

Voyage to Lower Canada

The ACBS International Rover Award (donated by the Toronto chapter) recognizes the outstanding effort by an individual or group in organizing and implementing a major cruise or other special function that encourages the use of antique and classic boats for the benefit and enjoyment of the Society's membership. In 2008, Jim Watts and Ron Jelley were the proud recipients for their High Point Tour – a five-day trip involving 15 boats and 65 people travelling from Bolsover to Peterborough and passing through two high points of the Trent Severn System: Kirkfield (which has the second highest hydraulic lift lock in the world) and Balsam Lake (which is the highest point on the Trent Severn Waterway). Those on the trip enjoyed themselves so much, that many were asking for another one.

After taking a year to rest and recuperate, Jim and Ron got to work again – this time organizing the Voyage to Lower Canada to coincide with the Montreal Classic Boat Festival in August 2010. Ron had heard from several fellow members of the Manotick Classic Boat Club that the premier edition of the Festival in 2009 had been an excellent event, so a decision was made. In November, Ron and Jim began discussions with Simon Lebrun, the chair and founder of the Montreal Festival, and in January, they drove to Montreal to check out accommodations (both in Montreal and along the route) and the show venue. Then the organizing began in earnest.



The Carillon Lock with its unique guillotine closing system.



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Heading into Ottawa

The pair agreed to contact the High Point attendees first to see if any of them were interested. The invitation went out by email at 10:00 on a Saturday morning. By noon that Monday, they were completely booked and had a waiting list. Because of limited docking facilities at Hudson, Quebec where they would stay on their third night, only fifteen boats could be accommodated on the first leg of the journey. However, two more boats joined them in Hudson, launching on the morning of day four.



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Locked up in Ottawa.

The travellers gathered in Manotick for dinner on Sunday, August 15. The next day, 15 boats carrying 54 people headed along the Rideau Canal to Ottawa where they stayed the night at the Auberge Montebello. Along the route, there is an eight-lock drop into the city of Ottawa. Tuesday was planned to be a relatively light travel day, but Chris and Julie Bullen were in for a rude awakening when they received an early morning phone call telling them their boat, *Gatsby*, had sunk at the dock. Fortunately, Jimmy Potter arranged for the boat to be taken to his shop in Manotick for immediate repair, and it was trailered to the show on Friday. In addition, the ride to Hudson was a rough, wet one and several boaters found the Ottawa River Sand Bar the hard way. Despite the difficulties they encountered,


Jim counts the trip along the Ottawa River as one of his personal highlights. He recalls the spectacular scenery and thinking of the original mode of travel of the First Nations people, the logs that had been shipped down the river, and the thousands of people who had used this waterway before. A highlight for all the travellers was travelling through the Carillon Lock with the longest drop (20 m) of any Canadian lock. The Carillon also has a unique guillotine closing system.

The final travel day saw the group travel from Hudson to Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue where they were greeted with coffee and pastries, then a trip across the Lake of Two



Jim and Merridy Watt.


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Voyage to Lower Canada - continued



Cruising across the Lake of Two Mountains in Saving Grace.

Mountains to the first lock in the Lachine Canal, which has been refurbished and reopened in 2001. The trip along the canal to the show site was a slower one which allowed all of the boats to travel together. At each lock along the way, crowds gathered and shutters clicked as the passage was recorded.

At the foot of McGill in the Old Port of Montreal, boats were directed into their pre-assigned slips and the next stage of the journey began. The show was small (about 56 boats), but incredibly well organized with something for everyone – including lots of musical entertainment. Ron describes this as a “must see” event. In addition to the show (Friday-Sunday), Simon Lebrun and his crew had organized a run along the St. Lawrence to St. Surplice – an island winery where the participants enjoyed a delicious lunch and sampled the various wines on offer. On Friday, Jim and Ron arranged for a bus to take everyone back to their vehicles and trailers so they could be in Montreal ready for departure on Sunday afternoon.

The good weather held until Sunday morning when the rain arrived. Because of the poor weather, Simon decided to hold the awards portion earlier in the day than originally planned. Although everyone was sorry to see the show (and the voyage) end, they were also glad to have a chance to get on the road and head for home.

Of the 17 boats that made the trip, eight of them won awards. These were:

- Chris and Julie Bullen – Best Classic Runabout – *Gatsby*
- Ron and Wilma Jelley – Most Original – *Rawley*
- Rich and Linda Hughes – Best Contemporary – *Lady Guinevere*
- Jim and Merridy Watt – 3rd Place Classic Utility – *Greavette Cadet*
- Ray and Judy Saunders – Merit – *Raysea*
- Pam and Dan Truax – Merit – *Endorfin*
- Norm and Kathryn Kitching – Longest Trailer Haul (Lake

Tahoe, California) – Kathryn

- Bryan and Kathy Rhodes – Festival Choice – *Saving Grace*

So what’s next for Jim and Ron? They’re not ready to reveal them yet, but plans for 2012 are already under discussion. We can tell you this much – this is one you will not want to miss. Stay tuned to future issues of *Classicboat* for more details.

For more photos and videos of the Montreal Classic Boat Festival, visit www.fbcmontreal.com. A professional film crew travelled with the group from Hudson; two of their videos can be seen at <http://vimeo.com/15394770>. ❁



A view of the boat show.



Ron and Wilma Jelley

