

# Re-Union Canal Boats Ltd Annual Report 2014



## Introduction

Re-Union Canal Boats is a social enterprise based on and around the Union Canal. We engage meaningfully with canalside communities in Edinburgh and Falkirk through a variety of projects including boat training, community engagement, canal clean up's, education trips, floating youth clubs and co-ordinating and the annual Edinburgh Canal Festival and Raft Race. We provide training programmes in Edinburgh and Falkirk for people referred to us by a range of agencies and also for people who love the canal.



Re-Union offer boat trips to community and private groups in Falkirk and Edinburgh to generate income. We also own 51% of Capercaillie Cruisers, a holiday hire boat company, based in Falkirk, which is the trading arm of the organisation.

## Board

The voluntary Board of Directors of Re-Union in 2014 consisted of Sheila Durie, Sam Baumber, Douglas Tharby, Gerry Baker, Helen Wyllie, Jan Colligen, Christine Wilson, Sheila McMillan and Caroline St Johnston. Sam Baumber resigned in July 2014 due to pressure of work. The Board regretfully accepted his resignation as Sam was a co-founder of Re-Union and had put many hours into the development of the organisation. The Board thanked him for everything he had done to make the organisation into what it is today.

## Staff

Pat Bowie continued as full-time General Manager. Sam Adderley remained as Canal Community Development Worker while Anna Canning and Miranda Morgan held the post of Volunteer Development Worker in Falkirk and Edinburgh respectively. Miranda was replaced by Jenny White in February and Lesley Young replaced Anna in August. We were fortunate enough to be awarded funding for a Business Development Manager through The Robertson Trust and Stuart Pownall took up this 3 year post in April 2014. We also continue to employ 4 skippers/trainers on a casual basis.



## 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Re-Union celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in April, Lochrin Belle and the Canal Centre hosted the event catering for staff and volunteers old and new. There were boat trips, live music and refreshments served. It was a wonderful opportunity for people to share memories from the past 10 years and to see how far Re-Union had grown.

## Canal Centre

The Re-Union Canal Centre continued to be a great asset to staff, volunteers and for the promotion of boat sales. It is used as a drop in centre for users of Edinburgh Quay and the towpath. Local groups are also making good use of the centre and we rented meeting space to The Meadows Festival, Grove Garden, Forth Canoe Club, Scottish Canals and Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative. We also host the Canal College and Edinburgh Social Enterprise Network.

## Volunteers

In 2014 Re-Union delivered a training programme in Edinburgh and Falkirk through funding from People and Communities Fund and support from Link Housing Association and Prospect Community Housing.

Over this second year of the project we worked with 93 volunteers. We offered RYA training in Crewing, Helmsman, Engine Maintenance, First Aid and Train the Trainer courses 152 places on these courses were taken up. 186 places were taken up in additional training sessions covering Water Safety, Canal History, Lift Bridge Training, Lock Training, Hospitality, Rope Work, Mental Health Awareness, Food Hygiene and Mentoring.



We offered opportunities in addition to the recognised programme on 168 occasions and these included a range of volunteering achievement awards, supporting canal college, crewing for Re-Union on paid cruises, surveying the canal on behalf of Scottish Canals, canal clean up's, event delivery for both the canal festival and social in the square.

Re-Union gave on-going support on 139 occasions. This comprised of support into paid employment, CV writing, signposting, interview skills, encouraging into further education opportunities and volunteering with other organisations. (Figures based on project data April 14-March 15.)

In Edinburgh Re-Union worked with many referrals from various agencies throughout the year. One agency in particular 'The Sorted Project' received such positive feedback from their clients that they decided to create a bespoke training programme just for them. The training takes place each Wednesday which includes training from our trainers Iain and John and then the space is used in the afternoon for a variety of sessional activities.



We continued to deliver a bespoke training programme for the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. This training has been extremely well received, with very positive feedback from NHS staff and patients alike.

In Falkirk we have continued the successful ongoing delivery of Canal Communities All Round Project meeting all outcomes on RYA qualifications and increases in confidence and motivation. Evaluation showed general fitness was a barrier to participating and moving forward in life, and a general interest in improving wellbeing to support progression in life. This led to us building a slightly different focused project to be submitted to People and

Communities.

Re-Union was runner up in the Best Social Enterprise Falkirk Herald Business Awards. The Volunteer Development Worker in Falkirk has also begun talks with Job Centre Plus on developing an employability project based around canals and boating. We started to identify the potential of Falkirk and seeking ways to develop innovative and meaningful projects to meet the needs of the community.

## Canal Clean Ups

Regular canal clean up sessions took place in 2014 with volunteers showing strong commitment to their role in looking after the canal, venturing out in all weather conditions. Regular clean ups take place resulting in bags of general litter being collected and a wide variety of items being pulled from the canal including bikes, trolleys and road signs.

## Events

The annual Canal Festival took place on Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, where our volunteers played a huge role in the site set up, marshalling the event, running boat trips from Lochrin Belle and Roseann for the community and then breaking down the site. 24 Re-Union volunteers and 4 staff members attended on the day. The canal festival was enjoyed by local community members, enjoying various activities including music, stalls, local food, face painting, raft race, boat trips and model boats.



## Business Development and Promotion

**Canal Festival** - Stuart Pownall, Business Development Manager funded through The Robertson Trust, was new to Re-Union when the 2014 Canal Festival took place and was tasked with setting up a Re-Union table and talking to people about who we are and what we do. This gave him the opportunity to learn more about the organisation and to begin working on how it could be promoted and developed. The festival is a great family day out, the weather was good to us and everyone enjoyed themselves. Around 4000 people attended throughout the day and it is great to see the canal so busy, I know that the local community groups were able to speak to visitors about the development of the area and that there is a lot of support for the canal side to be properly developed and grown and for events like the festival to become a regular occurrence. It would be good in the future for Re-Union to take the time to promote themselves and their services properly at this event rather than be in the background organising.



**Great Canal Journeys** - Although this programme was not aired until 2015 and the resulting interest in the canal has impacted this year, the development, conversations and filming took place in 2014. Spotting a lady taking photos around the basin Stuart approached her and asked if he could help. (A benefit of being based at the canalside). She was a researcher for the channel 4 programme Great Canal Journeys and so after a long discussion about the Union Canal, Fountainbridge and Re-Union. They were offered places on a Flee the Festival cruise as they were hoping to film in August 2014. Several e-mail and phone correspondences later Timothy West and Prunella Scales were on our boat heading out of Edinburgh.

Although the actual footage of the Lochrin Belle was short the programme showed the Union Canal in an exceptional light and we began to receive numerous phone calls about boat hire (Jaggy Thistle), events (Lochrin Belle) and holiday hire which we directed to Falkirk. We are confident that this programme has added to the additional trips on Lochrin Belle and Jaggy

Thistle as well as the increase in boating holidays that are now taking place. It has also generated a great deal of interest in the canal in general.

**Flee the Festival** - This event was one of the first created by Stuart Pownall. After taking time to work on understanding and reviewing the business and events it enabled him to plan and cost out future events to ensure their profitability. He then reviewed the Fringe festival timetable in detail to work out when the quietest times at the festival would be so that our event would not be hidden by the millions of others taking place over August. It was decided to put on 2 trips every weekend during August and these were promoted in all the usual places as well as paying for some advertising in two local magazines. From the outset the trips were popular and filled very quickly. The feedback from our passengers was excellent and the crew also reported that the events had been a success as well as being profitable!

## Trips & Project Bookings

During 2014 we operated 96 booked trips, 56 private, 3 corporate and 37 community, plus 38 ticketed events and 47 project sessions. Projects included the Floating Youth Club, Canal College, Broxburn Education Trips, NHS Training and Canal Clean Ups. We also had 56 training sessions on board. Total number of passengers - 3752. Our ticketed events have grown and we now offer Tea and Cake Cruises on a regular basis. We again delivered our very popular Santa Cruises which were enjoyed by young and old – and the crew who magically turned into Santa and his little helpers.



## Boats

### Lochrin Belle

The boat was given the name Lochrin Belle in 2014. This was felt necessary to distinguish between Re-Union the organisation and our boats. As the boat has been in service since 2008 wear and tear was beginning to show. Again, through The People and Communities Fund we were able to allocate some funding towards refurbishing the boat and we had the interior panelled and painted with new flooring and work tops and the exterior completely re-painted while the boat spent 2 weeks in Capercaillie's dry dock. We continue to pass all regular Maritime Coastguard Agency examinations which are necessary to comply with regulations governing our operation.



### **Jaggy Thistle**

The popularity of Jaggy Thistle continues to grow and in season 2014 53 bookings were made adding to the sustainability of the organisation as well as providing a training venue for our projects.

### **Funders**

Re-Union would like to thank The Robertson Trust, People and Communities Fund, Prospect Housing Association and Link Housing Association for their continued funding and support.

### **Capercaillie Cruisers**

It was a good year for the holiday hire boats. The Capercaillie team at Falkirk continue to give great service to our customers. Capercaillie purchased a second hand boat from ABC, Gosling, with a loan from Tim Ford which we are confident will be repaid on schedule and add to the income for the company. The figures for the year show a profit at last and this is down to the hard work and efforts of all concerned at Falkirk and the management of Tim Ford and Re-Union. The team continue to look at how they can diversify the operation to increase profitability in the coming years.

### **The Future**

2014 was a very busy and good year for Re-Union. The provision of training programmes continues in two areas now and the sales of trips on both Lochrin Belle and Jaggy Thistle, combined with the Capercaillie success gives us confidence that the organisation is moving in the right direction after a few difficult years.

We continue to look for new opportunities both in funding and revenue streams and with the continued dedication of Board, Staff, Volunteers, Funders and Partners Re-Union are looking forward to a bright future.



Pat Bowie  
General Manager  
September 2015