

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025

Galley Radio



Merchant Navy Association – Edinburgh & Forth Branch

SPRING 2025

Tall Ships – Aberdeen

The fleet of historic tall ships will begin arriving in Aberdeen harbour on the 18th July, however, the event will be open to the public 19th – 22nd July.

Access to the harbour is free, but it will be busy and there will be Park-and-Ride facilities at Bridge of Don and Craibstone (near the airport) as parking in the town is very limited (and expensive).

There are ticketed concerts during the event with Deacon Blue on the 18th (sold out), Ministry of Sound 19th, with the Kaiser Chiefs on the 21st. There is a free concert on the 20th from Tide Lines & Calum Bowie and this will be on a first come basis.

Quayside events are 09.00 – 20.00. There will be food markets and bars open from 09.00 to 23.00

The crew sports and parade will be on Sunday 20th

Tuesday 22nd is the undocking and parade of sail along the quayside and beach esplanade 10.00 – 15.00

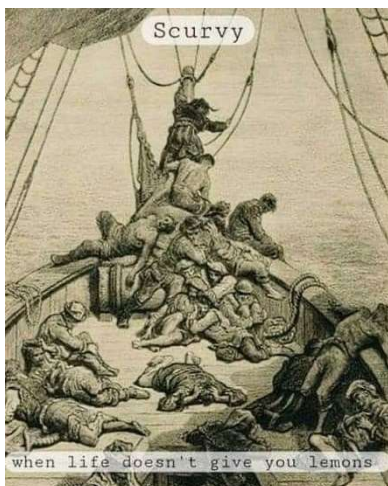
A warm welcome to another

edition of **Galley Radio**, where we cover some of the events that have happened during the Spring 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.

FRYING TONIGHT

After the March meeting, in order to keep the troops morale up, we descended on Landy's Fish & Chip restaurant on North Bridge for a F & C lunch. With very prompt service and some tasty fish, it made for a fine afternoon, with the only disappointment being the steak pie. We then retired to The Tron pub behind the Tron Kirk for some harmony where we met with the proprietors of our previous meeting place, Shandwick's.



ANZAC DAY 25th April 2025

The Dardanelles Straits is a narrow stretch of waterway 41 miles long, connecting the Mediterranean with the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea beyond. Gallipoli is at the northern end of the straits. During the First World War the Allies were trying to keep the straits open as a supply route in to Russia. The initial naval campaign comprised of vessels from Britain's Royal Nav, French Marine Nationale, Imperial Russian Navy and the Royal Australian Navy.

The naval campaign in trying to keep the straits open was less than successful due to the German reinforced fortifications, mines and submarines. Minesweepers used for clearing the minefields were unarmoured trawlers manned by civilian crews. Hampered by strong currents in the straits and Turkish defences, this proved too much and the crews were unwilling to work while under fire. On the night of March 13th, six minesweepers were led in to the straits by HMS Amethyst. Four trawlers were hit and Amethyst was badly damaged, with 19 stokers killed from one hit.

In the initial campaign, the fleet lost more ships than the RN had suffered at the Battle of Trafalgar. Four days after the unsuccessful naval campaign it was decided to use the infantry to seize the Gallipoli peninsula and capture forts, clearing the way for the navy to pass through to the Sea of Marmara. A combined fleet of naval and merchant vessels were used in transporting thousands of soldiers to and from the Dardanelles, with the major threat was attacks from German and Austrian-Hungarian submarines and mines.

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025 contd.

North East Scotland College will be there to chat and provide information on training opportunities, such as trainee deckhand courses and officer of the watch cadetship programmes. The local Sea Cadets will also have a small stand at the event.

One of our newer members has suggested a golf outing and has kindly proposed his club at West Linton as a possible venue. Once he returns from his travels in "Trumpland", this will be discussed further.

With one of our colleagues now working on the river Forth, we can look at the possibility of a trip on the Maid of the Forth, South Queensferry, with other 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

Some of our members were in attendance at the remembrance service at the Scottish War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle. Our Treasurer, Allan Dickson, laid a wreath during the service. A lovely addition to the service was the inclusion of ANZAC biscuits for all.



PUDDING IT TO REST....



Recent years have seen many inventions to improve the lot of the seafarer, but the most dramatic improvements must have surely have been in communication, so that now, it becomes difficult to imagine the frustrations and mistakes of visual signalling methods of the not-too-distant past. Radio was a godsend not only to ships, but also to remote lighthouses. Nearly all of these were built in the nineteenth century, long before the days of radio communication and were therefore fitted with yardarms on either side on which a series of black balls could be hung to convey basic messages to shore. The appropriate permutation of black balls was hung out one day on the Pentland Skerries lighthouse as one of the keepers was laid low with appendicitis. Unfortunately, the weather was too bad for a boat to take him off. A system was arranged whereby the patient's pulse rate and temperature would be transmitted by Aldis lamp every evening and a doctor on shore would interpret these and return instructions by the same means. This worked well for two evenings, but on the third evening the watchkeeper had changed and a different lightkeeper was manning the Aldis. Symptoms were duly transmitted and after a pause the reply winked back over the stormy waters of the Pentland Firth, "Give treatment of two nights ago" Unfortunately, the man on the Aldis found the Achilles heel of Samuel Morse's celebrated code and read this as "Give treatment of two night sago" The happy outcome of the tale was that the patient responded well to a diet of nocturnal milk puddings and was on his feet by the time the storm abated and the relief boat came alongside. The good doctor, for his part, received a letter from the Commissioners of Northern Lights thanking him for his devotion to duty and commending him for the efficacious treatment he had prescribed. The lighthouse became fully automated in 1994.

BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS

This year, the Forth Rail Bridge celebrates its 135th anniversary. Prehistoric travellers may have attempted to cross the River Forth by coracle or canoe to avoid the acres of impenetrable forest and pathless bog that once bordered the shores. Many a Roman centurion must have pondered the logistics of a direct route north from the camp overlooking the Forth at Cramond. The first recorded regular crossing was that of the saintly Queen Margaret, wife of Malcolm III as she journeyed between the royal palaces of Edinburgh and Dunfermline. Her son David I established a ferry around 1130. These ferries were to continue in one form or another until 1964 when the new Forth Road Bridge was opened.

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025 contd.

Another proposal is to have a day out to Brodick on the Isle of Arran. This would be in conjunction with a sail on the newest of the CalMac ferries, the "Glensannox". This would involve travelling to Troon, sailing to Arran as foot passengers and having lunch in the Douglas Hotel in Brodick. If we choose the right day, it may be possible to have a tour of the vessel from our Treasurer, who is currently Second Engineer on board.

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.

Since its opening in 1890, the Forth Rail Bridge has been recognised as one of the world's greatest engineering feats, however, the Forth Bridge was not the first rail crossing over the River Forth though. The Alloa Swing Bridge was a railway swing bridge across the River Forth that connected Throsk and Alloa as part of the Alloa Railway. The Alloa Railway obtained authority through an Act of Parliament on the 11th of August 1879 to open a section of line linking the South Alloa Branch of the Scottish Central Railway to Alloa. The new line was also connected to the North British Railway between Alloa Railway Station and Alloa marshalling yard - both opened on the 1st of October 1885, five years before the Forth Bridge at Queensferry opened. The rail line was double track except for the bridge crossing, which was single track. The swing bridge design was necessary to allow the passage of shipping up and downstream at a time when Stirling was still an active port.

The bridge was designed by the consulting civil engineers, Crouch and Hogg, and built by contractors Watt and Wilson, both of Glasgow. The bridge was designed as a 492 metre long (1,615 feet), with 20 spans made of wrought-iron with a bow-girder



structure, with a horizontal curvature of 865 metres. The span of the swing bridge was 44 metres, providing a clear opening of 19 metres for river vessels on each side of a steam-powered, rotating, central pier that housed a cabin structure mounted over the rails to allow operation of the steam engine, which had been built at St Rollox works in Springburn, Glasgow. The central pier of the rotating span was protected by a timber cutwater that projected 43 metres up and down river. When the swing bridge was opened for river traffic, the ends of the rotating span were supported by structures at each end of the cutwater. The deck of the bridge was at a level of 7 metres above high-water level and was supported on piers, each consisting of two stone columns connected by ironwork at top and base.

The bridge was damaged by collisions on at least three occasions. In 1899, gales drove a sailing ship against one of the piers. On the 12th of October 1904, the schooner '*Stirling*' under tow, also collided with one of the piers as it passed through the swing span, destroying the pier and displacing some girder spans. Rail traffic was suspended until the 1st of June 1905. In the early hours of Sunday the 15th of August 1920, an obsolete British destroyer, '*HMS Mallard*', which was scheduled to be broken up, broke free from its moorings in a storm and was blown into the bridge. For some time, this was widely reported in the local press to have been a former German warship. The damage was serious enough to close the bridge to rail traffic until the 1st of March 1921. *HMS Mallard* was a two-funnel (later D-Class) destroyer, launched in 1896 at Chiswick. Following her WWI Royal Navy



career, *Mallard* was sold on the 10th of February 1920 to the Alloa Ship Breaking Company for breaking. As a result of these incidents, three stone piers were replaced by cast iron ones and additional cross-bracing was added to all piers. Repairs were carried out by Sir William Arrol and Company, the contractor who helped build the Forth Rail Bridge.

POTENTIAL EVENTS for 2025 contd.

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

Suggestions are always
welcome for new
potential visits.

The structure was in use from 1885 until 1968. Throughout its existence the bridge had carried passenger and freight traffic, but both gradually declined and in the 1960's, the passenger service was replaced by a four-wheeled railbus. Trains continued to bring coal to the swing bridge engine house until this was fixed in the open position for river traffic in May 1970. The connecting lines, bridge deck spans and engine house were dismantled and removed in 1971 and 1972, leaving only the piers and abutments. Sadly, this bridge is not as celebrated as the more spectacular Forth Bridge.

VE DAY REMEMBERED

The Donaldson Line "*SS Dillian*" spent the entire War on the North Atlantic Convoys. On 7 March 1941, U-70 attacked convoy OB-293 southeast of Iceland, but was lost after a second attack at 07.25 hours. The U-Boat survivors claimed that they had hit three ships in the first attack at 04.45 hours and another in the second. In fact they had hit *Athelbeach* and *Delilian* in station #71 and #61 during the first attack and *Mijdrecht* during the second.

At about 04.50 hours, the *Delilian* was hit on the starboard side by one torpedo and her crew abandoned ship. When *Mijdrecht* approached one of her lifeboats about 90 minutes later, she was herself damaged by a torpedo from the same U-boat. Escorts later brought the crew back to *Delilian* which turned back and arrived at Kames Bay on 10 March. She was repaired at Glasgow and returned to service in May 1941. With VE Day on us and we celebrate I'm presently sitting here reflecting on my parents participation on that day. My late mother was 15 and boarded a bus with like-minded girlfriends to take to the streets of Edinburgh while her boyfriend, my late father, a young 17 year old Navigation Cadet, was onboard his ship in Southampton docks.

Dad joined *SS Delilian*, Donaldson's Glasgow, as a 16 year old cadet, on 18/08/1944 in Liverpool and promptly set off on convoy ON255 bound for Canada. He went on to complete 3 North Atlantic runs but it was his last, HX342 that put him and the *Delilian* into E16 dock Southampton for VE Day. On that returning convoy to the UK dense fog descended onto the eastern Atlantic. A rendering crash went through the vessel and the worst was feared even although U-boat sinking was becoming rare. But it wasn't a torpedo. During the zig manoeuvres one column zagged while the others zigged and the *Delilian* was in collision with another vessel sustaining major bow damage. She broke convoy and headed to Southampton. On VE Day the ship decked out with all the flags available onboard. Dad kept the Jack as a souvenir and I am proudly flying this 80 year old flag from my flag pole this day.



Article & photos courtesy of David Reid, MNA Edinburgh Branch

STARRY, STARRY NIGHT....

It was a glorious star-studded night when a lady passenger on the boat deck stopped a passing sailor to ask the name of one very bright star. Paddy, said he didn't know, but would ask the officer of the watch and would convey the information back to her. "Tell her," said the officer "that it's Sirius, it is in the constellation of Orion and it is the brightest star in the firmament." Back comes Paddy to the boat deck. "Ma'am, I have it now. It's the constipation of O'Brien, it's serious and it's the tightest arse in the infirmary"

NEW MEMORIAL PLAQUE UNVEILED.



opened Govan/Partick Swing Bridge, opposite the tall ship the *Glenlee*. At the end of the ceremony, the bridge was swung open to allow the paddle steamer *Waverley* to pass. A fitting tribute. Many congratulations to the MNA Glasgow Branch, who, without their perseverance and dedication, the memorial would never have become a reality.

Saturday 10th May saw the unveiling of a new memorial plaque dedicated to the memory of 55 thousand merchant seafarers who lost their lives during two world wars. The unveiling was carried out by Captain John Hood (RFA retired) and Deacon John O'Donnell, Stella Maris and Senior Port Chaplain for Scotland & Northern Ireland carried out the dedication.

A sizeable crowd had gathered to see the unveiling at its home beside the newly

MEMORIAL DAY ON CUMBRAE



grave. It consists of a path, memorial garden, monument and metal artwork. The memorial was the idea of Ian Forsyth and was dedicated by Rev Marjory Mackay of the Parish Church. Saturday 17th May saw another service and wreath laying ceremony held at this memorial, performed by the Reverend Canon Alec Boyd and a poem read by Jim Holmes of the MNA Glasgow Branch accompanied by the RBLs Cumbrae Pipe Band. Special thanks to the RBLs Millport branch for their hospitality.

There are two war memorials on the island of Great Cumbrae. The main memorial sits on the seafront in Millport commemorating the men from the island who were lost during WWI and WWII. The memorial was built by Robert Gray and unveiled on October 15th 1922.

The second, built in 2005, is sited just north of Sheriff's Port on the west coast of the island. Dedicated to the men and women of the Allied Forces who sacrificed their lives for our freedom and have no known



There is another memorial at the north end of the island, but not a war memorial. It is in memory of two young men who lost their lives 181 years ago, on 17th May 1844. *HMS Shearwater* was a wooden paddle steamer which became the main surveying vessel in the UK in the 1840s. *Shearwater* was built in Harwich in 1826 for the Post Office, transferred to the Royal Navy in 1837, and equipped for surveying at Woolwich in 1841. In the summer of 1844 *HMS Shearwater*, under the command of Commander Charles Gepp Robinson, was surveying the west coast of Scotland. By mid-May they had reached Largs Bay and on the afternoon of Friday 17th was at anchor.

Two young midshipman friends from the *Shearwater*, Charles Cayley, aged 17 and William Jewell, aged 19, borrowed a small sailing boat to amuse themselves.

They were out near the north end of Cumbrae when a strong north-east squall blew up, caught them and drove their boat bow-first under the waves taking the boys with it. This was observed by the crew of another Government steamer in the bay called *Vulcan* which, having its steam up, went to the rescue. Unfortunately, all they could recover were the boys' caps. There was a thorough search for their bodies but they could not be found. Later Commander Robinson and his crew erected a sandstone obelisk at Tomont End in memory of Charles and William.

NORWAY REMEMBERS



Saturday 17th May is also the Constitution Day, the national day for Norway. It is the day Norway chose to become an independent kingdom in 1814 after Denmark/Norway's defeat in the Napoleonic wars. As a result of this, a union was formed between Norway and Sweden, as Norway was under Swedish rule at this time, however, this was dissolved in 1905 when Norway became truly independent.

All over Norway and around the world, memorial services are held to the fallen during war and other

notable national people, with speeches and wreaths. One such service, dedicated to Norwegian merchant seamen, was held at Seafield Cemetery in Edinburgh and attended by our colleagues Allan Dickson and Alon Palmer. Also in attendance was our good friend and associate, Mike Bullock (Chief Executive of the NLB)

...TALKING OF NORWAY



The last week in May saw an old Norwegian lady visiting Leith, *D/S Hestmanden*. So much history in one wee vessel.

Built in Bergen one hundred and fourteen years ago in 1911, she sailed up and down the coast of Norway with cargo and passengers before being commandeered for foreign merchant trade. She is the only ship to survive two world wars and the only remaining vessel from over 1000 ships that were part of the Norwegian national shipping fleet during the Second World War.

On board are many examples of the sad stories from the men who braved the Atlantic convoys. Men who were, unfortunately, abroad when Germany invaded Norway, could not return home for the duration of the war, with some unable to return home as late as 1947.

More than 4500 Norwegian seafarers were killed in service for their country, but the *Hestmanden* became known as a "lucky" ship, managing to avoid bombs and torpedoes, despite many enemy attacks.

The vessel is a tribute to the dedication and hard work by the restoration team and her crew and a fitting monument to the bravery of the merchant seafarers who sailed on her during the years of conflict.



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