



# Neath and Tennant Canals Trust

Quarterly Newsletter – No. 129

September 2009



One of the new information boards on the Neath Canal between Morrisons and B&Q.

# **NEATH & TENNANT CANALS TRUST LTD.**

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008 – 2009.**

This last year has been comparatively quiet compared to the great activity in preceding years by the Trust and especially Neath Canal Navigation Co. in the restoration of the Neath Canal. The main focus for the Trust latterly has been promoting and negotiating the vital restoration of Aberdulais Aqueduct to achieve the reinstatement of the navigable link between the Neath and Tennant canals.

### **Current Activity**

The study by Opus International Consultants Ltd into the Assessment of the Feasibility of the Rehabilitation of Aberdulais Aqueduct has been completed. The draft report is to be circulated to all members of the Stakeholder group, after which further action on the raising of funding and restoration of the aqueduct will then be formulated and agreed.

As chairman of the Trust, I have attended over the past year many meetings associated with canal restoration and the vital role it can play in the regeneration of the Vale of Neath. The groups holding these meetings include the Western Valleys Strategy Stakeholders Group and the Vale of Neath Steering Group, of which I am a member. As a director of NCN, I attended their committee meetings and their AGM and meet regularly with R Minty, the Canal Co. manager to discuss ongoing canal strategy. I have also attended as a guest the Welsh Assembly Members' Cross Party Group on Waterways in Cardiff and also the Southern Canals Association meetings.

The Trust has continued with its publicity campaign and I attended the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeology Society open day at the Swansea Museum and the Glamorgan Family History open day at the Industrial and Maritime Museum at Swansea. At each open day the Trust mounted its history and restoration display, which was viewed with great interest.

The Trust's trip boat Thomas Dadford continued operating public trips on the Neath Canal from Neath Town Centre during the season Easter to September, but had to cut short its activities in August due to mechanical problems. During the inactive period over the winter other problems associated with the boat operation, namely the interpretation and implementation of the Marine and Coastguard Agency certification of trip boat crews. To date the Trust have been unable to comply due to the confusion in applying the new rules, as a result it is unlikely that Thomas Dadford will operate during the 2009 season,

Due to the interruption of trips on Thomas Dadford the Trust suffered a resultant fall in income, but to compensate for this fall I carried out investigative work for NCN and received payment of £2,000 on behalf of the Trust for that work.

We received a boost to the publicity campaign to increase awareness of the proposal to link the Neath and Tennant canals to the Swansea Canal via the SA1 project in Swansea. In 2007 I did some filming with Keith Wootton, the series producer of Water World, on a feature outlining the restoration work being carried out on the Neath Canal and the possibility of linking the three canals of the Vale of Neath. The ten minute feature was transmitted by ITV in July 2008 in their Water World series, the programme received national coverage.

I represented the Trust at number of meetings. In May I attended a meeting at the Welsh Assembly Government offices at Penlleger Business Park to discuss the economic appraisal of restoring the Neath and Tennant canals.

In June members of Swansea Bay Tourism were taken on a trip on Thomas Dadford to view the restoration work carried out the Neath Canal and the potential for tourism.

During September IWAC held their committee meeting at Newport and I gave a presentation to that meeting of an update of the restoration on the Neath and Tennant canals and the future, as seen by the Trust, of the canals in this part of South Wales.

The financial situation of the Trust is sound at present, but if the future operation of the trip boat is to be secure a considerable amount of money will have to be spent on upgrading the boat ready for the 2010 season.

The present level of work undertaken by Trust both manual and administrative has been less than in previous years and to return to the prior level it is vital to recruit new younger blood, especially in the work party field. Restoration work already completed and that planned cannot be allowed to deteriorate due to lack of attention.

As I stated in last years report, BP is still negotiating for their major holding in shares in NCN to be transferred to a new company and it will be more vital than ever to ensure the momentum of canal restoration is maintained as BP's negotiations are now in their final stages.

Finally, I wish to thank members of the Committee of Management and ordinary Trust members who gave of their time and commitment over the past year to ensure the smooth running of the Trust, attendance at work parties and the running of the trip boat.

Peter Ricketts MBE.

Chairman.

## News.

### **Thomas Dadford.**

The Trust's Boat Committee recently met to discuss the 'Thomas Dadford' and it was decided to seek grant funding to replace the engine and to refurbish the inside of the boat. It is important that this work is done in the next few months so that the training of the boat crews can be completed before the start of the trip boat season at Easter next year. If any members have won the Lottery recently – please keep us in mind!

### **Trail Boat Rally.**

There is a possibility that the IWA National Trail Boat Rally may be held on the Neath Canal in 2011. Discussions are taking place between various bodies locally and nationally and more information should be available soon. If this event does take place on the Neath Canal, the help and support of every member will be needed so keep the week-end of 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>. May 2011 free!.

### **Damage to Tonna Workshops.**

Further to the report in the last Newsletter regarding the damage to the roof of the Workshops at Tonna, two teenagers were arrested and have since appeared in court. They both pleaded guilty to the offence and were ordered to pay for the damage - approx £240 each. One of the boys has paid the amount in full and the other is paying in instalments. They were also ordered to write letters of apology the Trust and these have been received.

### **New Information Boards.**

Visitors to the Neath Canal can now discover the history and wildlife of the area thanks to a series of information boards that have been put up along the canal at a cost of £8,000. Funded by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, the project has been carried out in partnership with the N & T Trust. One of these boards is pictured on the cover of this newsletter.

### **Golden Wedding.**

Many congratulations to Jean and Trevor Morgan on their Golden Wedding Anniversary.

### **Work Parties.**

Three work parties have been held at Tonna Workshop recently. The area around the Workshops has had a general clean-up, the weeds sprayed and the garden dug over. Mess left by fly-tippers has been removed and trees growing out of the Long Shed cut down. For details of future work parties please contact the Work Party Co-ordinator – Malcolm Smith ( Tel: 01792 774991)

### **Family History Day.**

Another Family History Day will be held at the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>. Nov. The Trust will have a stand and any help to man it will be appreciated.

### **Canal Talks and Walks.**

Our Chairman, Peter Ricketts, has been busy promoting the canal by giving talks and leading walks. Talks were given to Swansea 41 Club and St, Mary's Church Women's Guild. Peter also led a group of walkers from Pontardulais and a class of children from Gnoll Primary School.

### **M&S Walk.**

A group of staff from Marks and Spencer in Neath recently held a sponsored walk along the Neath Canal towpath in aid of Cancer Research.



### **AGM.**

The AGM was held back in July and some members of the Council of Management came up for election. All were re-elected. At the Council of Management meeting in September, officers for the year 2009 – 2010 were elected and a full list appears on the back page of this newsletter. Our thanks go to Elliot Griffiths for auditing out accounts yet again this year.

### **Membership.**

With the possibility of the National Trail Boat Rally coming to the Neath Canal it is important we have a strong, active membership. Please encourage friends, relations etc to become members. Welcome to our latest new member – John Gordon and family from Caswell.

## Neath Canal Archives.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the Neath Canal can study archives held by Neath Antiquarian Society at the Mechanic's Institute in Neath.

Examples of the type of archives held -

**Title:** Papers of the Neath Canal Company.(1794 – 1881)

Copy lease to vest possession for the term of one year in consideration of 5s annual rent one peppercorn dated 1 Oct 1794; between James Gough Aubrey of Aberpergwm, [Cadoxton-juxta-Neath parish], Glamorgan, clerk; ii) Company of Proprietors of the Neath Canal Navigation (incorporated by an Act of Parliament made and passed 31. Geo. III for making and maintaining a canal from Abernant [Aber-nant], Glamorgan, to and through the Brickfield near Melincrythan [Melyn Crythan] Pill into the River Neath); All pieces of land over which the canal now runs, being the lands of i) and his wife Eleanor called Maes Gwyn [Maes-gwyn], Glynccorwg parish, Glamorgan, now in the tenure of Rees Williams.

Copy bill of sale in consideration of £1967.5.11 dated 1 Sep 1813; between John Penrose of Glynccorwg parish, Glamorgan, and William Marriott of Cadoxton-juxta-Neath parish, Glamorgan, merchants, traders and carpenters; ii) George Bartlett of Cadoxton-juxta-Neath parish, Glamorgan, accountant; iii) Evan Thomas of Neath town, Glamorgan, yeo. iv) The Company of Proprietors of the Neath Canal Navigation; All barges, boats and other vessels belonging to John Penrose, William Marriott and David Morgan, together with all coal and other goods belonging to them on the wharves of the Neath Canal Navigation, and including all tackle; Enclosed: Copy resolution of the Company of Proprietors of the Neath Canal Navigation regarding 3,000 tons of coal and culm dated 4 Jul 1816

Bundle of papers relating to the case Bevington Gibbins esq. vs. the Company of Proprietors of the Neath Canal Navigation, concerning damages suffered to the Bevington Gibbins' works [Melin Crythan Chemical Works] by water from Crythan Brook not having free passage under the Neath Canal, containing: correspondence and copy correspondence, mainly written to Bevington Gibbins, regarding the case dated 1824-1825; notices to the Canal Company, written notes on progress of the case and reports on estimated costs of the damage suffered; opinions; brief for Bevington Gibbins re: Commissioners; 1824-1825

Notice to the Company of Proprietors of the Neath Canal Navigation and to their clerk John Rowlands from Charles Strange and Robert Parsons of Baglan, Glamorgan, lessees of minerals in the following parishes: Michaelston-super-Avon, Baglan, Neath and Llantwit-juxta-Neath, Glamorgan, informing of their intention to make an application to the Company to obtain consent to build railways, roads and bridges as necessary for the Act for making an maintaining a canal or navigable communication from or near a certain

place called Abernant [Aber-nant] to the Brickfield near Melincrythan Pill into the River Neath near Neath town, Glamorgan (31 Geo. III). Lists farm names and landowner. 1 Mar 1839;

Monthly returns of 3<sup>rd</sup> Lock. These list the type of load, quality, tonnage, names of boatmen, and place of loading and final destination. Also gives rents of cottages and other misc. accounts.

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Two photographs from our own archives – removing an old weedcutter from the Neath Canal at Ynysbwlllog late 1970s/early 1980s. How many of these members (many are still with us) can you recognise?



**Neath and Tennant Canals Trust.  
Council of Management 2009 – 2010.**

**Chairman:** Peter Ricketts MBE 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.