

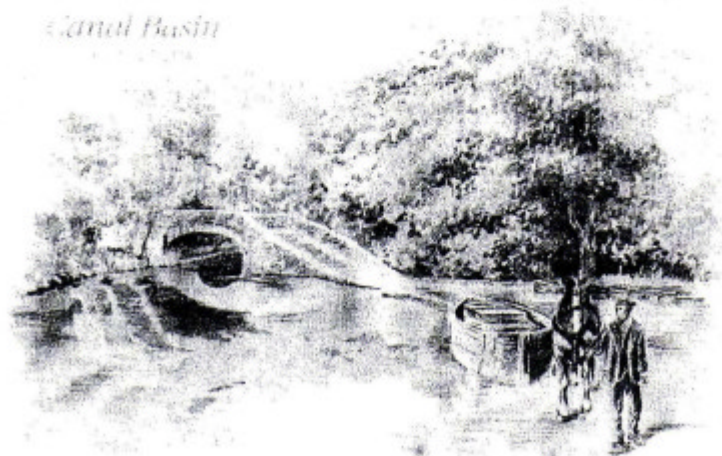
Neath and Tennant Canals Trust

Quarterly Newsletter No. 118

December 2006.

Nadolig Llawen

Canal Basin



Happy Christmas

News.

Thanks.

Margaret Ifold has retired as Membership Secretary after many years loyal service to the Trust. We wish her all the best for the future and thank her for her diligent and efficient management of our membership. Who can ever forget her and Len's Children in Need fund raising effort, towing the boat at Resolven and their fantastic input with the Father Christmas Grotto and boat trips for schools. Council member Trevor Morgan has now taken over as our Membership Secretary.

Publicity.

Photographs and articles about the canal continue to appear in the Evening Post. We also had a mention on BBC Wales when Derek Brockway mentioned that the Neath Canal was a great place for a towpath walk!

NCN.

Our Chairman, Peter Ricketts was nominated and voted onto the Committee of Neath Canal Navigation at their recent Annual General Meeting.

Grant.

The Tonna Woodlands Improvement Scheme. adjacent to the canal at Tonna, has been awarded a grant of £152,000.

Boat Engine.

The ongoing saga of the problems with both engines for the Thomas Dadford, which severely disrupted our summer trip programme, continues. Both engines have been taken down to Pembrokeshire Yachts on two occasions but after extensive investigations there is still a problem with both engines. Hopefully this will be sorted out soon.

Work Parties.

Two Work Parties have taken place recently under the leadership of Malcolm Smith - one at Tyn-yr-heol Lock, doing general clearing up work, and the other at Aberdulais Basin clearing weeds from the Skew Bridge and surrounding area.

Ynysbwllog Aqueduct.

Work on constructing the single span aqueduct across the River Neath will begin early in the New Year, Funding for this project has now been obtained.

New Lock Gates.

Work to replace lock gates and an access bridge at Resolven Lock has gone out to tender. More about this project in the next newsletter.

Canal Exhibition.

Our Canal Exhibition is now in the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea. It will be there until January, so if you haven't been down to see it, time is running out. Thanks to our Publicity Officer, Hywel Jenkins, for organising recent displays.

Website.

Very favourable comments have been received about our new website. New material is being added all the time, so don't forget to look at it regularly. Many thanks to Richard and Edwin Farrar for their hard work.

Website Address: **www.neath-tenant-canal.org**

Aberdulais Aqueduct.

A meeting has taken place with CADW regarding the state of Aberdulais Aqueduct and how the structure will fit into the Aberdulais Flood Relief Plan.

Resolven Road Bridge.

A study has been made regarding the possible reinstatement of the Canal Bridge across the Neath Canal just below Resolven Basin. More information when we get it.

Questions and Answers

To answer the first question asked in the September 2006 edition of the Quarterly Newsletter regarding the method used in the passing of barges travelling in opposite directions on the Neath Canal, the procedure was dictated by the Neath Canal Co's Byelaws.

Between 1796 and 1803, fifteen byelaws were passed by the General Assembly of the Company of Proprietors of the Neath Canal Navigation governing all conduct on the canal and the three main byelaws for the operation of 'boats' are as listed below -

1. Boats navigating toward Neath to use the side nearest the towpath, boats navigating toward Abernant (Glynneath) as well loaded as unloaded shall give free passage to the respective boats navigating toward Neath, on pain of forfeit of five shillings for every offence.

2. That no boat shall be navigated without a steerer and without a line four feet higher than the sides of the boat upon pain of every offence the sum of five shillings.

3. That all boats lying on the side of the canal shall be moored down at both ends on the side opposite the towpath so as not to incommode the passage of the said canal under penalty, not exceeding twenty shillings nor less than five shillings, at the discretion of the magistrates convicting.

When boatmen were passing each other on the canal and abiding by the above byelaws, the barge navigating upward toward Glynneath and therefore travelling on the opposite side to the towpath, would lower his towrope into the canal to allow the barge navigating down the canal to Neath, to float over it. Passage past a moored barge would be straight forward as it would be located on the opposite side of the canal.

No excuses could be made of being unable to see during the hours of darkness as a byelaw passed in 1796 restricted movement on the canal as follows -

No boat shall pass through any locks before four o'clock in the morning nor after nine o'clock in the evening during the summer season, nor seven o'clock in the morning nor after five o'clock in the evening during the winter season, the summer season from 1st. March to 29th. September, under penalty of forty shillings for every offence.

The Second question regarding 'Rope grooves' made on the stone parapets of canal side structures is the result of constant rubbing of the horse drawn barge towropes against the structures. The towropes were made from cotton or hemp, which are soft compared with iron or stone, but when impregnated with grit became slightly abrasive.

As the horse drawn barge travelled along the canal, the towrope flexed, one moment submerged in the canal, the next being dragged along the surface of the towpath picking up grit between the fibres making the rope abrasive. The grit also shortened the life and usefulness of the towrope. Most of the rope grooves appear where the towpath veers slightly away from the line of the canal, as at locks, bridges or skirting around buildings.

A good example of rope grooving can be seen on the downstream side of the old Rheola Brook Aqueduct. When restoration of this aqueduct took place in the late 1980s. CADW insisted that all the stonework was to be returned as originally constructed and one of the features retained was the rope grooves in their original location. Some of the original iron ground paddle stanchions, which were replaced during restoration of the locks above Resolven, also had deep rope grooves cut into the ironwork.

Peter Ricketts.

Dave Coles from Resolven sent in this reply to the first question -

'I was told many years ago by an old bargee that when two horses met on the canal towpath there was a solution long forgotten. The horses were trained to lie down on the towpath and the other one jumped over it!'

I will let you decide which is the correct answer! Editor.

Throw 'im down the stairs

*Christmas is comin', the geese are fat
better write to Santa
before 'e gets the sack.
That's what i'w said in' it Mam.*

When my mam met my dad
'e worked the steel in Ebbw Vale,
now 'e watches Tesco all the night.

Mam's nerves are in a state
Marks 'ave shut 'er sewin' factory down,
two-faced gits — givin' millions to at *Children's Promise*.

Don't know 'ow my bruth 's doin'
'e's on 'is knees for Sony,
thing is, 'e don speak no Japanese.

'Ow you gonna manage Santa ?
'Cos I wants a football signed by Giggsy
Nike trainers and a vid:

Don't forget —
I 'elped you last year in the Co-op
before they shut it down.

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With thanks to the Poetry Magazine: Red Poets 9