

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2001

A workparty was held at Pontardawe on 25th March to clean up the canal area in the town centre in preparation for a visit by people from Locmine, Pontardawe's twin town in Brittany. A joint effort of collecting litter etc was carried out by canal society and Twinning Association members, pupils from Cwmtawe School and councillor Jim McNamara. Thanks to all who helped particularly Elliot James, Sian Slack and Nathan Martin from the school.

A second workparty was held at Pontardawe on Sunday 17th June to clean up the canal along the trip boat route. Various shrubs were planted near the winding hole above the foundry where the trip boat turns at the end of each voyage. This is to brighten up the area and improve the visual aspect of the canal. Forsythia, Flowering Cherry, Buddleia, Pampas grass, Variegated grass, and Perennial Geraniums were planted. Litter was collected from the towpath and the off-bank side between Holly Street bridge and Ynysmeudwy Isaf bridge. A considerable volume of plastic, old timber, glass, and metal was gathered from the off-bank adjacent to gardens lining the canal. The boat was used to remove the debris and was also used as a work platform to cut back overhanging trees which were considered to be hazardous to passengers on the trip boat. Fish lines and fish hooks were removed from a number of over-hanging branches, these are a serious nuisance and can cause severe damage to boat passengers and crew. Many thanks to all who turned up to help, Meryl Hunt, Jude Biss, Martin Hunt, Ken Bond, Steve Williams, Grant Duncan, Mike Clarke, Kelly Stockwell, Sue Stockwell, Barbara Tate, John Andrew Davies, and Clive Reed.

The voyage of the boat on the day caused concern for the operating of the passenger carrying trips. At several locations along the canal there were found to be quite large silt banks which hindered navigation. The society has requested British Waterways remove the silt banks and raise the water levels in the canal by one inch which will give a little extra depth of water to float the trip boat. Until the water levels are adequate for the safe operation of the trip boat the canal society cannot carry passengers.

NEWS FROM THE PAST

Excerpts from the Swansea Canal Navigation Company Minute Books. RAIL 876/1 held at the Public Record Office London.

At the General Assembly of the Company of Proprietors of the Swansea Canal Navigation, held at the Mackworth Arms Inn in Swansea on Tuesday the first day of July 1794. In pursuance of an Act passed in the Thirty fourth year of his present Majesty's Reign intitled "An Act for making and maintaining - "A Navigable Canal from the town of Swansea in the county of Glamorgan, into the Parish of Ystradgunlais in the County of Brecon". Present John Lucas, Esquire, Chairman and others. Resolved That John Bennet Esquire be admitted to three shares. Resolved That all subscribers to the Canal possessed of five shares or more Constitute the Committee which are as follows -,

Sir R.H.Mackworth Bt	Rowland Prichard Esq. Portreeve	
The Revd. Mr Aubrey	John Lucas Esq.	Mr Morgan Esq.
Mr Padley Sen.	Daniel Harper Esq.	Thomas Hopkins Esq.
Mr Llewen Esq.	Mr J.Place	Mr David Michael

Messers Coles and Haynes	Matthew Gwynn Esq.	Mr Houghton
Mr Chance	Mr Thomas	Mr Rees
Mr Robson	Mr Aynsworth	Mr Rees
Mr Miers Esq.	Mr Rhys Davies	Mr Arthur Davies
Mr Jenkin Davies	E.C.Fox	R.M.Fox
Peter Price	Mr M.Mood	Mr Cuthbertson
Mr Charles Collins	Jeffrey Wilkins Esq.	Mr Thomas Williams
Wyndham Lewis Esq.	Samuel Hawkins Esq.	Rev.
Richard Davies		
Mr Andrew Parsons	Mr John Parsons	Rev Mr Hopkins
Mr W.Gwynn.	Mr John Phillips	Mr Thomas Thomas
Thomas Eaton Esq.	Mr Rees Williams	Mr S.Thomas
Mr David Rogers	Mr Rice Price	Sir Matthew Lewis
Mr Charles Nott	Mr Howell Powell	Walter Wilkins Esq.
Alexander Raby Esq.		

Resolved that Mr Gabriel Jeffreys be appointed Clerk to the Company of Proprietors herein, and that his salary shall be Thirty Pounds per annum.

Resolved that the Committee be empowered to decide and direct the mode and system of making the Canal whether by contract or otherwise, and that the same be taken into consideration on Friday next, and that the said Committee do proceed forthwith in making the said canal.

General Assembly (Committee) 7th July 1795. Resolved that Mr Charles Roberts be employed as Engineer to this Company from the ----- day of July instant upon the following terms, that is to say, To be allowed a Salary of Twelve Guineas per week for Thirty Nine Weeks certain and not to charge any extra expences unless required to go a greater distance than one days journey from the line of the canal.

Resolved That for the future no more than One shilling and sixpence per day be allowed to Cutters and Labourers for their Subsistence at the direction of the Committee.

General Assembly 5th July 1796. The following Rules, By Laws and Orders were this day made for the management of this navigation. That every Boat navigated towards Swansea, shall in its course be kept to the side of the canal nearest the Towing path, and every Boat navigated towards Hen noyadd as well loaded as unloaded shall give free passage to the respective Boats navigable towards Swansea, any person not duly conforming to this By law shall forfeit for every offence the sum of Five shillings.

That no Boat be navigated without a steerer. That all Boats lying to/ except those lying at the wharfs/ shall be moored at both ends and on the side of the canal opposite the towing path.

General Assembly 4th July 1797. It is the opinion of this Assembly that the Sum of Six thousand four hundred pounds is necessary to be raised for the purpose of completing the canal by water.

General Assembly 3rd July 1798. That the Tolls be in future collected monthly until the canal is finished and that the money be laid out in completing the canal.

The Swansea Canal was constructed using contract labour.

Roger Pearce built Clydach aqueduct 1795/6. Charles Maliphant constructed locks 3 and 4 near Swansea which became known as Maliphant Locks. Jenkin Rees and

William Rees each manufactured 200 wheelbarrows, John Watkins manufactured 100 wheelbarrows, all in 1794. The Swansea Canal was eventually completed in October 1798. All spellings are as recorded in the original document.

The wages and salaries paid are quite revealing. The cutters and labourers earning one and six pence per day or nine shillings a week for a six day week. This is equivalent to the present day weekly basic wage of £160-00. Charles Roberts's salary of £12-12 per week equates to a present weekly wage of £4,160-00.

Clive Reed June 2001.