

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2001

News from the past. Public Record Office Document RAIL 876/1.
Company of Proprietors of the Swansea Canal Navigation

General Assembly 4th May 1797.

Mr Edward Martin having given notice to the Company to make a rail way or waggon road from a certain vein or Seam of coal or culm under Tyr Griffith Roch to the canal according to the Act of Parliament.

Resolved that Mr Martin is at liberty to make such a rail way or waggon road at his own expense.

Resolved that the order made by the Committee on the sixth day of June last for erecting seven public wharfs on the line of the canal be confirmed, the expense of building them not to exceed one hundred and forty pounds for the whole seven.

Resolved that the Committee be allowed for their expences the sum of five guineas for each meeting, to be divided equally between those who attend before the hour appointed.

That four of the barges built for the Company be sold at a price not less than seventy six pounds each, and that money arising from the sale of them be laid out in building new ones.

General Assembly 3rd July 1798.

43 present, including Mr Miers, Alex. Raby, Mr Sheasby, Mr Padley, Mr R Parsons. Mr Gabriel Jeffreys be re-appointed Clerk to the Company of Proprietors at the Salary of thirty pounds per annum.

That in future the workmen be paid monthly. The Sub Committee having met at Clydach and being of opinion that a feeder should be made to bring the lower Clydach brook from the bridge at Clydach under the canal below the Aqueduct and into it at the tail of the fifth lock, the expense of which Mr Sheasby estimates at One hundred and twenty seven pounds, the same is approved and it is ordered that it be proceeded on with all possible expedition.

This implies that there were already water shortages on the canal soon after its completion.

That the Rate of Wharfage for all Goods brought down the canal and landed on the Wharf's belonging to the Company at Swansea or Hafod, or shall be laid on the said Wharfs to be carried up the canal shall be as follows -

For all Iron Stone, Iron Ore, Coal, Culm, Stone Coal, Stone, Tiles, Tilestones, Brick, or Clay at the Rate of a Farthing for every Ten tons per day.

For all calcined Iron Ore, Coak (Coke), Cinders, Charcoal, Rotten Stone and Limestone at the Rate of a Farthing per ton per day.

For Bar Iron and Iron castings at the Rate of Three halfpence per ten tons per day.

For all Pig or Ballast Iron at the Rate of One penny per ten tons per day.

For Manure, Timber and all other Goods at the Rate of One penny per ton per day.

Explanation of terms - Culm is small coal. Stone Coal is Anthracite Coal. Calcined Iron Ore is ore that has been roasted to remove impurities. Rotten Stone is decayed limestone used in polishing and mined on the Cribarth Mountain at the head of the canal.

Notes from first newsletter September 1981.

Over the weekend 9/10 May, the Canal Society, in conjunction with the Swansea Valley History Society raised the 100 year old timber canal barge "Dorian" from Clydach Aqueduct and towed the barge to Players Works, in readiness for transportation to the maritime museum at Swansea.

9th May :

Canal clearing day on the Swansea Canal for the moving of the old coal barge, rescued by the Swansea Valley History Society, sunk at Clydach Aqueduct to prevent damage by vandals and now due to go to its new home at the Swansea Maritime and Industrial Museum.

10th May :

May 10th dawned as a typical 1981 Summer's day, wet, windy and downright miserable! Under the direction of canal foreman Mr John Hutchins, the canal was let out by lifting the plug in the aqueduct. Within 15 minutes the canal was a mere trickle and the barge could be seen lying on the muddy bottom. After clearing out the mud and debris was canal was let back in and amid great excitement the barge began to rise, but was heavy in the bow and slid again back into the water.

A second attempt had to be made, this time more successful , the barge rose and was pulled slowly downstream. After a well deserved break in the “Colliers Arms”, everyone returned to move the barge the last few hundred yards. The barge finally arrived at its last mooring place.

11th May:

After many attempts “Dorian” resembling a very large banana was lifted by the Maritime Museum onto a low loader and taken to its final resting place at Swansea and is shortly to be preserved.

Postscript

After languishing outside the Swansea Maritime and Industrial Museum for several years without any treatment or cover the barge had deteriorated considerably. The remains were cut into three sections and put into storage at the museums warehouse at Hafod. The barge should have received adequate treatment to prevent further decay

We cannot emphasise the importance of the “Dorian” to local maritime history. She was the last surviving all timber Swansea Canal barge, and had been constructed circa 1890. The last surviving Swansea Canal barge is now lying below Ynysmeudwy Locks. She is not all timber like the “Dorian”, but constructed of timber and iron. The bottom and sides are conventional timber construction but the internal frames are iron. This probably allowed for quicker and easier construction and also gave more cargo space. This barge is un-named and was probably constructed about 1900-10. She was the last barge to navigate the Ynysmeudwy locks in 1943. Clive Reed 2001.