

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

For those looking for a bit of sparkle this Christmas, the following is a few suggestions to fill an evening. Not saying this is a suggested outing for the group, but may be of interest for individuals and grandkids.

GIANT LANTERNS AT EDINBURGH ZOO

Selected dates between 14th November 2025 and 22nd February 2026
16.45 – 21.00 (last ticket 20.00)

A return of the giant Chinese lanterns to the zoo after 6 years, but this time with an underwater theme.

Check the website for dates, times and ticket prices :

www.edinburghzoo.org.uk/events-experiences/events/edinburgh-zoos-giant-lanterns

Galley Radio

Merchant Navy Association – Edinburgh & Forth Branch

AUTUMN 2025



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

HALF A CENTURY

I left school in the June of 1975 after 6 years at Leith Academy in Edinburgh and felt that a 6th year wouldn't have been of any value to me. Not sure of what I wanted to do, as the careers guidance was never the best, although I wanted to do something in engineering. The only careers advice my father gave me was, "Don't join the RN unless you want to become an artificer" So with that in mind, I decided to join the Merchant Navy. I took a job working in a newspaper shop for that summer, not as a delivery boy, but actually working in the shop. The early morning starts didn't phase me too much. In August of that year I went down to the British Shipping Federation (The Pool) at 8 Old East Dock in Leith to sit an aptitude test, after which they asked what company I wanted to join. At the time, I had only heard of two companies, BP and Ben Line, and because a mate of my Dad had been with Ben Line, I chose them. Shortly after, I had my interview with the Cadet Training Officer, David Carmichael at the offices in Bernard Street, Leith and on the 1st September I had officially become an engineer cadet with Ben Line. I had expected to go to sea almost straight away, but it came as a bit of a surprise when I was told I would be going to Glasgow Nautical College with the OND intake for 2 years before I could even sniff an engine room. The picture shows myself and some of the reprobates whose company I was to have for the next two years, all from companies such as Shell, BP, SSM, Denholms, Bank Line, Ellermans, Jebsens and Harrisons, most of whom have now gone, like many British companies.



POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

FIVE SISTERS ZOO

As an alternative to Edinburgh Zoo, there is also an illumination event at West Lothians Five Sisters Zoo for an evening of light and wonder.... and the knowledge that you'll be supporting the animals Running from 21st November to 23rd December, please check the website for dates, times and tickets : <https://fivesisterszoo.co.uk/zoo-illuminations-2025/>

THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS

If you still feel you are short on Christmas sparkle and fancy an evening stroll around the Botanic Gardens, they will have a superb light display around the gardens and the opportunity to have a hot drink and snack as you walk round. It truly is spectacular. On selected evenings between 20th November and 30th December, please check the website for dates, times and tickets: www.rbge.org.uk/what-s-on/christmas-at-the-botanics-2025/

We were the first group to stay in the newly built accommodation block on the college campus and a sort of camaraderie was built up over the next two years, learning more maths, which I thought I had done with from school, applied heat and mechanics, naval architecture, technical drawing, electrical technology, as well as practical engineering training in the workshop on site. It was a great place, **Glasgow College of Nautical Studies**, or **GCNS** as we called it. There was talk of changing the name to **Clyde University of Nautical Technology**, but no one fancied having that acronym on a sweatshirt or T-shirt (despite the fact it may have been true!!)

During the summer break in 1977, I was sent for vocational training to Brown Brothers in McDonald Road in Edinburgh, where I was to be given more practical experience in engineering, but also to make friends with some that I was to meet later in my career. September 1977 I joined my first ship in Southampton, a steamship called Ben Avon, for my first voyage to the Far East (and back).... but that's another story.

It's hard to believe it has been 50 years since joining Ben Line. The ships may be gone, but the company still carries on as an agency and logistics company based in the Far East, but with offices around the globe.

MERCHANT NAVY DAY

Despite the rain, we had an excellent turnout both from dignitaries and the general public for our gathering and service at the Scottish Merchant Navy Memorial in Leith, Edinburgh on September 3rd for Merchant Navy Day. A very poignant speech from the Right Honourable Lord Provost of Edinburgh, along with readings from Reverend Iain May, Alon Palmer and a message from HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, read by Allan Dickson.

Wreath layers included Rt. Hon. Lord Provost, Trinity House, MPs MSPs Councillors, Royal Navy, Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Northern Lighthouse Board, Leith Trust, Leith Academy, Nautilus, Commonwealth War Graves, Forth Ports, CalMac and the President of the MNA Edinburgh & Forth Branch, David Fleming-Millar.



After the event we retired to the Vine Trust barge, *Tom Dunn*, which sits beside the old NLB vessel *Fingal* in Leith Docks, for some respite from the rain and a welcome cuppa and biscuits. In all, a great event with some suggesting for next year, "We're gonna need a bigger boat!"



POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

CASTLE OF LIGHT

November 21st –
January 4th 2026.
Edinburgh Castle is once again granting special access to its grounds after dark as it becomes home to the UK's largest annual projection show. The inspiration for this year's event is the "Enchanting forces of fire & ice". Interactive light and sound projections will tell stories of mythical creatures and the origins of the Scottish landmark.
Check out the dates and times on their website:
www.edinburghcastle.scot/whats-on/castle-of-light

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

This year we are having Christmas lunch at Howies, at Waterloo Place.
For those attending, please be there sharp for 12.00 noon as we only have 2 hours before we'll be thrown out on our ear.

Speaking of the **Vine Trust**, we were invited to join them aboard their barge in Leith to celebrate their 40th anniversary on Sunday 14th September with some tea and tabnabs. Since 1985 the charity has contributed immensely to communities in the Peruvian Andes, in the Amazon, on Lake Victoria and at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro. This includes five medical ships, more than 2.5 million free medical consultations, eleven residential centres,

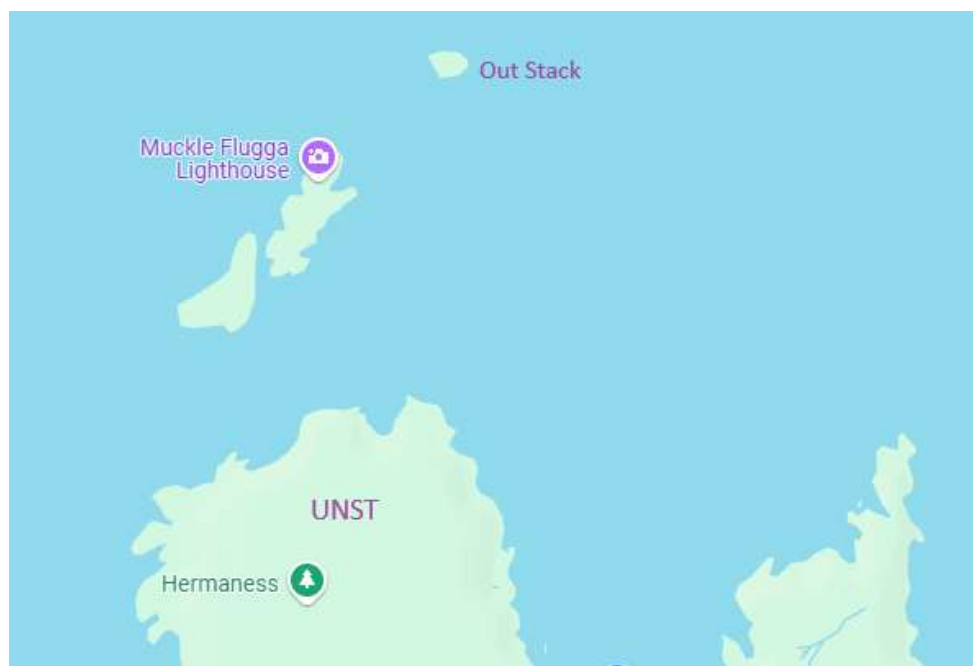


149 family homes built and the foundations of a new village have been laid. As with many charities, they rely on volunteers and supporters and on the day they had several drookit supporters returning from raising funds during the Edinburgh Kilt Walk. On behalf

of the Edinburgh & Forth branch of the MNA, we wish them all the very best in raising the £40,000 they are looking for in 2025 to help them to continue to support 4 current key projects. If you feel you wish to contribute to the fund raising, please visit their website www.vinetrust.org for further details.

THE REAL LAND'S END

What's wrong with the travel guides? The northernmost tip of Scotland (and therefore the British Isles) is usually wrongly said to be Muckle Flugga in the Shetlands, however, the island of Out Stack, not much more than a rock really, which lies about 600m north of Muckle Flugga, is the most northerly point of the British Isles. The island is 27m high and has been described as "the full stop at the end of Britain".



The Commissioners of Lighthouses were undecided for years over exactly where to locate a lighthouse on Britain's northernmost point.

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025 - 2026

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.

With increasing numbers of ships passing through the islands on their way to Russia during the Crimean War, they finally chose Muckle Flugga in the Shetlands. A temporary light was erected there in 1854 followed by a more permanent one in 1858. One morning in particular in 1854, the sea struck Muckle Flugga with such a force that it climbed to the summit of the rock, smashed open an iron door to the lighthouse dwelling house, which weighed nearly a ton, and admitted a three feet high wall of water which swirled around inside the house before retreating and taking everything that wasn't firmly secured with it. The keeper reported, "We had not a dry part to sit down in, nor even a dry bed to rest upon at night".

Thomas and David Stevenson were commissioned to build the lighthouse and legend has it that Thomas' son, the author Robert Louis Stevenson, visited the island in June 1869 and gained inspiration for the map of Treasure Island, however, some say that Fidra in the Firth of Forth was also his inspiration for the map. Muckle Flugga was the most northerly inhabited island in the UK until the lighthouse was automated in 1995 and the lighthouse keepers left the island. It's been uninhabited ever since.

PEOPLES PARADE

Sunday 14th September saw the Edinburgh Riding of the Marches event and the Edinburgh 900 People's Procession to mark 900 years of Edinburgh becoming a city, to which the MNA Edinburgh & Forth branch were invited to take part. The rain held off for the duration of the event, which was a welcome bonus. The gathering was outside the Scottish Parliament building at Holyrood and the procession made its way up to the Mercat Cross at St. Giles Cathedral on the Royal Mile, accompanied by the High Constables of Leith & Edinburgh in their finery, where the Right Honourable Lord Provost and HRH the Princess Royal welcomed and thanked participants and visitors alike. The branch Standard was on display during the event, with Alon Palmer and his good lady and Sandy Mitchell in accompaniment. Following the Peoples Procession were 280 riders who had embarked on a 26 mile route through some of Edinburgh's countryside, predominantly from 29 Scottish Common Riding Towns, dressed in traditional uniforms with coloured sashes representing their towns. We thank the Edinburgh March Riding Association for inviting us to be part of this unique event in marking the 900th anniversary of Edinburgh city.



THE CHANCER...

The young deck cadet, barely sixteen and small for his age, was admiring himself in his smart new uniform, glancing at his reflection in all the shop windows as he walked down the street. Near the docks, he saw two sailors go in to a pub. 'I've never done that' he thought and, looking sideways again at his reflection, he decided to take the risk. He asked for a half pint of heavy. The barmaid looked him up and down and said, "Look sonny, are you trying to get me in to trouble?" The cadet paused for a moment and then replied, "Well, I'll have the half of heavy first"

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

A wee reminder that the Branch AGM will be held at the meeting on 28th November at the offices of the Northern Lighthouse Board. If you have any items for the agenda, please let Ned Kelly know.

Subs will also be due on the day, so if you haven't paid already by bank transfer, remember extra cash on the day.

MNA NATIONAL AGM

Saturday 18th October saw the gathering for the National AGM at the Mercure Hotel in Glasgow, with good attendance by branch members from around the country. The morning session of the AGM went smoothly and our thanks goes to Duncan Mackison, CEO of Caledonian MacBrayne Ferries, for his presentation, giving an enlightening insight in to the West of Scotland ferry business. A coffee break was followed by the quarterly National Council meeting, which covered a lot of ground with one strong topic on the need to attract newer and younger members to the Association. After the various councillors' reports, the Chairman, Ian Hodge, thanked everyone for attending announcing the next face to face meeting of the council would be in Newport, South Wales, on 18th April 2026.



After lunch, the Chairman, some Councillors and members from the Glasgow and Edinburgh branches visited the new memorial plaque beside the new Renfrew Bridge over the river Clyde, to lay a wreath in respect and recognition.

HOLIER THAN THOU...

Saint Peter was checking on the new arrivals at the Heavenly Gate when a Bosun and his lady appeared together. "Good gracious" said St Peter, "whatever makes you think I'm going to let you in here?" The couple looked rather discomfited "You have allowed your whole life to be dominated by drink, even your wife is called Ginny. You can't come in. Go and find somewhere else"

Hard on their heels came another pair, this time a Captain and his wife. St Peter looked at his checklist and said, "You can't come in here" he said to the captain, "your whole life has been dominated by money. Even your wife is called Penny. You'll need to find somewhere else I'm afraid"

As they turned away, the next couple in line, a Scottish Chief Engineer and his wife, had heard both the previous conversations and before they faced St Peter, the engineer turned to his wife and said, "Come on Fanny, I'm not staying round here waiting to be insulted,"

LUNCH TO CELEBRATE THE LAUNCH

It has now been three years since our merry band had their inaugural debut at the offices of the Northern Lighthouse Board in George Street, Edinburgh. So, after our monthly meeting in October, we decided to celebrate with a bit of lunch at the local hostelry that is Weatherspoons.

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025



A warm welcome was made to our visitors on that day, Alistair Grindlay (brother of Ken) and our esteemed colleague from the Glasgow MNA branch, Jim Holmes. Glad to say the branch is thriving, being given recognition and becoming involved in many local memorial events,

RECOGNITION AND REMEMBRANCE



At our October meeting, one of our members highlighted the fact that there was a small Merchant Navy memorial in Calton Cemetery in Edinburgh, dedicated to five of the crew of the vessel MV Atheltemplar, which was hit during an airborne attack whilst in convoy in 1941. (more on this vessel in another issue). Our thanks to Colin Williamson for highlighting this and to Alon Palmer for visiting the memorial to place one of the tributes made by Jim Holmes.



REMEMBRANCE DAY – SUNDAY 9th NOVEMBER

Several of our members attended Remembrance Day services in their local areas, including Edinburgh City, Corstorphine in Edinburgh, Inverkeithing, Swinton, Broxburn and Kirkcaldy.



CONTACT US

President:

Captain David Fleming-Millar

Branch Chair:

Ned Kelly

mna.edinburgh@gmail.com

Branch Treasurer:

Allan Dickson

Mnaedin.treasurer@gmail.com

Social Secretary:

Sandy Mitchell

mnaedin.sosec@gmail.com

Branch Secretary:

Cathryn Moir



[Merchant Navy Association
Edinburgh Branch](#)



mnaedinburgh.co.uk

Learn More:



www.mnaedinburgh.co.uk

Editor : S. Mitchell



This year, Swinton commemorated women in wartime



SCOTTISH SERVICE FOR SEAFARERS



Sunday 16th November branch members attended the service at North & South Leith Parish Church for the 81st year Of the Scottish Service for Seafarers with many dignitaries in attendance including the Master and Members of Trinity House, the High Constabulary from both Leith & Edinburgh and the Depute Lord Provost of Edinburgh. Also good to see a great attendance from the Sea Cadet Corps.

A thoughtful sermon was conducted by Joseph O'Donnell, Senior Area Port Chaplain for Scotland and Northern Ireland, with Rebecca Haldane, Sailors' Society Chaplain, highlighting examples of the great work carried out by the Sailors' Society.

A wreath laying ceremony was conducted at the Scottish Merchant Navy Memorial at The Shore, where our chairman, Ned Kelly, laid an anchor wreath (just to make sure the memorial wouldn't sail away).