

Canal cruise crooners strike right chord as fundraisers



Singers raise thousands for charity to help fund cruises on the Union Canal

Volunteers from the Ratho-based Seagull Trust Cruises are raising money for the charity by offering their musical talents elsewhere.

Four crew members became well-known for their musical accompaniment on trips along the Union Canal for guests with special needs.

Then they received requests to perform further afield and the quartet are now being heard across the region singing at clubs, care homes and hospitals.

The money raised, which has now topped the £4,000 mark, is helping meet the costs of the trips.

Jim Bruce explained: "It was just a bit of fun to entertain the passengers on a Tuesday.

"We brought along guitars and everyone seemed to enjoy what we did but then we were asked to visit some of the care homes who use our charity."

Cruises have operated for nearly 40 years from their base in Ratho, providing trips in specially built canal boats, for those with special needs.

They have lifts and disabled toilets which means everyone can take advantage of the free facility, but funds come solely from donations and gifts and all those involved are volunteers.

From now until October thousands of people of all ages and disabilities will enjoy a journey into the countryside.

Sailings take place seven days a week and sometimes the three boats may be out three times a day.

Chairman David Mieras said: "Because we rely on donations we need to source extra funding and the singers are doing some incredible work."

He added: "Volunteers do not have to have musical talents, they just need to enjoy working with people and mastering the joys of canaling.

"With so many trips, we need a lot of people who are keen to learn new skills and reap the rewards."

Meanwhile, one of the longest serving members, Johnny Haddow, has been awarded life membership in recognition of his work.

He joined in 1989, having once been a passenger following a serious accident, and now continues to charm the guests with his wicked sense of humour.