



# **Neath and Tennant Canals Trust**

**Quarterly Newsletter – No. 128**

**June 2009**



Our Chairman, Peter Ricketts, at the Trust stand during the Family History Day at the Waterfront Museum, Swansea in April.

## **News**

### **Congratulations!**

Society members will be delighted to hear that our Chairman, Peter Ricketts, has been awarded an M.B.E. in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for 'Services to Heritage Conservation in Wales'. This is a great honour for Peter and wonderful publicity for the Trust.

### **Thomas Dadford.**

As mentioned in the last newsletter, all crew members of the Thomas Dadford will have to undergo training to obtain a new qualification in order to crew the boat. One of our members, Gareth Hughes, has recently been to London and obtained his qualifications both as a boat handler and a trainer. He will now be able to train our members down here and award certificates. As a result of all this, the 'Thomas Dadford' has not been running this year and at the last Council of Management meeting it was decided that the boat would not run until next year. This will give us time to get the boat engine repaired, the inside of the boat refurbished and the training done.

### **Tonna Workshops.**

Back in April damage was caused to the roof of the Workshops at Tonna when two youths attempted to remove lead. Fortunately they were seen and the police were informed. The youths were caught at the scene and are now being prosecuted. A roofer has repaired the damage at a cost of nearly £500 to the Society. (see photos of damage elsewhere in this newsletter)

### **Bridge Concerns.**

Local people have expressed concerns about the amount of heavy traffic crossing the canal bridge at Maes Gwyn on the Neath Canal. The reason for this traffic is access to the Borrow Pits at the side of the A465. Two big events have recently taken place there namely Round Two of the British Jet Ski Championships on 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> May with over 1000 people attending and attracting caravaners, campers and trade stands. The following weekend the lakes hosted a Model Air and Boat Show again with caravaners and campers etc.

### **Family History Day.**

The Trust attended this event at the Waterfront Museum, Swansea again this year and many thanks to Hywel Jenkins for setting up the exhibition and to Peter Ricketts for spending the whole day manning it.

### **Canal Visit**

50 pupils from Ysgol Gymraeg Castell Nedd and half a dozen helpers visited the Neath Canal at Resolven recently as part of their studies. They were guided by Ted Porter who outlined the history of the canal and explained the present day restoration plans. As the group were leaving the weed cutter was being launched in Resolven Basin which added some excitement to the morning!

**Important Notice.**

**Notice of Annual General Meeting**

to be held at

**Lock House (British Legion), Aberdulais**  
on

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup>. July 2009.**

**at 8.00 p.m.**

**AGENDA.**

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of A.G.M. of 23rd. July 2008.
3. Matters Arising.
4. Chairman's Report.
5. Presentation of Accounts.
6. Election of President.
7. Election of Council of Management Members – Messrs Ian Milne, Huw James, Edwin Farrar and Trevor Morgan retire on rotation. Please send any nominations to the General Secretary, Mr. Ian Milne, 16, Gower Road, Sketty, Swansea, SA2 9BY to arrive at least 21 days before the date of the AGM.
8. Socialisation.

## More News.

### Canoeing.

The Neath Canal is frequently used by canoeists from local adventure centres. On one day recently a group from Kilvrough Manor, Gower were using the canal at Rheola and another large group from 'Call of the Wild,' Seven Sisters, were on the canal near Ynysbwllog. It is good to see the canal being used.

### Ynysbwllog Aqueduct.

The new Aqueduct at Ynysbwllog has not yet been officially opened. It was hoped that 'Thomas Dadford' would carry officials across the Aqueduct but until crewing and engine problems have been sorted out, the opening is on hold.

### Membership.

If you are still receiving this Newsletter and you are not a fully paid up member of the Trust, please contact the Membership Secretary or the Editor (Details on back page)

### Civic Trust Award.

As reported in the last Newsletter, the restoration of the Neath Canal has received a Civic Trust Award. The piece below came from the official Civic Trust Brochure.

## The Restoration of Neath Canal (Resolven to Ysgwrfa)



Owner:  
Neath Canal Restoration Co.  
Entrant:  
Neath Port Talbot District Council

The upper section from Resolven to Ysgwrfa was completed in 1990 and received a Civic Trust Award in 1993. The £4 million project was jointly funded by the Welsh Office and the Prince of Wales Trust. This project demonstrates the value to a community of restoring part of the former industrial infrastructure of the region so that it can be used as an important new leisure facility. This impressive work is truly restorative in that no new components have been added or invented.





April 2009.  
Damage to the roof of the  
Workshops at Tonna. Slates  
were removed to get at the lead

Looking up from  
the covered work  
area



## **Mystery Photo – March Newsletter.**

This one really had you puzzled. Only two answers were received and only one of those was correct. The winner of the OS Map of the Neath/Swansea Area was Peter Ricketts and the answer was – The Rhyddings Canal, near Bryncoch in Neath.

Very little is known about this canal which was originally known as ‘Redding Canal.’ Around 1814, George Tennant bought the Rhyddings Estate from the Earl of Jersey. Coal had been extracted from collieries along the base of Mynydd March Hywel for some time and originally the ‘canal’ was probably no more than a drainage ditch into which water from the workings was pumped. The canal followed the contours of the hill and when George Tennant took it over he probably widened and extended it and used barges, or more probably wooden tubs, to transport the coal from the collieries to a point near ‘Redding Farm’ – now known as Rhyddings Yard Farm. This is situated behind Alexander Road in the Rhyddings and the towpath is a Public Footpath. From here the tubs would be unloaded and transferred to an inclined tramway which connected to the River Neath near the old river bridge in Neath. Unfortunately, in doing so, this tramway crossed land belonging to the Ynysygerwn Estate which caused a few problems so it was later diverted to pass down into Cadoxton, down the side of Cadoxton Churchyard and then to a wharf on the Tennant Canal. It is not known how long this ‘canal’ was in use but today the towpath is still used as a footpath and a stream still flows along part of the canal’s length. It is still owned by the Coombe Tennant Estate and every so often the estate workers clean out the water course to prevent silting up and flooding.

If any members have any further information regarding this canal, please contact the Editor (Contact details on back page)



The Rhyddings Canal near Gilfach Road, Rhyddings, Neath.

## **Extract from the ‘Cambrian’ Newspaper.**

Friday 9<sup>th</sup>. January 1824.

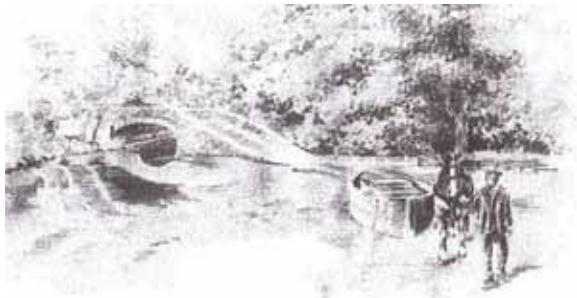
*The Neath & Swansea Junction Canal is raised by a single lock to the level of the Neath Canal which it joins by a stone aqueduct (of 10 arches) over the River Neath, connected with another aqueduct of iron over a navigable stream. The aqueduct is of the very best masonry, not surpassed in quality by any in Great Britain. The building of the aqueduct was executed without accident but flood levels have been remarkably high, with torrents sometimes rising to the caps of the arches, without displacing a single stone. As a specimen of taste, as well as of workmanship, this structure does the highest credit to Mr. Wm. Kirkhouse, the architect and engineer, to Mr. Wm. Davies, the working mason and to Mr Wm. Williams, the working carpenter.*

A Note inside the cover of George Tennant’s Account Book.

*N.B. On the 27<sup>th</sup> October 1824, the body of William Morgan, the Lock keeper of the Neath Canal (who died at the Lock House) was borne over the towing path of my aqueduct for internment at Crynant and as is usual on such occasions to take some acknowledgement, as evidence that the load is private, Thomas Williams, my Lock Keeper at Dylais demanded and received one penny which he paid to me - George Tennant.*

Memorandum from Curtis & Harvey’s Gunpowder Mills – 29/02/1896 to Cape Copper Company.

*We desire to call your serious attention to the following – ‘On Tuesday morning last about 6.30, our barge, loaded with gunpowder, was passing under the railway bridges when 5 or 6 horses driven by a man riding one, rushed along the towing path and knocked our horse into the canal, our man hardly having time to release the horse from the rope and escape himself. It was with the greatest difficulty that our horse was got out alive and although our barge man appealed to the driver of these horses for help, he only replied with abuse. These horses belonged to a Contractor of some such name as Corbett. This is not the first time our men have similarly suffered and we hope you will adopt some means to prevent horses, except when drawing barges, from passing along the towpath. The result of an accident with out traffic cannot be over estimated.’*



**Neath and Tennant Canals Trust.  
Council of Management 2008 – 2009.**

**Chairman:** Peter Ricketts. Tel: 01792 360688

**Vice-Chairman and Work Party Organiser:** Malcolm Smith Tel: 01792 774991

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

**Company Secretary** – Huw James.

**Treasurer:** Trevor Morgan.

**Membership Secretary:** Trevor Morgan.

**Social Secretary:** Vacant.

**Publicity Officer:** Hywel Jenkins.

**Newsletter Editor:** Ted Porter.

**Other Directors:**

Edwin Farrar  
Jean Morgan  
Mike Jones.

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

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- by the first week of the month of publication i.e. March, June, September and December.