

## THE KELVIN E2 ENGINE:



A restored launch needs an engine as originally specified and since these engines had not been manufactured since the late 1950s, finding one presented us with a major problem. By a stroke of luck, when we contacted Kelvin Diesels to obtain their permission to use the original drawings of the launch during her restoration, their reply mentioned that some unused Model E2 engines had been discovered in a warehouse in Kuwait and one of these could be obtained for our project. Their offer was duly accepted and a brand new (but circa forty-year old) Model E2 engine was installed in our launch.

**Kelvin-Ricardo E2 Petrol/Paraffin Engine:  
Two-Cylinder, 1042 cc, Four-Stroke, 7.5 BHP.,  
Poppet Valves.**

For further information about the earlier models of Kelvin Engines, Kelvin Launch Designs, and the history and other lore of the Kelvin Company, please refer to: [www.sky-net.org.uk/kelvin/](http://www.sky-net.org.uk/kelvin/)

## FURTHER INFORMATION:

We hope that you enjoy your cruise and we look forward to welcoming you back.

Kelvin Cruises regularly take place on the Union Canal, Edinburgh, on Sundays from Easter through to late October; times as advertised but subject to advanced or block bookings; all cruises depart from the canal towpath (opposite the ECS boathouse) by Harrison Park.

Other days / times can often be arranged as required, but as these are subject to the commitments of our volunteers, booking should be made well in advance of the actual day/s.

We regret that we are presently unable to cater for disabled parties.

Car Parking is available nearby.

For details of Kelvin cruises and all other society facilities including group bookings for our fleet of rowing boats, please contact the society's boatman: Bill Purves Tel: 0131 556 4503



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## EDINBURGH CANAL SOCIETY



**KELVIN ENGINES AND  
MOTOR LAUNCHES**

In 1904, Walter Bergius founded **The Bergius Car and Engine Company** to manufacture motor cars but by 1908 his company had only sold some 15 cars. The car was not a success due to competition from much more famous names such as Rover and Daimler. Part of his plan had been successful as an engine had been designed and built, and given the name Kelvin after the river which runs through the part of Glasgow where Bergius had his premises.

At the suggestion of his brother Willie and as an experiment, Walter fitted one of his engines into a 23-foot rowing gig, and found that this made a fine motor launch. Walter soon realised the enormous impact there could be in the West Coast fishing fleet by converting the vessels from sail to power.

Production of the car was abandoned in favour of the development of marine engines and launches. This proved to be much more of a success and in 1908, the company's name

was changed to the **Bergius Launch and Engine Company** which, in 1910, moved to the address with which it would become synonymous: **254, Dobbies Loan, Glasgow**, and where they had premises adjacent to the Forth & Clyde Canal.



**Carvel built Utility Launch with Spray Hood**

**Clinker built Utility Launch with Awning**

**Examples of our Kelvin Launches taken from the Bergius Launch and Engine Company catalogue of 1919.** *We acknowledge the assistance given by Mr. George Bergius in providing us with extracts from the former Bergius Company launch catalogues.*

Kelvin engines rapidly became very popular with fishermen and a steady stream of fishing boats arrived at James Lister's boatyard in Dunoon for the conversion from sail to power. Lister requested an initial payment of £35 at the time of conversion and the balance of £35 was to be paid during the next twelve months, as and when fish catches improved and the fishermen could afford to make payment.

## SPARES SERVICE:

Realising the importance of keeping fishing boats at sea, Walter Bergius developed an efficient spare parts service, so that an order received in the first postal delivery would be dispatched later that same day. His engines were designed on the basis of accessibility and ease of maintenance so that repairs could be carried out *in situ* by relatively unskilled people.

## MOTOR LAUNCHES:

A large part of the Bergius Company's business was in the marketing of Bergius designed wooden launches fitted with Kelvin engines. His boat designs were extremely detailed and he quoted the precise specification of every component in detail, right down to the exact sizes of the individual fasteners required in their construction.

Most of the launches were built by Scottish boatyards but some were manufactured in Norway. The majority built here were exported for use as despatch launches, beach boats, naval pinnaces, passenger launches, and other such purposes in the colonies of the British Empire. Soon after World War II, Bergius discontinued the sales of launches and passed his designs over to Willie Miller, of James N. Miller and Sons of St Monans, Fife, who continued to build the range under the name **Miller-Kelvin** until the 1960s. Walter Bergius died in 1949 and his company was sold. It remains as **Kelvin Diesels plc**, 133, Helen Street, Glasgow, G51 3HD, where marine engines and ancillary equipments continue to be manufactured to this day.

[Internet Web site - <http://www.kelvindiesels.co.uk>]

## KELVIN'S RESCUE:

In the early 1990s, the launch was moored in Fisherrow Harbour, Musselburgh, and there was a period of stormy weather during which she was damaged by a larger vessel heaving against her in the waves. Since the now sunken boat presented a danger to navigation and her owner had abandoned her, the Harbour Master arranged for her disposal.

It so happened that the driver of the council's lorry met Bill Purves, boatman of the Edinburgh Canal Society, and instead of ending her days in a bonfire, the launch was rescued and the course of her history changed.

## RESTORATION:

The Edinburgh Canal Society soon realised that it was well beyond its physical or financial means to restore the launch. Her price when new was £219 and the price when she changed hands in the 1950s was £80, but the cost of restoration in the late 1990s was measured in tens of thousands of pounds.

A successful application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund and in the Autumn of 1999, her remains were removed to Mackay's Boatyard in Arbroath. This is the same boatyard whose staff restored Captain Scott's "SS Discovery" (now berthed in Dundee). Working from original drawings, the boat-builders fitted new frames to replace those broken in the storm, removed all evidence of repairs outwith the design specification, and restored our launch to her original condition.