

# Re-Union Canal Boats Ltd Annual Report 2012



## Introduction

Re-Union Canal Boats is a social enterprise based on and around Edinburgh's Union Canal.

We engage meaningfully with canalside communities from Edinburgh Quay to Wester Hailes through a variety of projects including canal clean up's, community garden, education trips, floating youth clubs and co-ordinating community consultations and the Edinburgh Canal Festival.

Based in Edinburgh Quay, Re-Union offer boat trips to community, corporate and private groups to generate income. We also operate a holiday hire boat company, Capercaillie Cruisers, as a trading arm of the organisation.



## Board

The voluntary Board of Directors of Re-Union in 2012 was Sheila Durie, Chairperson, Sam Baumber, Douglas Tharby, Gerry Baker and Helen Wyllie who were joined by Jan Colligen and Christine Wilson in March 2012.

The range of skills and knowledge of the Board contribute to the governance of the organisation. The Board worked with the staff team during 2012 to continue to make Re-Union a vibrant organisation contributing to the regeneration of the Union Canal.

Throughout 2012, the Re-Union Board attended development sessions provided by Community Enterprise, to discuss the future of Re-Union. These were well attended by the Board and helped focus on our strategic aims and discuss sustainability.

## Staff

Pat Bowie continues as full-time General Manager. From March 2012 Sam Adderley was on maternity leave and the role of part-time Canal Community Development Worker was covered by Miranda Morgan. In November 2011, Sarah Elliott, Admin Trainee, came to Re-Union through the Community Jobs Fund initiative. Sarah's placement came to an end in July 2012. She left to take up full time employment.

## Canal Centre

In October 2012, Re-Union moved from the WHALE Centre in Wester Hailes to the Canal Centre in Fountainbridge. The move has allowed us to reduce our office costs as well as enabling us to be closer to the boat and act as a regularly manned drop in centre for volunteers and members of the public and a venue for local groups.

In 2012, the Canal Centre was used as an art space, displaying work from Edinburgh artist Colin Macleod and with money provided from Edinburgh Social Enterprise Network, we were able to display window information that has helped to raise awareness of social enterprise in Edinburgh. Thanks must go also to Helen Wyllie who designed and organised our new window banner which is helping to raise the profile of Re-Union at Edinburgh Quay.

## Volunteers



In 2012 Re-Union reported to The Robertson Trust on funding received for the period 2010-2012 which was awarded to deliver Re-Union's aims in relation to training and employment. Targets focussed on -

- Increasing the health, wellbeing and life skills of volunteers from marginalised areas
- Improving support for volunteers with significant needs
- Improving community cohesion through canal based activity
- Providing training and employment opportunities

Following our report, Re-Union applied for a further 2 years funding from The Robertson Trust and in October 2012 found out that we had been successful! This is fantastic news as it enables Re-Union to continue the part time post of Canal Community Development Worker to support our volunteers and activities on and around the Canal.

Re-Union has continued working with local support agencies, such as Wester Hailes Health Agency, Prospect Community Housing Association, Dunedin Canmore Housing Association, Careers Scotland, South West Edinburgh Volunteer Centre, Royal Edinburgh Hospital and South West Edinburgh Neighbourhood Partnership. We have developed a strong working relationship with the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and in March were awarded funding for a two year training programme.

Re-Union currently has 28 volunteers in total. This is a mix of retained volunteers and new recruits. All volunteers take part in regular training sessions, attend and support events and play an active role in the development of Re-Union.

## **Funders**

Re-Union would like to thank The Robertson Trust and Wider Role (through Prospect Housing Association) for their continued funding and the donations from The Clipper Foundation, The Hugh Fraser Foundation and The Cruden Foundation which all contributed towards the organisation being able to carry out their social aims in 2012.

## **Training**

### **Crew Training**

Continues to take place every Monday and throughout 2012 has been well attended. During training, volunteers learn about boat maintenance, emergency procedures, boat manoeuvres, knots, preparing for a commercial trip and team working.

### **Certification**

Volunteers work towards their RYA Inland Waterway's Helmsman Certificate which enables them to skipper a 12 passenger boat.

In 2012, volunteers also achieved recognised certification in Group Leaders, First Aid and most recently attended training from Scottish Canals to operate Leamington Lift Bridge. This has been very helpful in ensuring access to and from Edinburgh Quay when the bridge is not being manned by Scottish Canals staff.

### **Additional Learning**

Additional sessions have included a 'Wild & Free' foraging session along the canal and history of the Canal talks.

### **RYA Boat Masters Assessment**

2 volunteers achieved their Boat Masters Assessment in 2012, this has been fantastic as it has increased capacity of qualified skippers which in turn has helped us to increase the promotion of boat hire.

### **The John Muir Award**

Re-Union have played an active role in setting up the opportunity for volunteers from the Community Garden to undertake a John Muir Discovery Award, with them joining Re-Union volunteers in a Foraging Session alongside the Canal which culminated in a group feast of foraged goods on board Re-Union.

In October, long standing volunteer Donald McKenna attended the John Muir Award Gathering in Glasgow to find out more about the Award and to help plan a Conserver award he is starting in March 2013.



### **Canal Clean Ups**

Regular canal clean up sessions took place over 2012, with volunteers showing strong commitment to their role in looking after the Canal, venturing out in all weather conditions.

Regular clean ups, resulted in filling on average 7 garden sacks of litter per session, the clean ups collected a vast variety of litter, ranging from PET bottles, polystyrene packaging, plyboard and parts of white goods, positive feedback has been received from local residents, who have commented on



***"Re-Union Training allows you to learn at your own pace, not by being put under pressure but through learning in a team atmosphere"***

***Volunteer***

the improvement.

**Canal Adoption** - Through Re-Union's involvement with The Waterways Trust we have been looking after the stretch of the Union Canal from Edinburgh Quay to Slateford Aqueduct. We have so far painted over graffiti, collected litter, sanded benches and weeded areas around stonework.

### **Day trips**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012, volunteers travelled to Falkirk to spend the day cruising on 'The Wooden Spoon', a new classroom boat belonging to The Seagull Trust and visiting the new Helix Site, an area next to the River Carron which is under development.

### **NHS Training**

Thanks to NHS Funding, since July 2012, Re-Union has been delivering training every Wednesday for inpatients referred from the Royal Edinburgh Hospital (REH). Re-Union have provided a regular skipper/trainer along with an experienced member of Re-Union crew to deliver training. In 2012, 3 participants/patients achieved their RYA Inland Waterways Helmsman Certificate and we continue to work with REH as new students come on board. This training has been extremely well received, with very positive feedback from NHS staff and patients alike.

*" I usually find it difficult to get myself out of bed in the morning, since I have been coming along to Re-Union on Wednesdays, I'm usually the first one up and the first one here ready to start!"*

*Participant from REH*

### **Events**

#### **Edinburgh Canal Festival and Raft Race – Sat. 30<sup>th</sup> June**

Re-Union co-ordinate this event at Edinburgh Quay on behalf of City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Canals. Working with local groups and individuals we pull together an event that has a mix of land and water based activities. Re-Union's volunteers are paramount to the success of this event. They take on roles of planning, setting up, stewarding, encouraging the public participation, provide teas and coffee, and dismantle the site. The day is very hard work but everyone enjoys the challenge and success of the day. Around 3,000 visitors came along and 15 Re-Union volunteers helped on the day, from stewarding to manning stalls.

#### **Falkirk 10 Year Celebration – Sat 7<sup>th</sup>/Sun. 8<sup>th</sup> July**



This event was well supported by Re-Union. It was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Falkirk Wheel. We were asked to join the flotilla of boats transporting HRH Princess Anne and delegates over the Falkirk Wheel. Although nervous, our team of volunteers rose to the challenge and supported the event by setting up the site, providing tea and coffee, stewarding, managing attractions and meeting Princess Anne. The photograph above shows Princess Anne meeting three of our volunteers. A very memorable experience!

#### **Open Doors Day – Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September**

This year we provided a cruise on board Re-Union as part of Open Doors Day. Much to our surprise, by 10am we had a long queue out of the Canal Centre waiting to come onboard. It was impossible to keep up with the demand and despite adding extra trips to our already busy schedule, we felt it was necessary to hold another Re-Union Open Doors Day. This took place on Sun. 4<sup>th</sup> November and again members of the public filled the boat!

### **Trips & Project Bookings**

During 2012 we operated 148 trips, 72 private, 5 corporate and 39 community bookings amounting to 2863 passengers. As can be seen the boat is being well used both as a training facility and as a unique event space, increasing substantially in the number of Private bookings we are receiving.

### **Floating Youth Club**

Re-Union continued to work in partnership with SCORES Scotland, a multi-ethnic youth group, to provide a drop in facility for the young people from the Wester Hailes area. Alongside the drop in sessions there were canoeing, cycling and raft building sessions.

### **Santa Cruises**

We delivered Santa Cruises again this year and these were very successful and young and old enjoyed the fun.



### **Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative (FCI)**

This group, made up of organisations and individuals interested in the development of the former brewery site at Fountainbridge is Chaired by Re-Union working with the wider community to ensure local input is made available to City of Edinburgh Council who will be developing the site.

### **The Boat**

The boat continues to perform well with regular maintenance being carried out by volunteers and a qualified engineer when necessary. We continue to pass all regular Maritime Coastguard Agency examinations which are necessary to comply with regulations governing our operation.

In July 2012 Miranda took part in a sponsored abseil off the Falkirk Wheel to raise money for a new carpet on board Re-Union which will be fitted early 2013.



### **Capercaillie Cruisers**

The boat hire company continues to develop slowly and in 2012 bookings increased slightly. A re-negotiated management fee from our franchise partners helped increase turnover figures along with commission from the sale of 2 Black Prince boats. The sale of these boats also brought in additional income from fitting out the boats to customers specifications.

### **The Future**

2012 has been a difficult year financially for Re-Union but due to the diligence of the Board and staff we have managed to maintain our operation while investigating possible new funding streams.

Re-Union are working towards new funding bids that will support existing projects and also take our programme into Falkirk. We are looking into People and Communities Funding as a community anchor organisation and are working closely with the Scottish Waterways Trust with a view to providing services for their Canal College project. We are also developing marketing ideas to increase income generation from trips. The management duties provided to Capercaillie continue to provide a monthly management fee and the company was also able to contribute a cash injection to Re-Union which has helped towards our sustainability in 2012.

With the continued support of Board, Staff, Volunteers, Funders and Partners Re-Union are looking forward to the challenges that 2013 will bring.