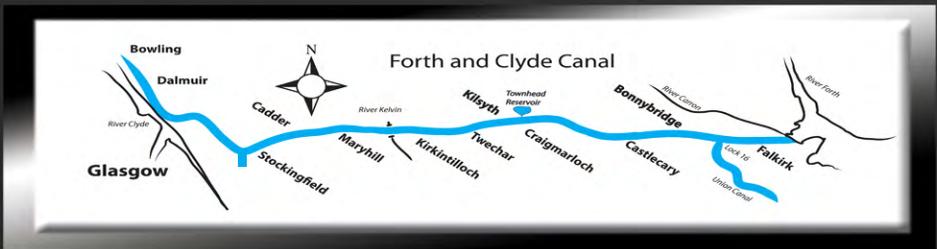


HISTORY OF THE CANAL



The "Great Canal"

The Forth and Clyde Canal was built as a convenient route across Scotland for sea going vessels. It was also a valuable inland waterway for moving goods at a time when roads were poor. Work started on 10th June 1768 at Grangemeouth. The canal opened to Kirkintilloch in 1773 but it was 1790 before work was completed. This was the first canal in Scotland and was the largest engineering project undertaken up until that time. It is 35 miles long from the Forth near Grangemeouth to Bowling on the Clyde with a 3 mile long Glasgow branch from Maryhill to Port Dundas.

Goods Traffic

A wide variety of cargoes was carried on the canal during its working life. Sea going vessels were towed through with their loads, while horse drawn scows worked on the canal carrying cargoes such as coal, timber, sandstone, iron ore, pig iron, manufactured goods and agricultural produce.

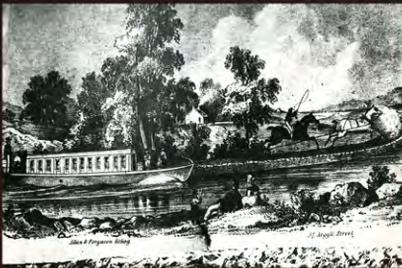


Horse-drawn barge near Cadder

Barges were replaced by steam "puffers", so called because in the early versions of these boats a loud puffing noise was made by the exhaust as it was forced up the funnel.



J. & J. Hay. S.S. 'Texan', built in 1937



Horse-drawn 'Swift' passenger boat, near Cadder, 1845

Passenger Services

The first passengers on the canal travelled in goods vessels, but in 1809 comfortable passenger only boats were introduced on a service from Port Dundas to Lock 16 near Falkirk. From 1830, improved 'swift' passenger boats were used. These were fast boats which did the journey from Port Dundas to Lock 16 in three hours, rather than the five and a half of previous boats.



S.S. 'Gipsy Queen', at Craigmarloch

Pleasure Steamers

In 1893 the SS Fairy Queen was introduced on the canal by James Aitken of Kirkintilloch. She was purely a pleasure boat, operating during the summer months only. She sailed from Port Dundas to Craigmarloch, where picnics were popular.

Decline and Revival

The development of rail transport in the 19th century and road transport in the 20th reduced the volume of both goods and passengers on the canal. By the mid 20th century it was no longer a profitable concern. It was closed to traffic at the end of 1962. Following closure, the canal was neglected and became derelict. However it reopened in 2001 following investment from a number of agencies. There are long term plans for further revitalisation.