

**Ymddiriedolaeth Camlesi Castell-nedd a Thennant**



**Neath and Tennant Canals Trust**

**Newsletter**

**November 2012 – No. 141**



Fancy a home by the canal – Lock House, Tonna is for sale!

## **Neath and Tennant Canals Trust - AGM, July 2012**

### **Chairman's Report 2011 – 2012**

The past financial year began with the final preparations for the Welsh Waterways Festival incorporating the IWA National Trail-boat Festival organised by the Trust, Neath Canal Navigation Company and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

The Festival, incorporating the IWA National Trail-boat Festival, was held at Ynysarwed Farm on the 28<sup>th</sup> to 30th May and proved to be highly successful despite the weather. The IWA event attracted 28 boats from various parts of the UK, some of whom cruised to Neath Town centre. The Trust's trip-boat, Thomas Dadford had a successful 3 days with every trip fully booked. The visiting trip-boat from the Mon. & Brec. Canal also proved to be popular.

The feedback received from the visiting boaters in particular was very favourable, many wishing to return to the canal in future. As a consequence of the Festival and associated funding, a further stretch of the Neath Canal was returned to navigation, an over-bridge was repaired and the canal attracted well-earned publicity.

Details of the events together with an acknowledgement of those who participated and supported the Festival have appeared in the Quarterly Newsletters. The Trust is particularly grateful to members of the three organising bodies, the IWA and to the Mayberry family for their dedication and commitment.

Following the Festival, Thomas Dadford returned to Neath Town Centre to resume its normal duties to and from Tonna Lock – carrying in excess of 500 passengers during the remainder of the season.

Given the vacancy created by the resignation of Peter Ricketts, MBE, as chairman, I was elected as his successor on the Council of Management. Peter, agreed to remain as a director and to accept the post of Archivist and I am grateful to him and other long-standing members of the committee for their support and guidance.

Much of the rest of the year has been taken up with issues relating to improving publicity by commissioning a revised information leaflet on the canals and locating additional signs regarding boat-trips.

Considerable work has also been undertaken at Tonna Workshops, both by work-parties in clearing the garden and burning rubbish and by contractors in rebuilding gate-pillars, hanging new gates, repairing and extending fences and in removing the pallets of lime left over following the restoration of Tonna Lock. As a consequence the overall appearance of the site has been greatly improved, the gates serve to prevent unauthorised access and the new fencing will protect the public from the adjoining river-bank.

On the negative side, part of the wall of the Long Shed collapsed over the winter. Fortunately it comprised the bricked-up portion of one of the original large door openings and did not affect the stone-work. The remainder of the listed building, however, remains precarious and the Trust is actively seeking the involvement of CADW via the local authority to determine the specific requirements for restoration.

The financial position of the Trust is relatively sound at this time and is likely to be augmented by income from the proceeds of the Waterways festival. There is an awareness,

however, of increased costs - such as on fuel and postage - and ways of reducing expenditure are being explored and adopted.

The content and presentation of the web-site is under review and will be updated in due course.

The Trust continues to be represented on various local and national bodies and has sought regular meetings with NPTCBC with a view to being more pro-actively involved in the regeneration of the canals - but with little success to-date.

Finally, I wish to thank those who have served on the Council of Management, manned the trip-boat, attended work-parties and otherwise contributed to the smooth running of the Trust over the past 12 months.

Gareth Hughes  
Chairman.

### **More News.**

**Thomas Dadford.** Another trip boat season has come to an end and as you may well remember, the weather was decidedly wet for much of the time. Volunteer boat crews turned up in all weathers and often spent a lot of time waiting for passengers to arrive or for the rain to stop. Despite the weather, takings for the 2012 season were reasonably good and in fact, were up on last year. Net takings for the season were £1677.59 of which £200 came from booked charters. Despite the ever rising cost of fuel, only £180 was spent on petrol. The season was free from engine and boat problems but weed in the canal caused problems at times despite NCN's efforts to keep the stretch clear. The boat is now out of the water and is resting in the NCN yard. A few small paint jobs will be carried out over the winter months and the engine will receive its annual service.

**Tonna Workshops.** Vandalism is again a problem at Tonna Workshops and a recent break-in caused damage to one of the doors and locks. Nothing was actually stolen but a new door and locks had to be fitted.

**Donation.** We are very grateful to Western Power for their recent donation of £600 towards the printing of our new leaflets (one enclosed with this Newsletter)

**IWA Calendar.** There is a photo of a boat on the Neath Canal in the 2013 IWA (National) Calendar. The boat is one of the visiting boats during the 2011 Welsh Waterways Festival.

**Thomas Dadford again.** The screen savers on computers at Neath Reference Library are an image of Thomas Dadford on the Neath Canal. Also keep an eye open for images of the T.D. on the canal near Llantwit Church on the back and sides of some buses operating in the Neath area.

### **Brian Messent.**

It is with much regret that we report the death of enthusiastic canal stalwart and brilliant ornithologist Brian Messent. Brian was a well informed member of the very first Committee of the Preservation Society formed in 1974. He took on the job of Neath Area Organiser and did much to spread the canal gospel by organising local work parties, looking after all the tools and equipment and together with his wife Pat, was instrumental in making a success of our venture in the early years. Many 'oldies' will remember the various fund raising events held in the Messent's house in Woodlands Park Drive and their informative joint effort – 'Birds of the Neath Canal' – written by Brian and illustrated by Pat – in the early issues of our magazine 'Aqueduct'.

Brian will be sorely missed and remembered as a tall, energetic, hard working person, always full of good ideas, with a ready smile and great sense of humour. Our condolences go to Pat and the rest of the family.

Ian Milne.

### **Dave Coles.**

It is with sadness I have to report the passing of one of the great characters of our Trust – Dave Coles. He was an Honorary Life Member and always signed himself 'Dave Coles HLM' He moved to this area from Bath, where he grew up. As a youngster he was a member of the Scout Movement and one of his last wishes was to have his ashes scattered on the fields near Bath where he camped as a Boy Scout.

He was a great story teller and loved recalling this tale –

*'After the second night of the air raids on Bath, I decided to don my Scout's uniform and volunteer as a bicycle messenger. So, early in the morning of April 23, 1942 I reported to the mayor's office in The Guildhall. On the way, I had to cycle over all the window glass which had been blown out of the houses in Camden Crescent and, to my surprise, did not get a puncture. I was told to stand at the top of the steps and await instructions. As I stood there contemplating the scenes of devastation, a lady came out of the door behind me and we talked for several minutes. She seemed very concerned about me and I did not know who she was until a naval officer emerged with gold rings up to his elbow. They both boarded a car to tour the city.*

*Thus I met the King and Queen at the age of 13 and remember quite vividly, some 60 years later, the kindness and genuine sympathy she showed to a rather scruffy young boy.'*

He never took life too seriously and loved introducing himself to unsuspecting strangers as a fictitious character. During his lifetime he has introduced himself as Lord Bath, a U Boat Commander, a neurosurgeon and a gynaecologist.

He worked for many years at the DVLA in Swansea and wrote a book about the history of the DVLA. Since moving to this area he has always lived near the Neath Canal and loved walking the towpath with his dog. He lived in Neath town centre at first then moved to

Ynysarwed where his garden backed onto the canal. He later moved to Resolven, again within a stones throw of the canal and finally to Glynneath.

He loved his garden and often turned up at AGMs with a small box of fresh raspberries which he presented to the then Chairman, Peter Ricketts – usually after asking some awkward questions about Tonna Workshops!

Dave was a great letter writer and it is said Peter Hain, MP for Neath, has a filing cabinet full of Dave's letters! He also had letters published frequently in local and national publications, usually of a political nature.

His funeral service took place at Margam Crematorium in August and his favourite black cap was placed on his coffin. An announcement was made at the beginning of the service - words left on a piece of paper by Dave – 'Anyone showing sadness or grief are not welcome at this service!' In true Dave Cole spirit, the congregation left the service to the music of 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life' from the film 'Life of Brian'. Our sympathy goes to Dave's sons, daughter and grandchildren.

Ted Porter

### **Annual General Meeting 2012.**

The Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>. July 2012. The Chairman, Dr. Gareth Hughes delivered his Chairman's Report. The Accounts were presented and accepted – many thanks to Elliot Griffiths for his continued support for the Trust and his very thorough auditing of the accounts. Four members of the Council of Management retired on rotation and were re-elected. Two new members of the C.O.M were proposed and elected – Peter McLellan and Lloyd Watkins.

At the first meeting of the Council of Management in September the Officers of the Trust were elected. The full list is on the back page. There is very little change but the post of Boat Roster Co-ordinator has been taken over by Peter McLellan. Many thanks to Edwin Farrar who has done this job for many years.

### **Items for the Newsletter.**

If any members would like to contribute articles, letters, photos etc for the Newsletter please send them to the Editor – contact details are on the back page. If you are sending items by post, please ensure you put the correct postage on the envelope. I have received two letters from members recently with insufficient postage and it has cost me a surcharge of £1.19 on each letter plus a trip to the sorting office to collect them. No names mentioned but I know who you are!!!!



From the Archives – Christmas Party at Tonna Workshops - 1990



## News.

### South Wales Canals Website.

A new website covering the South Wales Canals was started earlier this year and there is a section on the Neath & Tennant Canals. Have a look at –

**[www.visitsouthwalescanals.co.uk](http://www.visitsouthwalescanals.co.uk)**

□

### New Book.

One of our Life Members, Michael Handford has written a new book – The Cotswold Canals Towpath Guide – The Stroudwater Navigation. The Stroudwater Navigation was a canal linking Stroud to the Severn Estuary near Gloucester. At Wallbridge, near Stroud it connected to the Thames & Severn Canal to form a link between the River Thames and the River Severn. It passed through a total of thirteen locks and was eight miles in length. The canal was opened in 1779 and operated until it was formally abandoned in 1954.

In 2001 the Cotswold Canals Partnership was formed to restore the Stroudwater Navigation from Stonehouse to Stroud.

The author's history of the Stroudwater was first published in the 1970's. This completely revised new edition has been published to reflect the restoration work that has taken place since then. Complete with 100 B&W illustrations, many of which are published for the first time, this book will bring the restoration story up to date.

Available from bookshops or from Amberley Publishing – [www.amberley-books.com](http://www.amberley-books.com).

Price £12.99

ISBN: 978-1-84868-843-8

See advert near end of this newsletter.



Autumn on the Neath Canal at Tonna.

### **The Canal & River Trust.**

The Canal & River Trust or as it is known in Wales – Glandwr Cymru, is a charitable trust that was set up to look after waterways in England and Wales. The transfer of ownership from the previous Government-owned operator, British Waterways, took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2012. It is expected that inland waterways currently managed by the Environment Agency will transfer to the Trust in 2015. In Scotland British Waterways continues to operate as a stand alone public corporation under the trading name Scottish Canals.

The Motto of the Trust is – ‘Keeping People, Nature and History Connected’.

The Trust is responsible for 2000 miles of canals, rivers, docks and reservoirs, along with museums, archives and the country’s third largest collection of protected historic buildings.

Both our canals, the Neath and the Tennant, are privately owned so do not come under the umbrella of the Canal & River Trust, but the Swansea Canal and the Mon & Brec. do.

Google has partnered with the Canal & River Trust to put the UK’s towpaths on Google Maps. This includes highlighting access points, bridges, locks and tunnels. Once the project is complete, members of the public will have the ability to plan journeys that include canal and river towpaths as well as roads.

Further information can be found on the website –

[www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)

### **Tonna Woodland Walk.**

Tonna Community Council has produced a leaflet to guide visitors around their recently completed woodland walk. The partners in the project were the Welsh Assembly Government, Neath Port Talbot C.B.C., United Nations International Youth Exchange, Tonna Primary Community School, Neath Canal Company and the Neath and Tennant Canals Trust.

The background to the project is – adjacent to the Neath Canal at Aberdulais Basin, there was an area of derelict woodland that once formed part of the Dulais Fach Estate. Several parts of the woodland had become overgrown with rhododendron and the paths were impossible to walk. The woodland project opened up the pathways within the woodland and created a circular walk and a link with the newly restored Neath Canal Towpath. The work was undertaken by a combination of volunteers and specialist contractors.

Access to the woodland is either off Brunel Close or via the Neath Canal Towpath over a wooden bridge upstream, of Aberdulais Basin. Leaflets, which include a map, are available from local Tourist Information Centres.



## Lock House, Tonna.

As you may have noticed on the front cover, Lock House alongside the lock in Tonna is for sale. It is owned by Neath Canal Navigation and has been lived in until fairly recently. It is a Grade II Listed Building. Here are the sale details –

**Tenure:** Freehold

- OFFERS OVER £120,000
- Grade II Listed Building
  - Detached house
- Adjoining former stable
  - Amazing potential
  - Picturesque location

### About the Property

Of historical interest in the town, a Grade II listed house, believed to have been built in the late 18th Century and extended in the late 19th Century. Adjoining the house is a substantial building which was formerly stables/stores.

The properties require full renovation and interested parties should seek information as to the implications of purchasing a listed building.

The property is situated on the bank of the canal, adjoining the lock which was constructed in 1791.

This is a dream location to live in, and where you can relax and enjoy the rural pleasures of the countryside - otters and kingfishers have recently been sighted at the canal.

Please note access is by private road (public access) from Henfaes Road. Please note there is pedestrian access only from Lock House to Neath and Tonna via the towpath.

**GROUND FLOOR - Entrance Hall** - Stairs. **Lounge** 22' x 11' (6.71m x 3.35m) approx. Stone fireplace. **Dining Room** 12' 9" x 12' (3.89m x 3.66m) approx. Fireplace. **Kitchen** 12' x 9' (3.66m x 2.74m) approx.

**FIRST FLOOR Bedroom One (side)** 14' 6" x 10' (4.42m x 3.05m) approx. **Bedroom Two (side)** 12' 9" x 12' 3" (3.89m x 3.73m) approx., max. **Bedroom Three (rear)** 12' 3" x 9' 3" (3.73m x 2.82m) approx., max. **Bathroom** 13' x 8' (3.96m x 2.44m) approx. Bath, handbasin, WC.

Gardens to front and rear.

N.B. By the time you receive this newsletter, this property may have been sold!

## **Listed Buildings and Structures on the Neath and Tennant Canals.**

On the previous page it was mentioned that Lock House, Tonna is a Grade II Listed Building. There are a number of other listed buildings and structures on the Neath and Tennant Canals. Below is a list of some of them at the lower end of the canals. I am sure members will be able to add to this list and any additions will be printed in the next Newsletter,

Aberdulais Aqueduct.

Aberdulais Lock.

Aberdulais Basin.

Lock keeper's and toll collector's office at SW end of Aberdulais Aqueduct.

Wood seasoning shed and saw-pit at the Canal Workshops, Tonna.

Workshop, store and smithy at Canal Workshops, Tonna

Lock and over-bridge at Tonna.

Bridge over S end of Skewen Cutting, Tennant Canal

Bridge over Tennant Canal N of former Mines Royal Copper Works

Bridge over Tennant Canal to S of entrance to Neath Abbey

Clydach Aqueduct on Tennant Canal

Tramroad bridge over Skewen Cutting, Tennant Canal

Bridge over Tennant Canal, including towpath retaining walls and overflow channels

Roving Bridge over Neath Canal at Giant's Grave.

## **More News.**

### **Boat Crew Licences.**

If you crew the Thomas Dadford and your Licence is due for renewal, don't renew yet because Neath Port Talbot CBC are reviewing their licencing procedures. Please wait until you hear from Gareth.

### **Canal Walks.**

A number of local clubs/organisations have or will be holding guided walks along the local canals. On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>. December, Swansea Ramblers and the Gower Society will be visiting the Neath Canal at Aberdulais. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>. February, Neath/Port Talbot Ramblers will be walking along the Tennant Canal. Visit their websites for full details.

### **Trust's Website.**

The Trust's Website has been getting an update lately. Many thanks to Martyn Lyddon for his efforts. Work is still in progress but take a look at –

[www.neath-tennant-canals.org.uk](http://www.neath-tennant-canals.org.uk)

### **Canal Talks.**

Mike Jones has been busy visiting various organisations to give talks about the Neath and Tennant Canals. He recently gave a talk to Port Talbot Townswomen's Guild and he has more planned for the New Year.

**NEW BOOK  
AVAILABLE**



**THE  
COTSWOLD CANALS  
TOWPATH GUIDE**  
THE STROUDWATER NAVIGATION

Michael Handford



**Neath and Tennant Canals Trust.  
Council of Management 2012 – 2013.**

**Chairman:** Dr. Gareth Hughes

**Vice-Chairman:** Malcolm Smith

**General Secretary:** Ian Milne Tel: 01792 547902

**Company Secretary** – Huw James.

**Treasurer:** Trevor Morgan.

**Membership Secretary:** Trevor Morgan.

**Publicity & Website:** Martyn Lyddon

**Newsletter Editor:** Ted Porter.

**Work Party Organiser:** Mike Jones

**Boat Crew Roster:** Peter McLellan

**Archivist:** Peter Ricketts MBE

**Other C.O.M. Members:** Edwin Farrar & Lloyd Watkins.

Articles, letters, photographs etc. are always needed to keep your newsletters interesting. All contributions should be sent to the Editor:

Ted Porter,  
35, Alexander Road,  
Rhyddings, Neath,  
SA10 8EF

Email: [edward.porter.eurfryn@ntlworld.com](mailto:edward.porter.eurfryn@ntlworld.com)

- by the first week of the month of publication i.e. March,  
June, November.