



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Long-lost Songs to Return to the Firth**

Portobello, May 2012

For the first time in a hundred years, ‘dreg songs’ will rise again over the waters off Portobello Beach on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012 from 7:30 into the evening. Formerly sung by oyster fishermen as they rowed, towing dredges across the oyster scalps of the Firth, the songs nearly vanished when overfishing ended the harvest many years ago.

Cockenzie, Port Seton, Fisherrow, Newhaven and Leith were among the Scottish harbours visited in the 1930s by the American Folklorist, James Madison Carpenter, in search of sailors’ songs, ballads and other folksongs. Carpenter’s wax cylinder recordings and manuscripts contain many delightful songs but none more intriguing than the dreg songs which, it was said, would ‘charm the oysters into the nets’.

Three local clubs: Newhaven Coastal Rowing, Rowporty from Portobello and Boatie Blest from Port Seton are collaborating with scholars from the Elphinstone Institute at the University of Aberdeen and the Library of Congress in the USA to recreate these songs on their home waters. Musician/folklorist Bob Walser comments, ‘I’m thrilled at the chance to see and hear these songs on the water much as they would have been done a century or more ago!’

In honour of the event, Terry Magill of the charming shore-side Dalriada Bar has arranged with Inveralmond Brewery for a special Dreg Songs Ale to celebrate the occasion which will include performances by the rowing clubs in their boats and additional music and displays along the promenade.

For further information, contact Bob Walser, [dregsongs@bobwalser.com](mailto:dregsongs@bobwalser.com).

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If you’d like more information about the project, contact Bob Walser on 001-612-598-6842 (in the USA, 6 hours earlier than Portobello, please call after 1PM Scotland time).