during the Summer 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.

WAR MEMORAIL RE-DEDICATION



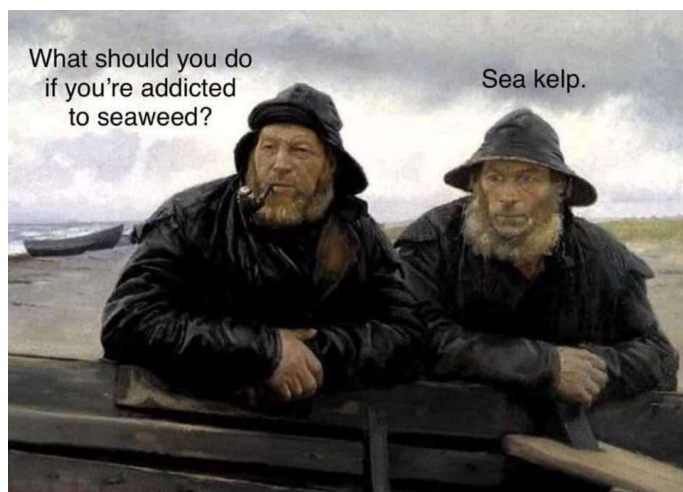
Wednesday 2nd July saw King Charles III and Queen Camilla in attendance at Kirkcaldy's war memorial for its 100th anniversary. The memorial was dressed with a waterfall of hand-knitted poppies made by the local community. As well as the re-dedication, a new cairn was unveiled which pays tribute to those who gave their lives and the people who served at home to keep the town running. Designed by George Henry Paulin, the War Memorial was paid for by the people of the town and with the support of local linoleum magnate, John Nairn (of linoleum fame), who made the site available and the construction possible. Finally unveiled in 1925 by Admiral, the Lord Wester Wemyss, who was the most senior British representative at the signing of the Armistice in 1918. It was he who decided that the fighting should stop on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. Present at the re-dedication was our very own Mike Ashworth.

WHAT A LOT OF BOTTLE....

It was a beautiful sunny day and the tide was full in when the highland farmer arrived at Wardie Bay, by Granton Harbour. He had been told by his doctor that if he paddled in the sea, his rheumatism would be cured. He took off his shoes and socks, turned up his trousers and spent a pleasant half hour enjoying himself at the water's edge. A few of the local fishermen were sitting on the pier at Granton and after coming out the sea, the farmer spoke to them and explained that he felt a hundred percent better and would be able to run up hills with no effort. "Do you think I could take back a bottle of sea water to the farm with me?"

"Oh yes," they said, "just give us a quid and help yourself" Back down to the water's edge he went, filled his bottle and went home happy.

A month later he came back to Granton again. It was spring tide and the sea had gone out a considerable distance. The same fishermen were sitting on the pier and the farmer could hardly believe his eyes. "Well, well," he said, "you have sold a lot of sea water since I was here last month."



What should you do
if you're addicted
to seaweed?

Sea kelp.

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

Port of Rosyth Tour

Sunday 7th September, as part of the Outwith Festival in Dunfermline, there is an opportunity to visit the commercial Port of Rosyth for a guided tour aboard a vintage Routemaster open back bus. There are 4 tours scheduled starting at 12 noon. Bus departs from Pittencrief Park car park. Price is £5.91 and booking is essential. Tours are estimated to last approximately 1 hour.

<https://outwithfestival.co.uk>

The Scottish Rum Festival

Now in its 5th year, the Scottish Rum Festival will take place at SWG3 in Glasgow's West End on Saturday 6th September. There will be two sessions, 12.00 – 15.30 and 16.30 – 20.00. General admission tickets are £22.50, which includes a Glencairn glass and a chance to taste various rums from around the country. Tickets and information can be found at:

<https://www.scottishrumfest.com>

TALL SHIPS – ABERDEEN

The Tall Ships Races is an international sailing event where ships from around the world compete and show off their vessels. July saw the start of the 2025 event leaving from Le Havre on the 4th of July and calling at Dunkirk, before arriving in Aberdeen. Last time the event was hosted there was 1997. With over 50 vessels of all sizes, the harbour was very busy and the quaysides were packed with visitors. Unfortunately, the weather was not at its best on Sunday 20th, but it didn't dampen the spirits of the visitors or crews.

The Tall Ships Races are organised by Sail Training International with the fundamental aims to provide sailing experience and foster international friendship for young people. Born in the aftermath of war, Sail Training International was built on the belief that when young people sail together, they form bonds that rise above politics, borders, and history. Unfortunately, politics reared its ugly head and denied one ship entry to the harbour. The TS Shtandart is a replica of a 1703 frigate built in 2000. It is owned by a Finnish citizen, operated by a German company, and run by an international crew. The captain, however, was Russian, and this was sufficient for the authorities to invoke the Russian sanctions preventing the vessel from entering the harbour. After Aberdeen, the vessels were heading for Kristiansand in Norway, then on to Esbjerg in Denmark.



Interestingly, in the Aberdeen Maritime Museum there is a fantastic model of an old friend of ours, the FRV Explorer. The second last steamship to be built in Aberdeen by A. Hall & Co. in 1955. It was operated by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries out of Aberdeen harbour until 1984.



More information on the SS Explorer can be found at <https://theexplorer.scot>

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

London International Shipping Week

15 – 19 September
To be held at the
London headquarters
of the IMO. Most
events are free apart
from the headline
conference and gala
dinner. There is also a
golf day scheduled for
September 13th at The
Grove, Chandlers Cross,
Hertfordshire.

More info :
<https://lisw.com>

A GOOD WALK SPOILED....

July 15th Edinburgh and Forth Branch of the MNA held its inaugural golf match at West Linton Golf Club. It was one of those days where, if you couldn't see the hills, it was raining, and when you could see the hills...it was going to rain.
And rain it did!! But it didn't dampen the spirits of the six intrepid (read stupid) competitors. After 18 soggy holes we all thought we were developing webbed feet, but we had a winner of the glass tankard trophy in the form of Graham (El Bandito) Johnston, with a Stableford score of 29. The runner-up was El Banditos compadre, Steve Hirst with 28 points.
Our thanks to West Linton Golf Club for hosting the event and our special appreciative thanks to Ian May for organising the event.
Of course, not having played for four years, Sandy Mitchell won the booby prize of a tin golf ball filled with shortbread (Thank you Cathryn!!)



JULY MEETING



Our end of month meeting went very well with much discussion regarding the forthcoming Merchant Navy Day on September 3rd amongst other topics, but we were keen to get through the agenda as we had another social event at TGI Fridays, where a burger and a beer was the order of the day. So enthralled were we that no one thought to take some pictorial evidence of the event. Suffice to say, the quality of the burgers were excellent.

AS A MATTER OF TACT... something our Chairman might empathise with...

A purser was reprimanding a new bedroom steward, "I have had a complaint from the young lady in cabin A 20 that you burst in on her when she was taking a bath. What have you to say for yourself?"

"Well, it was like this sir. I went in to change the towels thinking the cabin was empty. The bathroom door wasn't locked, and there she was in the bath"

"So, what did you do?"

"I said, sorry madam, and shut the door again quick"

"My lad," said the purser, "In a situation like that, you have to learn to use tact. First you should have knocked, then if you had entered as you described, you should have said 'Sorry Sir', to let her think that you hadn't seen that much"

A few days later the purser saw the steward with a black eye. "What on earth have you been up to now?" he demanded.

"Well sir, it's you and your tact. I took the honeymoon couple in A35 their morning tea and well they was.... They were in bed together. So, I put down the tray and, remembering what you said about tact, I asked, which of you gentlemen like sugar?"

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

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.



The Branch had been cordially invited by the Lord Provost Office to be represented at this event on the morning of August 3rd at St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh. It marks the official start of the Edinburgh Festival for three weeks August. Started 78 years ago, in 1947, it was designed as a boost to the spirits of the public, providing cultural and artistic relief after the devastation and darkness of World War II. With only one year missed in 2020 due to Covid, it has turned in to a huge international event with performers from all around the world descending on the capital, along with thousands of tourists.

Seen here are Ned Kelly (Chairman), Mike Ashworth and Sandy Mitchell. hob-nobbing at the City Chambers after the service. Alon Palmer was also present on the day

LEAD US NOT IN TO TEMPTATION...

In earlier centuries, people who lived in coastal areas were not averse to taking advantage of valuable cargoes which floated ashore from wrecked vessels. And there have been many stories of islanders benefiting from some interesting hauls. This was reflected by a minister on the island of Sanday, in the Orkneys, whose Sunday prayer in stormy weather was alleged to have been, "If it be thy will that ships should run upon the rocks, we pray the, Lord, in thy goodness, not to forget thy humble servants on Sanday"...

One of the most famous examples of this is the wrecking of the SS Politician, which was headed for Jamaica with her holds full of whisky, 260 thousand bottles to be exact, when she ran aground on rocks off the island of Eriskay in the Outer Hebrides. The crew were rescued by the local lifeboat and it seemed only right and proper that locals helped salvage some of the cargo too. After all, it was bounty from the sea and would probably only go to waste otherwise.

Unfortunately, local customs officer Charles McColl didn't see it that way and badgered the local police in to taking action. Several men were arrested and fined and a few even went to prison. The story formed the basis of Compton McKenzie's 1947 novel Whisky Galore, which was later filmed as one of the Ealing comedies. It wasn't until 2001 that it emerged that the SS Politician was carrying another valuable cargo; bank notes worth an estimated £3 million in today's money, about a quarter of which went missing. Luckily, Mr. McColl didn't know about those.



After 50,000 gallons of whisky spilled in to the sea, no tern was left unstoned

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SUPERSTITIONS

The past 100 years or more has seen vast changes at sea. Today's "sophisticated" mariners ignore or smile at sea superstitions and customs. Examples of this include an enduring dislike of leaving port on a Friday (the day Jesus was executed), which at one time caused the National Union of Seamen to seek shipowners assurance that no vessel would ever be scheduled to sail on Friday 13th. Other such days were Thursdays (God of Storms, Thor's day), first Monday in April (the day Cain killed Abel), second Monday in August (the day Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed) and December 31st (the day on which Judas Iscariot hanged himself). It's as if no one wanted to go to sea!!

Whistling in to the wind was forbidden as it was said to "whistle up a storm". Losing a hat overboard was an omen that the trip would be a long one. Women on board were said to be bad luck as they distracted the sailors, even more so red heads, if you happened to encounter one before boarding, which would anger the sea, causing treacherous conditions as revenge. However, conveniently for the male crew, naked women calmed the sea, which is why so many figureheads were women with bare breasts. At one time bananas were said to be unlucky as they would cause a ship to sink. (Heaven help the Fyffes banana boats). Spitting in the sea was considered taboo, often seen in the Mediterranean and Eastern countries as a means of warding off the evil eye, however, spitting might be ill received by Neptune. It was bad luck for seafaring men's wives to call out to them or wave goodbye

once they stepped out the door to leave for a voyage. And of course, don't kill an albatross as seabirds were thought to carry the souls of dead sailors, hence bad luck to kill one.



Vikings believed the sea gods demanded a life for every new ship launched, so useless prisoners were used in providing the offering. Similarly with war canoes launched in the South Pacific islands, humans were lashed to plantain trees to act as human rollers when launching, so the boats could taste blood before commencing a war. In time, wine has replaced blood for the quieter ceremonies of baptism and blessing. Champagne is the drink of celebration and the usual accompaniment to launching, however, it is not always the norm. HMS Invincible was launched by Queen Elizabeth in 1977 with a bottle of elderberry wine. During prohibition in the United States, ginger ale was used in many cases. Four bulk stout carriers launched in 1976 for the brewers Arthur Guinness naturally used their own famous product. Missionary ships have been launched with milk and Thor Heyerdahl's raft "Ra" was baptised with goat's milk, a Moroccan symbol of hospitality and good wishes.

Fishermen come with their own superstitions. If catches were poor, witchcraft was often suspected, so steps were taken to prevent "mischief" among the boats. In Dorset a pin-pierced mackerel was stowed in the net locker. Yorkshiremen held a sheep's heart stuck with pins in a fire. Belgian fishermen would burn straw in the holds, stamp it out and toss it overboard. Similarly Japanese fishermen would burn feathers on the deck, all to prevent the evil spirits from disrupting the trip. Normandy fishermen nail a bottle of brandy beneath a plank in the boat's stern for luck and "because the fish like its smell". In many fishing communities the fishing boats are blessed at the start of the season. After one such blessing many lobster fishermen had a poor season leading one old fishing hand to confront the priest, "Good heavens Father, what did you use last month to bless the fleet? Vinegar? It sure musn't have been holy water!!".