



# All Aboard!!

July 2008

## The Pioneering Ship of the Seagull

**30 Years  
Afloat!**

**1978—2008**



Recognise this boat? Perhaps not, because she passed out of The Seagull Trust's ownership in about 1997. Nevertheless, this was the boat that launched the first trips for disabled and special needs people on the Union Canal in 1979. Donated to The Seagull Trust by The Order of St John, she was delivered to Ratho in April of that year. Originally called "Minuet" she was renamed "Crusader" in honour of our donors. At that time the only navigation available for cruising from Ratho was the 7 mile stretch between the M8 blockage and Hemiston or a little further east.

Unlike the broad beam boats Seagull Trust Cruises operate now, she was a "narrow boat", built to operate on England's rivers and narrow canals. Being a fraction under 7 feet wide she was rather cramped, and pushing a laden wheelchair up the unguarded ramp onto the hydraulic lift on the foredeck was not only risky for the passenger but positively hernia inducing for the crew!

Despite her disadvantages, it can be safely said that from the 470 passengers she carried in her first year, she paved the way for the Trust's expanding fleet of boats in later years. From that modest beginning in 1979 until the end of 2007, a total of almost 250,000 passengers have enjoyed trips on our boats.

Two events deserve special mention during her years of service with the Seagull Trust. Firstly, she is probably the only boat to have done a spell at Saughton Prison, Edinburgh. She was taken "inside" to be worked on by inmates, lining the hull and sign-writing. She passed through the distinctly unpeary gates with 2" to spare, supervised by one Ronnie Rusack! Secondly, at a later date she provided a cruise on the Union Canal for Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher & husband Denis, photos of which are in the Trust's archives. If you can produce evidence of another boat on Scotland's inland waterways with a more interesting and distinguished record, we would be delighted to hear of it!

After an unfortunate period when she was taken over by another group, and sank at her mooring *twice!*, she has been "rescued" - repaired, refitted, repainted & renamed "Bluebell". And very smart she looks. The original engine is still going strong & she provides canal trips for the community in Winchburgh & Broxburn. The Bridge 19-40 Canal Society, who now own her, can be proud of their achievements. It is especially gratifying for Seagull Trust Cruises that this boat, which had such a special place in our history, is now so well looked after and is still going strong.

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## Thirty Years of Service 1978–2008

*For thirty years Seagull Trust Cruises has provided a unique service for Scotland's disabled communities. Countless volunteers have given their time and expertise to help and to allow us to continually enhance our services. Many have been long term 'servants to the cause' and continue to give their energies freely. In November we will celebrate Thirty Years at a Special Fund Raising Gala Dinner at the Falkirk Wheel, please book your tickets! In the meantime two of our most celebrated servants continue to do more than their bit:*

### Seagull Trust's Ronnie Rusack Joins the BWS Group

We are delighted to announce that Seagull Trust Cruises Chair, Ronnie Rusack MBE has joined the British Waterways Scotland Group. The move is recognition of the experience Ronnie has across the canal network, both as Chair and long time volunteer for Seagull Trust Cruises and for his commercial experience as owner of the Bridge Inn Ratho for many years.

British Waterways Scotland manages the 137-miles (220km) canal network which includes the Caledonian, Crinan, Forth & Clyde, Union and Monkland canals. The organisation seeks to ensure that navigation channels remain open and in a safe and well-maintained condition, balancing the conservation of Scotland's heritage and environment with developing leisure, tourism and business opportunities to generate income to reinvest in the waterways for further regeneration.

In the last few years Scotland's inland waterways have undergone a physical transformation and taken on a new lease of life to bring benefit to the communities through which they run. Scotland's canals are responding to wider agendas in leisure and tourism; health and community development; regeneration and economic opportunity; environment and sustainability. Seagull Trust Cruises is a vibrant part of this programme providing cruising access to disabled people.

The British Waterways Scotland Group champions British Waterways corporate and commercial interests in Scotland, providing a valuable counselling, consultative and influencing function both internally and externally. Good luck Ronnie!

### The 30th Anniversary Fundraising Dinner

#### November 8th at the Falkirk Wheel

Dust down your 'glad rags' and join the fun as we celebrate thirty years and raise money for many more years to come dining and dancing the night away. Please contact your branch chairperson for more information

### Brigadier Frank Coutts Cruise June 2008

**Quite where we would be without the enthusiasm and positive approach demonstrated by Frank over many years is hard to fathom. His capacity to raise much needed funds is now legendary.**

Today Frank is taking things a little easier (good for you!), but he still takes time to enjoy the waterways and celebrate his 90th birthday. Here he is enjoying a cruise as described by David Mieras, allowing us all a glimpse of just why inland waterways are such a benefit to the many passengers we serve each year:

*St John Crusader II had travelled from Ratho to Edinburgh Quay with a group from the Order of St John on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May. Being aware of this Frank grasped the opportunity to book the return trip for his neighbours on a perfect day of sun and little wind.*

*The barge, after turning in the basin, made off westwards passing under the Leamington lifting bridge, through the expanded moorings and pontoons to pass Polwarth. Harrison Park, Zazoo (a restaurant boat) – and the Edinburgh Canal Centre, all at a tranquil pace. Onto Meggetland and the Prince Charlie aqueduct at Craiglockhart—these are views you simply cannot get elsewhere. Very soon the longer aqueduct at Longstone was traversed leading on to Kingsknowe, where the passengers noted with interest the wooden sculpture of Burke and Hare.*

*Now in the rebuilt section of the canal, the cruise continued through Hailesland and Westerhailes, negotiating the very awkward turns and bridges to Calder Crescent, round the long bend to pass under the A 71 at Sighthill new and old bridges. Crusader approached the Scott Russell Aqueduct over the Edinburgh City By-pass with the consequent noise of traffic before reaching the rural tranquillity of Hermiston.*

*Hermiston Village and House – the official residence of the Principal of Heriot-Watt University – were observed in this peaceful country setting. Bridge 14 was negotiated and, passing by Ratho Park Golf Course, there were clear views to the new control tower at Edinburgh Airport. All too soon Ratho was seen ahead, the large basin at the Bridge Inn, Bridge 15 and, finally, the Trust Reception Centre.*

*One of the lady passengers suggested that the cruise could be considered as an early birthday celebration for Frank – four score and ten coming fairly soon! So here we go **Happy Birthday Frank!***

## The New Kirkintilloch Boathouse

The members of the Kirkintilloch branch will soon leave the boathouse they have occupied for the past 25 years, as Jennifer Biggins explains: It will be with mixed feelings that we leave a building which has served us well for so long. Inside a very ordinary, if not shabby looking outer shell is found an interior second only to Doctor Who's Tardis. It has been a place of great camaraderie over the years as well as the scene of many engineering marvels as a series of dedicated people have worked on both boats keeping them running with a lot of skill, effort and time and spending as little money as possible. With the coming of the new boathouse a few hundred yards to the west in the new marina a new start will be made. The answers to a number of questions have yet to be given.

- Will we miss the cold and the condensation dripping from the ceiling as we work on the boats over the winter?
- Will we remember fondly the fishing which took place whenever the water was pumped out of the boathouse during dry docking?
- Are we looking forward to a purpose built building with a proper crew room, 'indoor facilities,' a kitchen and a fully kitted out workshop?

Only time will provide the answers to these questions.

We have watched the building rise from the ground since the first foundations were laid. Some of our 'senior members' have even taken to wandering down to have a closer look at weekends. The boats have sailed past it twice a day since the season began and the new boathouse has become a 'highlight' of the trip. All our regular customers are as interested as we are about its progress. It now looks like a boathouse, a very big boathouse, and has recently had its windows put in. As I write it has not yet been flooded and this will not be done until all the internal fittings are in place.

Some of the offices around the marina have now been occupied and it will not be long before we are able to take possession of our own. We intend using the boats as floating removal vans when the time comes to make the big move and our engineers have already identified what we want to take with us and what is to be scrapped. At the moment we do not know when we will take possession of the boathouse as various dates have been given, the end of July being the most recent. As well as waiting for the building itself to be finished we need to wait until all the legal processes have been gone through.

As a branch we are looking forward to the move whenever it takes place and once we are properly 'settled in' we will no doubt be holding a 'house warming' at some time to which you will all be welcome.

– Jennifer Biggins, Kirkintilloch Branch

## A New Home for Yarrow and Marjorie!



The Kirkintilloch boathouse is making good progress and we are growing ever closer to its completion. The introduction of water into the marina was expected to take place in late May, a process which will take around 5 days, once the water pressure is equalised on both sides the temporary dam will be removed and Solent Marine can then install the pontoons.

Prior to the dam being removed the boathouse gate will have been fitted. This will then be tested to maintain the dry dock scenario when the marina is filled. The fit out contractors will then be working on the internals with a view to having the boathouse completed by late June. The office element has been handed over by the contractors and they are ordering furniture for the reception area.



# Growly Bears Travels'

**Growly Bear is our special Seagull Trust Cruise mascot — and you can buy one of his friends from any of our branches, fully adorned in his special T shirt! Not content with cruising the inland waterways of Scotland, this intrepid native of Scotland's waterways likes to spread his paws and see the world!**

George Growly-Bear lives with Dr Margarita Gomez Escalada, a micro-biology lecturer from Leeds Metropolitan University. George believes that he is the most widely travelled **Seagull Trust Cruises** Growly Bear. Perhaps you know better??

George is normally resident in Leeds and is a regular visitor to the Faculty of Health in the Metropolitan University. He visited Falkirk and Edinburgh briefly in December before flying to Madrid to

spend Christmas and New Year with Margarita's family. Early in January, he returned to Leeds via Liverpool. Then later in January, he went to London, first to the Royal Albert Hall to see Cirque du Soleil, then to the British Museum to see the terracotta warriors. In February, he visited Falkirk again, travelling by train of course as he is conscious of his carbon footprint!

Easter was spent with Margarita's cousin in Tucson Arizona. George took in a little of Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon at the same time. In May, he hopes to return to Spain for another short visit.

If you have a widely-travelled Growly Bear, we would like to hear from you and see your photographs.

## Growly Bears Holiday Album



Above: Growly in Las Vegas. Above Right: Growly Bear and his owner Dr.Margarita Gomez in London. Above Far Right: Poncho wearing Growly Bear in Tucson. Right: Growly Bear in Monument Valley.

**Volunteers always needed** – we are always looking for more volunteers to help us to extend our work and to help the disabled and disadvantaged in our communities; if you can help please contact us . For more information please go to [www.seagulltrust.org.uk](http://www.seagulltrust.org.uk)— every hour you can give can make a real difference.

**We are also always seeking new funds so if you can't help us with your time your donations are always welcome!!**

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