



CanalCraft Project Review

CELEBRATING HERITAGE, BOATS AND COMMUNITIES

Foreword

This review outlines the main themes of the project and its legacy.

In October 2018, the Forth and Clyde Canal Society (FCCS) received support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for CANALCRAFT.

Thanks to National Lottery players, the one year project, is based in local communities along the Forth and Clyde canal in and around Glasgow, brought boats and people together with exciting activities and community celebrations and gatherings.

CANALCRAFT passed on skills such as canal boat navigation, small craft boat-building, boat safety, and also memories and views about the canal.

Participants and the CanalCraft team collected, filmed and broadcasted our experiences widely through creation and sharing of online content.

The project celebrated these achievements through community events, film screenings and celebratory gatherings. CANALCRAFT trained participating communities in understanding and caring for their canal to stay open and be used.

In this review:
Brief history of the canal
and the Society
Why this project?
CanalCraft in Maryhill
and Kirkintilloch
Festivals
Legacy

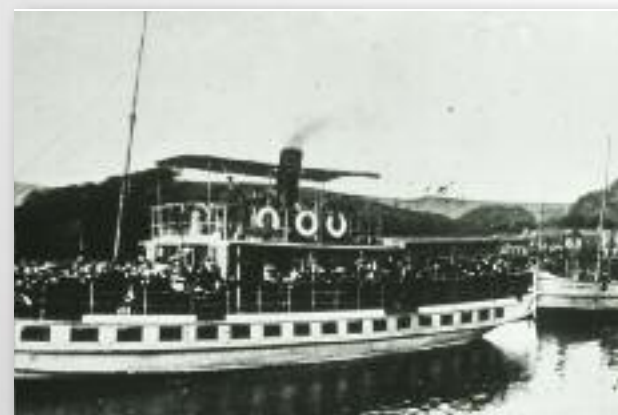
The Canal

The Forth and Clyde canal, which runs from the river Clyde in Bowling through to the river Forth, was created 250 years ago and carried cargo between two important cities in Scotland, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and assisted in the transportation of people and goods before the railways were established. The canal depended on the industry that existed around it. Coal mining, foundries, lime kilns, iron works, mills and all kinds of manufacturing supported a network of growth which benefited Glasgow, Scotland and the world.



Photos provided by Maryhill Burgh Halls

The canal's story is the story of boats. Many different kinds of boats travelled across the canal: cargo carriers, passenger vessels, sailing boats, even submarines. They all had their own stories, of their cargoes and the people who worked on them. Of all the canal boats, one stands out: the puffer. The puffers were built on the canal and the cargo they carried from the local industries helped in the development of West of Scotland coastal communities that were difficult to reach by road.



The development of the railway in the 19th century and eventually the collapse of the industries in the areas around the canal led to its closure as a navigable waterway in the early 1960s. The canal continued to be part of the environment in local communities, although its function had changed as it was not a 'working canal' any more. Attitudes towards the waterway became negative as it was abandoned and left to collect debris, uncontrolled vegetation and litter. It soon became an area to avoid for the communities living around it.

Although there was an effort from some local authorities to protect residents by covering it over or filling it in, some groups of boaters, from the early 1970s, started a campaign for the re-opening of the canal. The boaters claimed that a fully operating canal is a healthy canal: clean, safe and an asset to its communities, offering a positive feature in their area which they felt belonged to them. The canal also provided, and continues to provide, important drainage for the central belt.



Photos provided by East Dunbartonshire Archives and Local Studies



Photos provided by East Dunbartonshire Archives and Local Studies

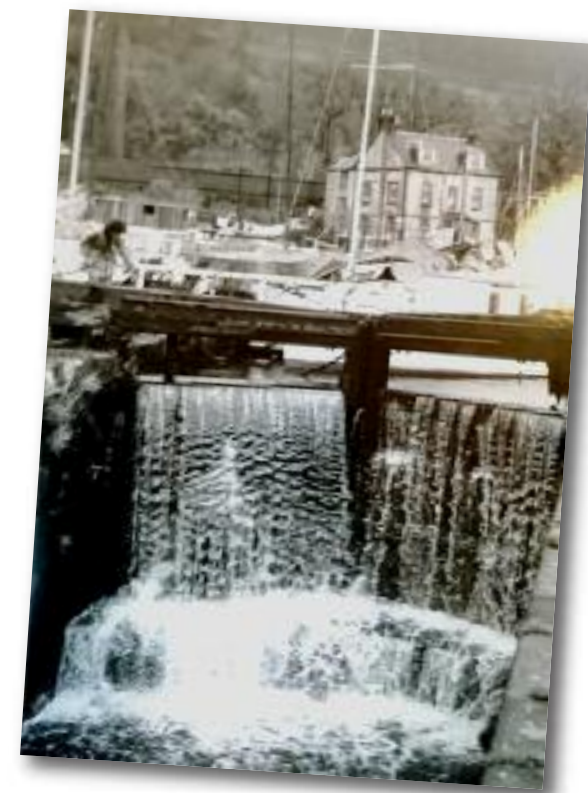


The campaign gained support, not only from boaters but also from others in local communities who started to realise the benefits of a busy canal.



The boaters invited groups of supporters to start action. They needed to persuade local authorities along the Forth and Clyde canal that the main operational components of the canal (locks and bridges) could be made operable and that there was public demand for the waterway to re-open.

Many events, such as lock clean ups and boat rallies, took place, with folk coming from all over the UK to help get the message across. The activists soon realised that one organisation needed to control and drive the campaign along the canal.



The Society



So, the Forth and Clyde Canal Society was established in 1980, creating a group within which all other groups interested in bringing the Forth and Clyde canal back to life could campaign.



The Society has been campaigning for a navigable Forth and Clyde canal for 40 years by making people aware of the history, the benefits and the social and economic potential of the canal. They are doing this through a powerful tool, a journal Canal News, which has been published since the formation of the Society and it is still published today. Canal News began as a home typed and bound magazine, and has grown into today's full colour publication and, along with the Society's web site and social media pages, continues to serve the on-going campaign for the preservation of the Forth and Clyde canal.



In 2001, as part of the Millenium Link, the Forth and Clyde canal opened once again to navigation, from sea to sea and from Glasgow to Edinburgh. By then, the Forth and Clyde Canal Society had succeeded in getting people on the canal, first with an old work boat, then running the old Govan ferries, and now with a 25 passenger vessel, Gipsy Princess and our flag ship Voyager with 45 passengers.



Why this project

The Forth and Clyde Canal Society was exploring new possibilities for engagement. The Society wanted to rekindle a sense of ownership of the canal amongst the general public who live or work in its vicinity. They decided to apply for funding to support a yearlong community engagement project for the Society and so the idea for CanalCraft was born.



The Forth and Clyde Canal Society identified the communities they wanted to work with and started a consultation. The consultation focused on two areas of the canal: Kirkintilloch, a canal town outside Glasgow, the society's base of operations, with a long and rich history of boat building, and Maryhill, in Glasgow, because of its rich industrial heritage. This second area would help renew the society's ties with the city.

The Consultation

The society wanted to reach out to young people and women as these groups are underrepresented in boating activities.



Mixed attitudes were revealed. Younger participants appeared not to know much about the canal. They seem to engage primarily with the towpath. Many of the local women the Society consulted had grown up during the canal's closure, and they remembered deaths and accidents of people they knew and they had grown up with the feeling that the canal was a dirty area of the city, where criminal activity takes place.



The consultation revealed mixed attitudes towards the canal and that a new project to promote engagement was needed in the areas. The National Lottery Heritage Fund agreed to support the activities we proposed:

- an oral history project involving the society's members
- a new archive for the Society
- the building of three boats and their oars
- two films
- two celebratory events

The Archive

The Society's newsletter, Canal News, the main campaigning tool for the Society, was digitised as part of the project, in a format that could allow the text to be searchable on line. Additional archival material including photos and leaflets were also digitised and catalogued.



For information on how to access the FCCS Archive please contact the Society:
www.forthandclyde.org.uk/contact.asp



At the same time the Society's website was upgraded to accommodate the new material and be interactive for engagement purposes.



George MacAngus Collection

The first collection of photographs, of a now deceased member donated to the Forth and Clyde Canal Society. The collection is showing the Forth and Clyde canal in various stages of development, primarily in the mid to end 1990s, when the canal's redevelopment started.



Flotilla for the opening for the new bridge in Bishopbriggs

Oral History

During 11 interviews, stories were collected about the society from its long term members, with a questionnaire that the members themselves developed. The questions were not just about the campaign and the formation of the Society but also about the Society's role today and how they see the Society's role in the future, the canal and the future of boating on the waterway.



The interviews highlighted the role of women members of the Society during the campaigning years and their role in the running of the organisation. This oral history work also drew a different picture of campaigning before the time of the internet and social media platforms



Boat Building ~ Maryhill

Boat building activities started in Maryhill in April 2018, at Kelvin College, with service users from Maryhill Integration Network, after some difficulty finding a suitable space that could host such an activity for five consecutive days. The group built two boats and four oars in one week, with the help of two professional boat builders. There was a language barrier to begin with, which was an issue as there were tasks that were not obvious to explain, but as one of the boat builders told the Society "at the end it was all fine, boat building became our common language".



Civic Journalism ~ Maryhill

The Forth and Clyde Canal Society ran workshops on civic journalism with the women's groups, the Women's Centre and the Oasis group from the Maryhill Integration Network. Participants, inspired by the Society's campaigning history, learned about activism through social media and how to create powerful video stories under one minute long, against the clock. They had training from a professional journalist in interviewing, filming for journalism and in creating short messages with an impact. They used these tools to create messages about the Forth and Clyde canal.



Boat Handling

Lunch was a big part of the activities in CanalCraft where people exchanged ideas and memories.



The same groups of women were invited on the Society's boat to sail, have a try at the tiller and learn how a boat moves in the canal, areas of caution and how the weather affects the canal and the boat. Participants who took on the challenge also viewed their local area from the water and that sparked discussions as to how much the area has changed. For most of the women being on a boat was a first time experience.



Skill

You're paying more attention when you're on the boat.

**It's narrow
and the sun comes that way
It's so green, peaceful.**

**The fright I used to have is gone
being here on top of the water.
With the rain outside, like waking in a caravan
I love listening to the rain
hitting off the roof.**

**We all get a shot of driving the boat
Underneath us sit the fish
Pike and carp
Maybe a flash of the rare kingfisher.**

**Here is a fork:
to the east, Edinburgh
to the west, the Clyde.**

**Turning, we move too close to the side
The boat scrapes along the reeds and lily pads
But the new driver fixes our course
And the boatmaster tells us
It takes a special level of skill to crash the boat like that**



*Katherine from the Open Book project was on-board in one of the cruises. She collected words from the boat handling experience the women had and so the canal poem Skill was created!
The women were proud of their poem that they recited it to an audience at the Celebratory event.*



Celebratory Event

The first celebratory event of the project took place in the Engine Works, a building part of the local industrial heritage and adjacent to the Forth and Clyde canal. The event gathered over 100 visitors.



The Society invited SheBoom, who are based at the Women's Centre and the dancers from MIN to entertain the visitors. There were film screenings from the boatbuilding and civic journalism workshops and the Society handed out awards. For an 81 year old lady that award was the first one she had ever received! Visitors shared food from the Middle East and listened to the participants telling their side of the experience through the activities. The event was partly supported by the Refugee Festival Scotland and became one of their main publicity events.



Glasgow Canal Festival



The boats that were built during CanalCraft were taken to three festivals by the boat-builders: the Glasgow Canal Festival, the Kirkintilloch Canal Festival and the Clydebuilt Festival on the river Clyde.



Kirkintilloch Canal Festival



Clydebuilt Festival



Boat Building - Kirkintilloch



In Kirkintilloch the boat building group was gathered from local youth groups. The Seagull Trust, a local charity, offered their boathouse to the young people to build their boat. The participants were between 17 to 25 years old





Working along with the Seagull Trust's volunteers proved to be successful too. Being inside a boathouse, in a boating environment for two weeks was a unique experience and participants learned a lot about life with boats, the canal and being on water.

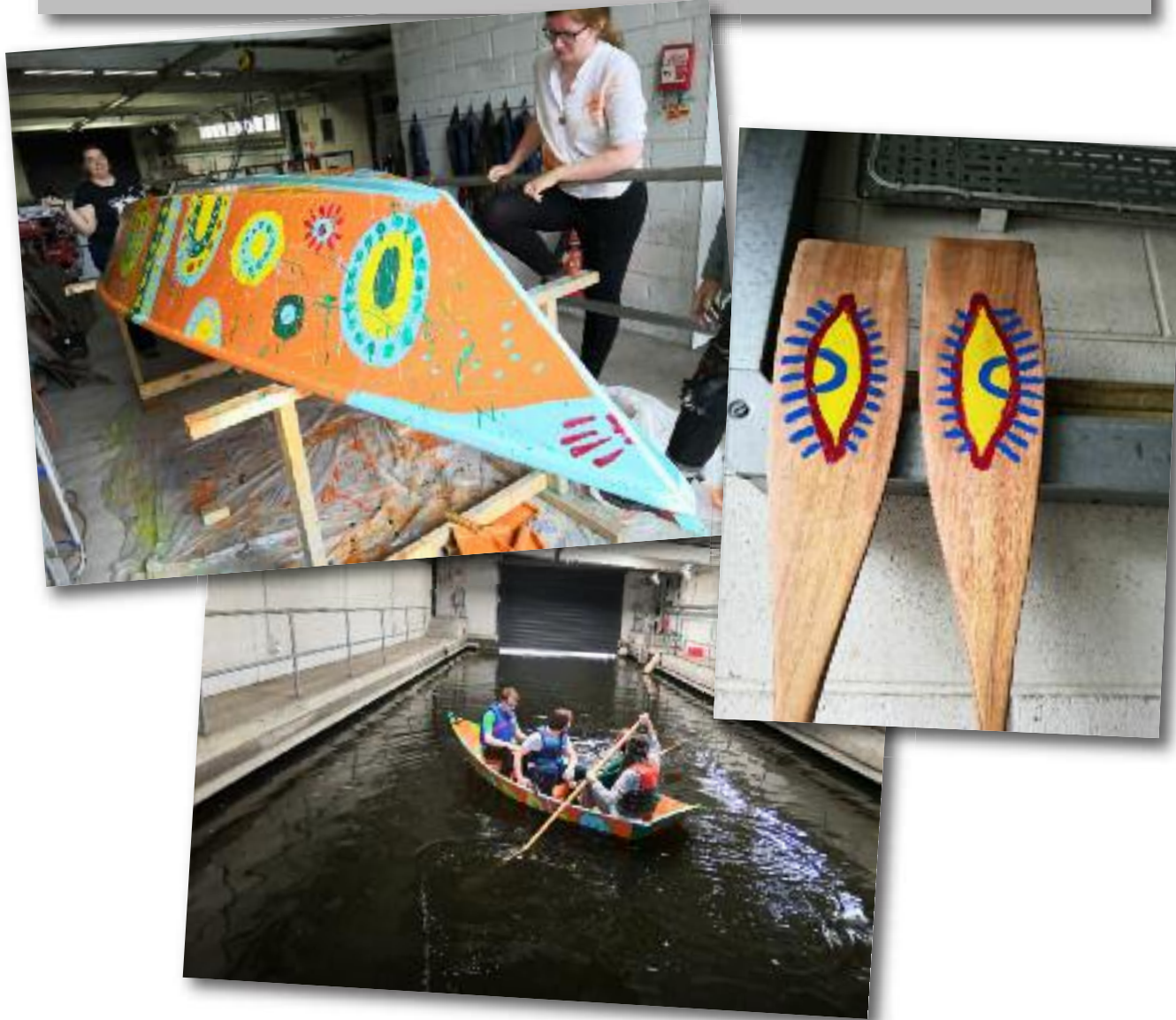


Lunch was a very big part of the activity and was discussed from first thing in the morning. During breaks and lunch there were discussions about the activity, boats, the local area and relationships. Boat building proved to be a good vehicle of personal development, as the idea of a 'workshop' where kids could go, hang out and work towards a big project created an environment of trust and comfort.



The Boat called WAWHFL

The boat looked distinctly different from all the other boats in the canal and the group came up with a very suitable name.
Participants were encouraged to try the boat in the boathouse and we made sure it was safe for them to do this.



The boat called WAWHFL (What Are We Having for Lunch) was officially launched at the East Dunbartonshire canal festival in August, by Cllr A. Polson.
During the event, Don Martin, a local historian, informed the young people that this boatbuilding activity was the first to take place at the same spot in 60 years!



The Civic journalism workshops took place in two different community centres in Kirkintilloch with participants from GRACE, a mental health after care venture where people who have sustained trauma find a place to feel safe, develop skills and feel confident to resume their life. Working with GRACE was a great opportunity to prove the positive role boats and water can have in someone's life and also to share views on the canal and boating from a group with limited experience of life on the water.



East Dunbartonshire council have been very supportive to the project. They offered an exhibition for CanalCraft at the Co-curated space in the newly developed Heritage Centre in Kirkintilloch, where the boat builders worked with the professional curators to develop a very attractive show.



Celebratory Event

The second celebratory event, with music, certificates and sign singing took place at the Town Hall in Kirkintilloch which also concluded with a big lunch shared with everybody involved in the project, their friends and family.



During the event, The Campsie Scottish Folk Players performed their song 'The Queen' for the first time. The song was commissioned by the Forth and Clyde Canal Society and the lyrics came from an anonymous poem found in the local archives. The song pays tribute to the historic and very popular passenger canal boat Gipsy Queen and the Forth and Clyde canal.



Legacy

In November, the charity "It's Good 2 Give" accepted one of the CanalCraft boats built by participants of the Maryhill Integration Network (MIN). A team from the Forth and Clyde Canal Society, CanalCraft and some boat builders from MIN went to Ripple Retreat just outside Callander, to deliver the boat, which was named Love & Care by the people who built it. The Ripple Retreat offers holiday breaks for families dealing with child and teenage cancer. We had a tour of the project by its volunteers and we admired the fantastic work and the magnificent location.



Legacy

The arts organisation Carnival Arts, based near the Forth and Clyde canal in Glasgow has accepted the second boat built by the MIN participants. The organisation will use the boat every year during the Glasgow Canal Festival, engaging MIN and other local community organisations in floating activities on the canal.



the
carnival
arts
yard





Canal Craft is the Forth and Clyde Canal Society's latest project to bring a new and younger audience to care for the Forth and Clyde canal, which runs through their neighbourhood.



"I want to join the Society and become a skipper", one of CanalCraft's participants told the Society.
He is now the Society's youngest volunteer, learning about canal boats and training in heritage and community project management.

Acknowledgments

CanalCraft and this publication wouldn't have been possible without the support of the National Lottery players



Images/Photographs

Elena Koumpouzi
Kirstie Anslow
Ian Maclellan
Paul Carter
Daniel Harkins
Douglas Johnston
Harry Tanser
Gordon Low
Forth and Clyde Canal Society
Archive
East Dunbartonshire Archives and
Local Studies
Maryhill Burgh Halls Archives

Thanks to

Forth and Clyde Canal Society Volunteers
Maryhill Integration Network (MIN) Members
and Staff
The Women's Centre Members and Staff
G.R.A.C.E Members and Staff
LGBT Youth Scotland and The House of the
EvangelEasties
Archipelago Folkschool
The Prince's Trust
The Seagull Trust Volunteers
The Engine Works
Scottish Refugee Council
Scottish Canals
East Dunbartonshire Council
East Dunbartonshire Leisure and Culture Trust
East Dunbartonshire Local History Forum
The Campsie Scottish Folk Players
Kelvin College
It's Good 2 Give
Jen Jones

Special thanks to

Lynne McNicoll
Remzije Zeka Sherifi
Gianluca Palombo
Helen Thomson
Sandra Martin
Robert Smith
Stephen King
Shaun Horne
Don Martin
Shona Baird
Johnathan Niven
Peter McCormack
Jen Binnie
James Higgins
Gillian Kealey
Janice Miller
Katherine Mackinnon
Nicola Mchendry
Ed McKee (Designer)

