

SWANSEA CANAL SOCIETY
CYMDEITHAS CAMLAS ABERTAWE

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Newsletter Sept/Oct 2007

Lynne Gent maintained the Society's accounts and finances over the past year, and a brief resume follows below. A full report can be sent to member who desire a more detailed account.

Treasurer's Report 2006/2007

Income

Membership subscriptions	£444.00
Membership donations	£634.00
Fundraising, raffles etc	£221.66
Gift Aid 2001-2006	£351.71
Grants- BW and NPTCBC	£380.00
Miscellaneous	£63.00
Interest on accounts	£555.31
Total income	£2,649.68

Expenditure

Postage	£113.82
Room hire	£80.95
Photocopying etc	£100.05
Exhibition costs	£117.01
Affiliations	£43.00
Insurances	£673.05
Boat surveys	£80.00
Secretary's expences	£68.00
Miscellaneous	£44.95
Tax paid	£107.84
Total expenditure	£1,221.01

Society Assets :-

Exhibition equipment	£635.00
Tools	£170.00
Small boat	£1,000.00
Trip boat	£8,000.00
Archive material	£1,020.00
Miscellaneous equipment	£45.00
Total material assets	£10,870.00

Annie Hopper bequest of £10,000, the contribution ring-fenced towards a Swansea Canal publication in partnership with the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales. Hopefully to be published at the end of this year.

Secretary's Report

The greater part of the Society's work over the past year has been in meeting partners in an attempt to keep the canals project alive and moving forward. Until such time as the local authorities and British Waterways agree to give active support to the Swansea Canal project then there is very little that the Society can do on its own. Meetings were attended with British Waterways, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Council for Voluntary Services, Welsh Assembly Government All Party meetings, funding surgeries, lobbying community councillors, setting up exhibitions, giving slide shows and talks to community groups, holding events in the community, writing articles for local publications and magazines, and writing lots of letters. All of these activities keep the Swansea Canal in the public eye and raise its profile in the political arena. The officers of the Society have put a tremendous amount of time and effort into the meetings and other activities and we all hope that the work will pay dividends in the coming year.

The Society is financially sound, thanks to Lynne, and has a strong membership base that proves to our partners that the canals project is community based

Workparties. Two were held over the past year, one each at Ynysmeudwy and at Pontardawe. As usual we removed masses of general litter, scrap metal, timber, plastic, car tyres, farm gates, fencing, supermarket trolleys, window frames, concrete etc. from the canal or from the towpath and canal verges. All this work keeps the canal clean for the benefit of the community, for British Waterways, and for the Society. Thanks to all the members who helped on those projects.

Trip boat "David "Papa" Thomas". The boat did not operate during the past year, due to British Waterways not raising the water levels in the canal to enable the boat to float. The boat is sitting on the canal bottom due to the shallowness of the canal above Pontardawe. Sadly, the craft was very badly damaged in an arson attack on the 2nd June 2007. The timber cabin and all the internal fittings were totally destroyed. We await a loss Adjusters report into whether the craft can be repaired or not.

Small canal boat. The Del Quay Dory is still not afloat. BW wants several hundred pounds mooring fees to place the fourteen-foot long craft in the canal, and that is not acceptable to the Society after all the work we do assisting British Waterways to improve and promote the canal.

Newsletters. Five were produced over the past year, including an additional one for the National Eisteddfod at Swansea. We try to keep them interesting by including historical articles, news of events, and updates on BW and local authorities.

Exhibitions. Photographic displays are an ideal way of reaching the public, and six displays were set up in libraries in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. Several thousand people saw the exhibitions, and thanks to Jude, Colin, and Meryl for transporting and setting up the displays.

Slide Shows. Four were presented over the past year to community groups and historical societies. They were attended by approximately 300 persons.

Membership. 157 paid up members, an increase on last year. Sadly, we lost Janice Morgan, Steve Edwards, Jim Haines, and Theo Brown. The membership is extremely important when we approach funding agencies, they require proof that the Society is a community group, and your support gives us the strength to prove that. The Swansea Canal Society is a member of both Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Community Volunteer Services.

Events. Canal towpath cycle ride, car treasure hunt, Christmas social, canal walk. They all bring the membership together and allow non-members to participate in fun events and learn about the canal heritage.

Community works. Continue to work with the Ystalyfera Development Trust to promote the industrial heritage of the canal between Ynysmeudwy and Ystalyfera. Work with the Clydach Development Trust to promote the canal in Clydach.

Arena Pontardawe. Brian Smith from Alltwen was appointed to the post of Heritage Research Co-ordinator to catalogue the Society's archive, and to publicise the heritage value of the canal and the development of the Swansea Valley via the canal. This is a joint project between the Arena Pontardawe Project and the Swansea Canal Society.

British Waterways.

British Waterways no longer have a permanent workforce based on the Swansea Canal. The former Swansea staff now form part of a mobile labour pool that work on any of the South Wales canals where they are required. There was very little work input the Swansea Canal, the maintenance staff were mostly employed on the Mon and Brecon Canal. As a result of that policy the Swansea Canal was neglected. The Society received numerous complaints from members of the public, and from community councillors about the condition of the canal through Pontardawe, Trebanos, and Clydach. The build up of litter in the canal, the lack of general maintenance such as trimming back fallen trees, grass and weed cutting, all gave the canal an uncared for dilapidated appearance. Sections of the Swansea Canal are now as bad as they were twenty years ago.

BW work programme on the Swansea Canal. Selective small-scale dredging at Clydach and Trebanos to maintain the canal water channel to a suitable width to maintain water flows along the canal. Railings were erected at Ynysmeudwy locks as a safety barrier, and the parapet walls of the bridge crossing the feeder at Ystalyfera was rebuilt.

The Society has assisted BW identify their Swansea Canal property boundaries as part of their new policy on protecting their property portfolio.

NPTCBC.

The Swansea Canal is still not receiving the full support of the Council, and we are still campaigning to protect the canal corridor via the UDP and other council policies. There has been no NPTCBC work on the Swansea Canal between Ynysmeudwy and Clydach since the Council was created in 1996. The only Council input has been very small-scale works on the canal nature reserve at Godre'r Graig.

However, the Society is working with certain Council departments and assisting them with their strategies on regeneration. The Society assisted NPTCBC with the design of the Ynysmeudwy Gateway Project. This is a scheme to improve the entrance to Ynysmeudwy village and consisted of walls inset with photographic images printed onto glazed tiles. The images were of the canal, local industries, workpeople, the village of Ynysmeudwy, and pottery designs. The Society provided all the images.

NPTCBC awarded the Society £7,300-00 to design, produce, and install a heritage information panel at Ynysmeudwy. This compliments the Gateway project, and depicts the history of Ynysmeudwy over the past 1500 years, with emphasis on the Swansea Canal as the catalyst that led to the development of industry and of the village.

Clive Reed.