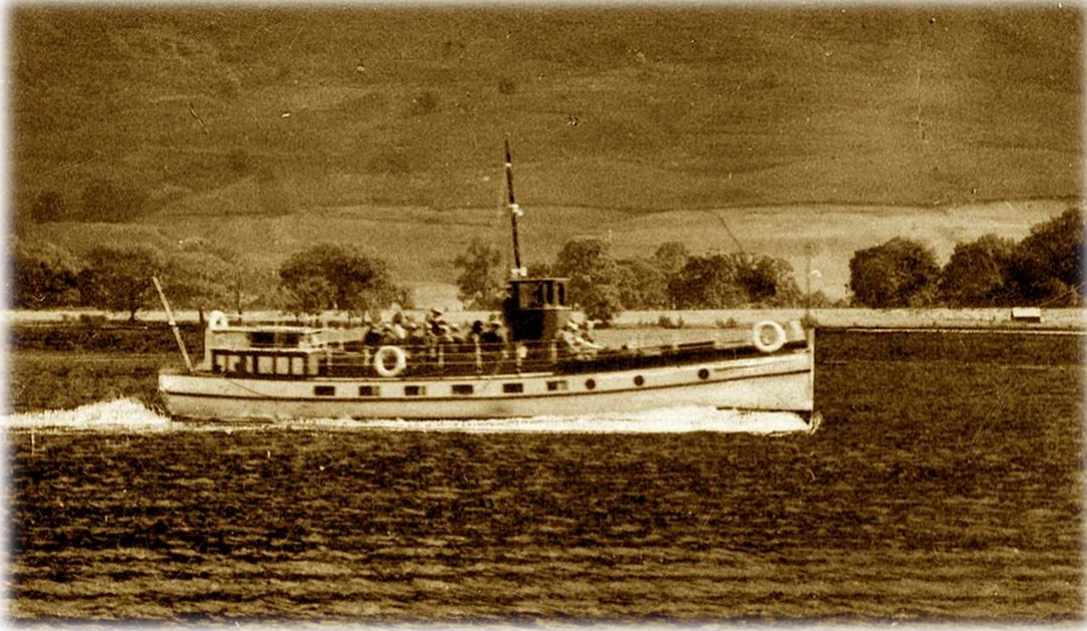


The Queen of Loch Earn



A brief History

Loch Earn had to wait until 1922 before her waters were graced by a vessel in public service. The *Queen of Lochearn* was a 56foot motor vessel built in Fraserburgh for Mr Peter Crerar. Mr Crerar was an enterprising char-a-bang owner from Crieff who had popularised “*Crerar’s Tours*” that provided trips to the picturesque beauties of Perthshire and surrounding areas. He also opened a cinema in Crieff and in Auchterarder and eventually had interests in cinemas and theatres in Glasgow, Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline. The country areas were not left out and he ran a “travelling cinema” for villages in Perthshire. (*The outhouse at the rear of the Sandison Hall was used as a projection booth, and the metal shutters are still visible on the internal wall*).

Strathearn Herald June 24th 1922

“Motor pleasure boat on Loch Earn: Launched this week”. Early on Thursday morning the motor boat *Queen of Loch Earn*, intended to ply as a pleasure craft between St Fillans and Lochearnhead, was successfully launched at the former place. (*The vessel was launched on to the loch at Rose Cottage*) Thus in a manner placing Loch Earn on a plane, as regards tourism sailing with her more prestigious rivals in Scottish lochland. The pleasure for this departure belongs to Mr Peter Crerar, who may be said to be the pioneer of motor tours in Crieff district, and who, realizing the advantages of sailing on Loch Earn as a natural adjunct to his char-a-banc tours, determined on the venture which successfully culminated on Thursday.

The work of building was entrusted to Messrs J. & G Forbes of Fraserburgh, and, so far as can be seen, they have executed a capital piece of workmanship. The vessel, which is about 12 ton in weight, and is splendidly appointed with a spacious and comfortably furnished saloon, in some 56feet long by 12 foot broad, and has a draught of 3 ½ feet. The motive power is supplied by two 25h.p. internal combustion engines, working on paraffin as fuel.

Apart: altogether from the capital outlay on the boat, and the problematical character of the venture as a commercial proposition. Mr. Crerar had to face the extremely difficult question of transport from the nearest possible harbour – Perth, and these might have deterred a less enterprising and go-ahead man. Now that these initial difficulties have been successfully negotiated, it may not be amiss to detail the barriers which lay between the Tay and the source of its largest tributary.

The trip: through Perth streets.

Under its own power the craft proceeded from Fraserburgh to Perth Harbour, accomplishing the trip in about 8 hours. Perth Harbour was reached early on Monday morning, and the work of transferring the boat to its trolley, which was used to transport it over 30 miles of road journey, proved a somewhat difficult job. The trolley was run into the water underneath the vessel, which fell into its position as the tide receded. A powerful tractor then hauled the trolley and its freight up the slip. The operations occupied a considerable part of the day, and about 11.30 on Tuesday night the unwieldy conveyance started its journey to St Fillans. Late as the hour was, large crowds of interested citizens watched its progress along Princes Street, Victoria Street, King Street, South and North Methven Street, Barrack Street, and Dunkeld Road, and to many the sight was no doubt a literal demonstration of the phrase, *“Ships that pass in the night.”*

The Queen of Lochearn on its Trolley at Crieff



The journey from Perth to Crieff was, as mentioned, begun on Tuesday Night, the haulage being supplied by a powerful steam tractor belonging to Messrs McAinsh, timber merchants, Crieff. Passing through Perth the front axle of the trolley was damaged, which interfered with normal speed being maintained

and it was not until 7 o'clock on Wednesday morning that Crieff was reached, the boat on its carrier being detained at Charing Cross, East High Street, until the evening, and where it was viewed with much interest by many spectators throughout the day.

From Crieff to Loch Earn

About 8 o'clock in the evening the final stage of the journey was commenced, and by midnight the boat was alongside Loch Earn, about 140 yards west from the hotel, ready for launching preparations. Both in Crieff and Comrie extraordinary interest was shown in Mr Crerar's latest venture; large crowds witnessed the arrival and departure of the *Queen of Loch Earn*. The transport from Perth was carried through practically without a hitch, many awkward corners being negotiated without trouble or mishap

The Launch



The actual launching was carried out in a highly workmanlike manner, and when one considers the difficulties – the narrow road, absence of a slipway, and the necessary accessories for such a job, it reflects great credit on the builders and on Mr. Crerar and his employees that the *Queen* was afloat without accident in less than four hours from its arrival at St Fillans. To get the unwieldy burden stern-on to the loch was the first step in the programme, and that accomplished after lengthy manoeuvring, the carriage and its load was levered by man-power as far as possible down the slope. Power was then taken into operation, and a persuasive push from John Ross's obedient engine sent carriage and boat into the loch, the boat riding gracefully on her proper element.

The *Queen* launched, a trial run was made for about five miles up the loch, in which she behaved admirably, her engines worked smoothly and making a capital turn of speed. In the water the graceful lines of the boat were much admired. With the completion of a few final adjustments by the builders, and a formal inspection by the Board of Trade officials, the *Queen of Loch Earn* will be ready for service, and she is expected to be in active work next week.

Queen of Loch Earn at St Fillans



As formerly mentioned in the Herald, piers have been erected at the top end of the loch, and a few hundred yards east from Lochearnhead village, on land belonging to the Marquis of Breadalbane, and at the lower end on the south side 200 yards from St Fillans, on property of the Earl of Ancaster.

It is not, of course, given to man to command success, but Mr. Crerar's enterprise in thus opening up a new and beautiful vista for tourists on lovely Loch Earn makes him deserving of public patronage; and one hopes and feels sure that the sail on the loch, providing, as it does, a wider outlook on its undoubted beauties, will prove as popular with those visitors who wish to see picturesque Perthshire as his wide motor char-a-banc programme has been.

The opening excursion was in July:

Strathearn Herald July 8th 1922

Leisure motor boat on Loch Earn: Opening trip for Crieff Town Council



What will undoubtedly prove a great addition to the many popular attractions of far-famed Strathearn was inaugurated on the afternoon of Monday last, when the new motor boat on Loch Earn made its opening trip. To Mr. Peter Crerar, Crieff – who has for several seasons carried on an extensive char-a-banc traffic to various popular districts of Perthshire and neighbouring counties – is due the credit of this public-spirited enterprise.

The opening trip was assigned to the members of Crieff Town Council and burgh officials along with a party of ladies and gentlemen from Comrie and St Fillans, the company included – Provost Mungall, Bailies Tainsh and M'Owan, and other members of the council; Sir James Scott, Tayport; Mr. George T. Ewing, factor to the Earl of Ancaster. Mrs Ewing and Mr Hedley Ewing; Mr and Mrs M. D. Stewart, Crieff; Mr P. McPherson, J.P., and Mr H. M'Kinstry, Comrie; Mrs. Scott, Post Office, St Fillans, &c. The company from Crieff were conveyed in one of Mr. Crerar's splendid char-a-bancs, the scenic beauty on route forming a very pleasant feature of the journey.

Embarking at the pier, on the south side of the loch, a short distance, beyond St Fillans, the sail, as the *Queen* glided alongside the southern shore westwards to Lochearnhead – a distance of



seven miles – was greatly enjoyed, notwithstanding the stiff breeze which prevailed for a short time, the craft forged along with smoothness and the absence of vibration. No halt was made at Lochearnhead, but numerous spectators along the shore waved their congratulations on this important new departure in navigation of the loch. By this time the breeze had given place to brilliant sunshine, and the glorious vista of majestic

mountain grandeur – overtopped by the giant Ben Vorlich – and sylvan beauty with which the loch is begirt on either side, presented a scene of resplendent magnificence.

In course of the sail the company were entertained to refreshments by Mr. Crerar, and Mr George Ewing in proposing success to Mr. Crerar's new venture, said he was sure they were all delighted with the advent of a pleasure boat on Loch Earn, and he hoped it would prove a great success.

Pleasure Sailing
ON
Lovely Loch Earn.

BE sure to avail yourself of the opportunity of seeing the Glorious Beauty surrounding Loch Earn, by having a Sail on
"The Queen of Loch Earn."

TIME-TABLE
BY
CHAR-A-BANC FROM CRIEFF TO ST FILLANS.
RETURN FARE, 4/-

Leave CRIEFF,	9.45 A.M.	2 P.M.	6 P.M.
Arrive ST FILLANS,	11.30 A.M.	2.40 P.M.	6.45 ..
Leave ST FILLANS,	12.15 P.M.	4.35 P.M.	8.45 ..
Arrive CRIEFF,	1 P.M.	5.20 P.M.	9.20 ..

BY BOAT FROM ST FILLANS TO
LOCHEARNHEAD.
Single Fare, 1/6; Return Fare, 3/-

	A.M.	P.M.	P.M.
Leave St Fillans,	10.35	2.45	6.50
Arr. Lochearnhead,	11.15	3.30	7.30
Lev. Lochearnhead,	11.30	3.50	8
Arrive St Fillans,	12.10 P.M.	4.30	8.40

Full particulars at **BOOKING OFFICE, 39 HIGHLAND STREET** (Next Post Office), where Seats may be booked. **Phone 112.**

On the return of the *Queen* to St Fillans, the company adjourned to the Drummond Arms Hotel, where, through the kindness of Provost Mungall, they were entertained to High Tea which was admirably served by the hotel staff. After enjoying the repast the Provost, in course of a few remarks, said they were greatly indebted to Mr. Peter Crerar for their most enjoyable afternoon's outing that day.

Mr. Crerar might be looked upon as a real benefactor to Crieff, for it was due to his go-ahead-ness and enterprise that with his excellent fleet of char-a-bancs he catered for the enjoyment of many visitors to Crieff. By these conveyances he had made accessible to visitors to the district some of the most beautiful parts of Perthshire. (*Applause.*) Here in Strathearn they had

scenery that was unequalled in any part of the world – (*applause*) – and he (the Provost) had seen a good deal of scenery in various parts of the world – in Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Italy, &c, In Switzerland, for example, the scenery was grander, but it was lacking in the beautiful colouring's of the Scottish hills. He thought it was a great misfortune that Sir Walter Scott in his "Lady of the Lake" and his references to the Trossachs, and the stag "in lone Glenartney's hazel shade." Did not come over the hill to the Glen, and down to Loch earn and Comrie, when he might have viewed the beauties of Loch Earn and District; for of all the beautiful lochs in Scotland, Loch Earn stood at the head. (*Applause.*)



The beauties of Loch Earn were now seen to full advantage, while sailing along in the Queen of Loch Earn (*applause.*) On behalf of the Town Council, he begged to tender to Mr. Crerar their grateful thanks for inviting them to sail over the beautiful loch that afternoon, and they expressed the earnest hope, that this new venture might prove a great success, as it so well deserved (*applause.*) Anyone who launched a new

venture, as he had done on that loch, deserved success and the gratitude of the thousands of people who might patronize it. (*Loud applause.*)

Mr. Crerar, in a few words, thanked the Provost for his complimentary remarks, and also for his generous kindness and hospitality. The return journey was thereafter made to Crieff which was reached about 7 p.m., after a most enjoyable day.



Mr. Crerar sold his interests in the transportation business, including the *Queen of Loch Earn*, to the Scottish General Omnibus Company in 1928 and in turn this became part of the Messrs W. Alexander & Sons, Ltd., in 1930. For a time the tours continued to be advertised as “Crerar’s Tours.”



The *Queen* was laid up at Ardrostan Bay at the end of the season in 1936 and in 1938 Alexander’s touring service announced that the Loch Earn steamer service had been discontinued. *(The remains of the tracks used to hoist it in and out of the loch are still visible in the bay at the watersports centre)* Later it was purchased by Mr. Burchill, of Walnut Grove, Kinfauns who converted into a summer houseboat: Sadly it was destroyed by fire in the 1950s.



The Queen at the old jetty on the south shore road

Fay Morrison recalled in an article entitled ‘are there still tattie scones for tea’ published in the herald November 3rd 1963: swimming out to explore Neish Island and also playing on the south side shore in the rusting derelict hulk of the once beautiful Queen.

What later became known as the Hydro jetty was lost during a gale in the late 1990s but you can still see the remains of its slipway opposite the old curling pond



‘Peter Crerar - A pioneer of many talents’



Born in 1882 at *‘Balnearn’*, Fearnan on Loch Tay, where his father was a farmer; ‘farming life’ was not to Peters taste and he became an apprentice in the motoring trade at Aberfeldy. He then moved to Crieff where he was joined by his brother John repairing bicycles. After, service in the royal Navy, during WW1. He returning to Crieff and set up a coach building business again with his brother John in the High Street.

They eventually moved to larger premises in what was to become Alexander’s bus station.

As he got older he moved from Crieff and disposed of many of his assets. Purchasing the Royal Hotel at Innellan; enabled him to indulge in his passion for the sea and yachting. He died there a bachelor at the end of October 1961, aged 78. He is buried at Inverchaolain churchyard, Loch Striven:

In his obituary the Strathearn Herald described him as a veritable business Czar (with interests all over the country) and at one time the burghs biggest employer. A good friend but a firm boss; he built up his enterprises on the basis of “wages for work”

(His property interests included the Station Hotel, Ayr and the Royal Hotel, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow; he was also involved in the building of Paisley Ice Rink. And the introduction of pleasure craft at Aberdeen.)



Acknowledgments:

With grateful thanks to the following publications -

Valeman, Clyde River and Forth, Loch Earn published January 5th 2020

Perthshire, Crieff & Strathearn local history Blog August 6th 2012

British Newspaper Archives: Strathearn Herald

With additional photos and comments provided from the St Fillans Heritage Archive

