

**Ymddiriedolaeth Camlesi Castell-nedd a Thennant.**



**Neath and Tennant Canals Trust**

## **Newsletter**

**June 2012 – No. 140**



John Gordon and a 'Thomas Dadford' passenger at Tonna Lock.

Note the bunting on the boat – it's Jubilee Week!

# Important Notice.

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

to be held at

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

on

**Wednesday 25th. July 2012.**

**at 8.00 p.m.**

### **AGENDA.**

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of A.G.M. of 27th. July 2011.
3. Matters Arising.
4. Chairman's Report.
5. Presentation of Accounts.
6. Election of President.
7. Election of Council of Management Members – Messrs Peter Ricketts MBE, Malcolm Smith, 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.

## News.

### **‘Thomas Dadford’**

Trips on the ‘Thomas Dadford’ started on Good Friday and have continued on Saturdays and Bank Holiday Mondays since. The weather has not been very kind to us but quite a few passengers have been carried at times.

### **Work Parties.**

A number of work parties have been held, mainly at Tonna Workshop where weed control has been the main priority. Some improvement work has also been done to the landing stage at B&Q.

### **Correction.**

In the last Newsletter reference was made to a newspaper article about Aberdulais Aqueduct. The article stated that Aberdualis Aqueduct carried the Neath Canal, in fact it carries the Tennant Canal.

### **Tennant Canal.**

The Tennant Canal Company has been carrying out towpath improvements and has been dredging along some stretches of the canal see photo below –



## Restoration, Retrospective and prospective.

We are in a new canal age. The last fifty years have seen an astonishing change in both public and political perceptions of inland waterways. Restoration is no longer some lunatic ideal but one accepted as obvious and desirable by the man or woman in the street. If you need any proof of this go to the centre of Birmingham or Leeds where the new development of pubs, nightclubs and restaurants face the canal, not back onto it. Properties facing the canal fetch a premium of around 20 percent compared with identical properties that do not.

Money has not really been a problem. The costs of restoration escalate with health and safety requirements and the greater difficulty of later canal schemes. At the same time we have had Manpower Services, Heritage Lottery, Regional Development Agencies, European Union money and others. The ease of assessing money has waxed and waned. Nevertheless I remain to hear of any well-managed, well-respected, well-planned scheme held up for lack of money. Of course schemes need to fight for money and progress here can be maddeningly slow. But it is progress even so.

So what has been achieved?

First generation restorations like the Kennet and Avon Canal have been completed. Here the entire track remained in the same ownership and each obstacle was manageable with engineering solutions. Even the formidable Caen Hill flight of locks at Devises is only one lock to restore twenty nine times. Given that, and given money from Heritage Lottery, the restoration was simple and straightforward when compared with later schemes.

The second generation of restorations was more difficult. Schemes like the Forth and Clyde, Union, Rochdale and Huddersfield Narrow Canal had the benefit of essentially single ownership (apart from the Falkirk flight of locks) and the disadvantage of major obstacles. In the case of the Rochdale Canal this involved moving a supermarket, repositioning a motorway and nearly two miles of concrete infill. The Huddersfield canal had Standedge Tunnel and the Bates factory. Nevertheless, given access to funding and engineering expertise, solutions were found and restorations completed. The Montgomery canal is also in this category and restoration proceeds- slowly but the important fact is it does proceed.

The third generation of schemes is with us now. Restorations like the Cotswold Canals have part of the track intact and part of it is lost. Part is held in one ownership (The Company of Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation) and part (mostly the Thames and Severn eastern side) is in multiple ownership. So the issues to be resolved include repurchasing and rebuilding lost sections of the canal. Here again £25 million sourced from the Heritage Lottery Funds, Regional Development Agency and others is now restoring the canals from Stonehouse on the Stroudwater Canal to Brimscombe on the Thames and Severn. The next objective will be to restore the Stroudwater Canal from Saul to Stonehouse, thereby linking the canals to the national network.

The fourth generation of restorations is also with us. Examples include the Wey and Arun and the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canals. Here there are issues of both tracks which are not intact and multiple ownership. This is not entirely true for the Ledbury to Hereford length of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire but the essential problems of reassembling land ownership remains. Despite these substantial issues restoration in both.

cases proceeds with impressive expertise and achievement. Big money has not arrived yet though the Wey and Arun canal Trust in particular are skilled at raising eye watering sums of money from volunteers and other sources

What could happen as these schemes approach completion? I suspect fifth generation of restoration will follow. This could include restoration and completion (for some were not completed) of the Kington, Leominster and Stourport; the Chard; the Dorset and Somerset; the Bude; and other canals. Here there are formidable obstacles – virtually no intact track and multiple ownership. Yet even here each obstacle could be solvable with expertise and money. The Bude canal has a restoration trust and an active members society. The others, including the Salisbury and Southampton Canal and the Itchen Navigation, do not.

Is there a sixth generation to come? I suspect there is. These are most likely to be new canals linking existing destination waterways that are connected with the national system at only one end. So we may see new canals linking the Oakham and Stamford, the Grantham and Sleaford, the Cambridge to Lee and Stamford, the Broads and eastern waterways, Gloucester and Berkeley Canal to Bristol, Cromford to Chesterfield and (via the Peak Forest Tramroad) to Whaley Bridge in the Peak Forest, Ashby to the Trent and Mersey and/or to the Charnwood Forest, Keilder Water to Ripon, Newtown on the Montgomery to the Kington Leominster and Stourport, Herefordshire and Gloucester Canal at Hereford to Brecon on the Brecon and Abergavenny Canal and others.

Is this impractical? Go back I ask you and remember the totally impractical, enormously difficult and expensive, pointless proposals to restore the Kennet and Avon Canal in the 1950s. We have made the future in the form we wanted. The fact that there are first and second generations of schemes completed and third and fourth generations taking place speaks for itself. If you do not believe this is possible you need to explain why we can put men on the moon but not restore the fifth and build the sixth generation.

M.A.Handford



Tennant Canal - no room for a towpath so build one out over the canal!

## News (continued.)

### Newsletter.

With the rising cost of postage and printing it has been decided to cut the number of issues of the newsletter from four to three per year – March, June and November. As an added cost saving measure, if any members would like their newsletter sent to them via email, that can be arranged. Contact the Editor – [edward.porter.eurfryn@ntlworld.com](mailto:edward.porter.eurfryn@ntlworld.com) and ask to be put on the emailing list. Past copies of the newsletter – in colour - can be viewed on the Trust's Website.

### Talks.

Mike Jones recently gave a talk to members of Port Talbot Mothers' Union.

### Polo Shirts.

Polo shirts and possibly fleeces are available - embroidered with the Trust logo. Please contact Malcolm Smith for details.



Dave – a Sustrans Volunteer Warden – who regularly cycles Route 47 along the Neath Canal - litter picking and reporting obstructions etc.

## Letters to the Editor.

Dear Sir,

The other Saturday my wife and I decided to travel to Neath to have a trip on the Canal Trip Boat. We travelled from Pembroke after friends of ours had told us about the Neath Canal. We had a very pleasant trip – we were the only passengers – and the two gentlemen in charge of the boat very kindly pointed out the places of interest and told us about the history of the canal.

We did have one problem however – finding the canal. We do not know Neath very well and spent about an hour driving around the one-way system looking for signposts to lead us to the canal. We even stopped a few times and asked ‘locals’ but they did not know anything about a trip boat but one chap did say “ Try Morrison’s Car Park – there’s a canal near there. “ We then saw the Canal Trip banners on the footbridge and our search was over.

I am sure more people would use the Canal Trip Boat if they could find it! Good luck for the future.

J & G Mathias.



Towpath improvements on the Tennant Canal – west of Neath Abbey.

**Neath and Tennant Canals Trust.  
Council of Management 2011 – 2012.**

**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:** Edwin Farrar

**Archivist:** Peter Ricketts MBE

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.