



**Monmouthshire, Brecon &
Abergavenny Canals Trust**

Canal Connections

WINTER 2019/20



A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF OUR MEMBERS

**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
MONMOUTHSHIRE, BRECON & ABERGAVENNY
CANALS TRUST**



Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust

A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The year ahead promises to be an exciting and important one for the Trust. As regular readers of this newsletter will know, we spent a good part of the last decade working on our new Community Boat – ‘*Lord Raglan*’, which has utilised much of our resources, both human and financial, over that period. Our plan is that the boat will be fully operational during the early part of 2020, and that, at long last, we can now begin to gain some reward for all this effort.

As we enter a new decade, it is perhaps an opportune moment to remind ourselves of the main aims of the Trust, our mission statement as it were. The **Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust** was established in **1984**, primarily as a reaction to the ongoing development of **Cwmbran New Town**, which resulted in much of southern part of the canal becoming non-navigable.

The Trust's overall vision is a fully restored and well maintained canal, navigable along its whole length from **Brecon to Newport**, as well as a functioning **Crumlin Arm** routed through a fully operational **Fourteen Locks** flight to the end of its now navigable course at **Cwmcarn**. Our vision not only involves providing boating opportunities for our community and tourism alike, but also includes a canal that is ecologically rich with plants and wildlife, is an historical and educational asset, and encourages leisure activities such as walking, cycling and fishing.

It goes without saying that we still have much to do in achieving this goal, but some progress has been made, namely in the first phase of the **Ty Coch Waterway Park** project, which was completed in **2017**, restoring **1.5 kilometres of canal and eight locks**. Plans are currently in place for the next stage of this development, and funding is now being sought for this project.

The Trust is an important driver in the regeneration and restoration of our canal, but we are also heavily involved in other activities, many of these centred around the **Fourteen Locks Canal Centre**. The ongoing success of the centre is chronicled elsewhere in this newsletter, but we would particularly like to highlight the resolve and persistence of the staff there, as they constantly strive to embrace new events with enthusiasm, as well as maintaining a welcoming presence to all visitors.

In all of this, we are indebted to you, our membership. We understand that not all of you are able to be actively involved, but your support is nonetheless greatly appreciated, and certainly not taken for granted. We are always looking to increase our membership base, not just as a source of revenue, but also as indication of our strength as an organisation, as this is an important factor when we come to apply for grants and funding. We would be grateful, therefore, if you could “*spread the word*” amongst your family, friends and work colleagues, and encourage as many as you can to join the Trust.

We could not operate at all without our wonderful team of volunteers, and as we expand our activities to meet with the demands of the coming decade, the pressure increases on our existing volunteer base and, as always, we are in urgent need of “extra hands”. If you feel you can help us in any way at all. please can you contact us at info@mbact.org, or via Fourteen Locks Canal Centre. We would also welcome any suggestions and ideas as to how you feel we can improve as a Trust as we strive to achieve our aims.

A Happy New Year to you all.

RJD



Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 2019

The 35th Annual General Meeting of the Trust was held at the Fourteen Locks Canal Centre on Saturday 19th October 2019. Listed below is a summary of the main issues discussed at the meeting.

Chairman's Report

The Trust's Chairman, **Richard Dommett MBE**, opened the meeting by welcoming everybody and noting apologies for absence. He then went on to summarise what has been another busy year for the Trust with the aid of a visual presentation. During the year, work on our Community Boat the '*Lord Raglan*' took up much of our time. We had hoped to have the boat operating fully during 2019, but sadly we have been frustrated in achieving this aim by a number of relatively minor issues, which have held us back. The Chairman advised the meeting that we were now awaiting the **Passenger Ship Safety Certificate** from the **Marine and Coastguard Agency (MCA)**, which we require to enable us to operate with more than 12 passengers. In the meantime, the vessel itself has taken part in a number of practice runs (see Autumn Newsletter), and trial events with a maximum of 12 people are envisaged. These include "*Pirate Days*" at autumn half term, and '*Illuminated Christmas Cruises*' the week before Christmas. There are also plans for "*Burns Night*" and maybe "*Mothers Day*" cruises. The Chairman advised that we remain optimistic that all the final obstacles will soon be overcome, and that the '*Lord Raglan*' would be fully operational by **Easter 2020**.

The Chairman continued by acclaiming another successful year for the **Fourteen Locks Canal Centre**. Under the enthusiastic management of **Kate Wickens**, a range of events have taken place during **2019** (see page 5). Footfall is well on course to increase for a fourth year in a row, and it is expected that the Centre itself will break even financially in **2019**. The Centre was also awarded with recognition by **TripAdvisor** by being awarded with their **Certificate of Excellence** for receiving consistently high ratings. During the year, we were able to successfully renew the Centre's lease for another five years with **Newport City Council**.

The **Annual Duck Race** continues to be an important event in the Trust's calendar, and also a vital source of income for us. This year's race was blessed with glorious weather on August Bank Holiday Monday, and the Chairman expressed thanks to **Bernard Illman** for all his hard work in organising the event, and also to the various organisations and individuals who donated prizes.

As has been mentioned in previous editions of this Newsletter, the Trust is looking into the possibility of converting to a **Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)**. There are a number of issues involved with this, but we hope to be in a position to be able to discuss this matter with the membership more fully at next year's A.G.M.

The Chairman concluded his report by announcing that we were looking for someone to succeed him in his role of **Regeneration Manager**, which he has continued to hold in conjunction with his position of Trust Chairman.



Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 2019

Treasurer's Report

Yvonne Forsey, the Hon. Treasurer, presented the accounts for the year ended **31st December 2018**, along with her projections for **2019**. The Treasurer explained that while the overall financial position of the Trust worsened slightly during 2018, this was due almost entirely to expenditure on the Community Boat, which is regarded as an investment for the future. During 2018, there were encouraging signs in the figures from the **Fourteen Locks Canal Centre**, where increased income from Shop and Café along with a reduction in overheads resulted in a much improved result. The Treasurer went on to report that this improvement in the financial performance by the Centre had continued into 2019, where it is hoped that a breakeven figure would be achieved as mentioned in the Chairman's report.

The delay in getting the '*Lord Raglan*' fully operational, also referred to in the Chairman's report, has resulted in limited income from the Community Boat, and this has obviously affected the Trust's overall financial position. However, at last year's AGM it was agreed to raise membership fees in **2019**, and the extra income this has generated has been a vital element in helping us keep the finances under control.

The Treasurer concluded by stating that **2020** will be in an important year for the Trust's finances, and our plan is to continue with the improvement in the performance of Fourteen Locks, along with the start of some much needed extra income from the Community Boat. Membership Fees will remain unchanged next year.

Elections to the Committee

In accordance with the Trust's constitution, three members of the Committee were stood down by rotation, but were then unanimously re-elected. These Committee Members were **John Collier**, **Ian Lewis** and **Wyn Mitchell**. In addition, **David Burden**, who was co-opted on to the Committee last year as the editor of the Newsletter, was now confirmed as a full member.

Attendance

It has to be said that the number of members in attendance was disappointing. The Committee moved the timing of the meeting to a Saturday morning in the hope that would encourage more members to attend, but the numbers were down on last year. We really want our membership to feel involved in the Trust's activities, and the AGM is an important forum for members to air their views and get involved. Next year's AGM has been provisionally arranged for **Saturday 10th October 2020**, starting at **11 a.m.** at the **Fourteen Locks Canal Centre**. Everyone is welcome.



Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust

FOURTEEN LOCKS CANAL CENTRE

2019 was another busy year at the **Fourteen Locks Canal Centre**. We repeated many of the events that have proved to be successful for us in previous years, such as **Rock the Lock, Go Wild, Nordic Walking**, and **Pebble Decorating Workshops**, along with a variety of trails organised during the school holidays. The year ended with another successful **Christmas Fayre** and, of course, **Father Christmas**. Additional fund-raising activities included **Rotary Club** raffle tickets, a **Folk Festival** and a **Sponsored Walk**.

Organised walks from the Centre are proving still to be very popular and take place on the **last Saturday** of every month. They can range from 7 to 12 miles and take place over every type of terrain. Details can normally be found on our Facebook page, and we will try, in future, to include details in this newsletter (please see next page).

Now in its third year, the **Canal and Countryside Team** have successfully tackled **Bracken, Water-soldier, Laurel, Japanese Knotweed** and **Azolla**, not to mention the evasive species **Himalayan Balsam**. Additional tasks have included drainage, ditch clearance, litter picking, fence repairs, painting, firewood splitting, managing woodland and pond clearance. Over the last twelve months, we have had an average of 15 people working over 50 days, including volunteers from **Lloyds** and **TSB** banks and the **Office of National Statistics**.

Sincere thanks are due to our centre volunteers, without whom it would be impossible for us to operate in the way that we do, and they are all vital to our success. We would like to make special mention of **Pauline Price** (who runs the art boards and helps out in lots of other areas), **Pauline Beckett** (who creates, designs and writes all the trails for the school holidays), and our two knowledgeable historians **Phil Hughes** and **Roger Foster**, who both tirelessly promote our beautiful canal with talks and presentations, collecting much needed donations along the way. Other volunteers we would like to particularly thank are **Darren Coldwell, Mike Phillips, Janice Herbert, Huong Ha** and, new this year, **Dave Allan, Alan Parsons and Marilyn Merry**. There are many other people who have supported the centre throughout the year by donating items such as knitting, bags and cards for sale in the shop. Thanks to you all.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks to all the many organisations that have helped us with free advertising, either on their websites or in their printed papers and magazines. These include **Newport, Torfaen** and **Caerphilly** councils, **Spotlight Newport, Inside Newport, Visit Wales, Visit Monmouthshire, Welsh Transport Heritage**, and social media sites **@socialbizwales, #overthebridgetowales**. Thanks are also due to the **South Wales Argus, Newport** and **Maindee** libraries, **Cwtch Café, Cwmbran Calling, Primary Times** magazine, **Local Link** magazine, **Living Wales** and **The Directory** for promoting the Centre and its activities over the year. This publicity has enabled us to reach a broader and more varied audience, and contributed much to our popularity.

A **Happy New Year** to all our staff, volunteers and visitors.

Kate Wickens



Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust

FOURTEEN LOCKS CANAL CENTRE

CAR PARKING CHARGES

Newport City Council have now gone ahead with their plans to introduce car parking charges at the Centre, and these were implemented in November. The charges are **£1 for up to 4 hours, £3 for 5 hours, and £5 for all day**. There are three spaces for **Blue Badge Holders** and these are free. We have also managed to obtain some concessions for our staff and a limited number of volunteers – please contact the Centre for details of these.



CAERLEON WALK

The next scheduled walk from the Centre is on **Saturday 29th February** and is a repeat of a popular walk to **Caerleon** (and back!). Leaving **Fourteen Locks** at **9.30 a.m.**, the route takes you along the canal towpath towards **Newport**, then joins **Cycle Route 88** heading along the **Usk River** to **Caerleon**, passing the **amphitheatre** before finishing at the **Hanbury Arms**. The walk is mainly flat, but can be muddy in places. Please note that you can purchase lunch and refreshments at the **Hanbury Arms**, but if you bring your own packed lunch this cannot be eaten on the premises.

You can then either choose to return on foot via the same route, or make your own way back. One way - the walk is **6.5 miles (3 hours approximately)**, Return is **13 miles (6 hours)**. Please note that if you do decide to leave the group at **Caerleon**, you do so at your own risk and need to be responsible for your own actions.

Further details are available on our website or Facebook page. Please contact the Centre for more information.

Please keep updated on all MBACT events by following us @fourteenlocks on





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PICKETSFIELD LOCK – KENNET & AVON CANAL

We don't normally feature items relating to other canals (although perhaps this is something we could consider more in the future), but before Christmas we learnt about new lock gates that are being installed at **Picketsfield Lock**, near **Hungerford**, on the **Kennet & Avon Canal**. This was particularly of interest to the Trust's Chairman, **Richard Dommatt**, for a couple of reasons.

Richard, a boat-builder by trade, first joined **British Waterways** (forerunner of the **Canal & River Trust**) in **1973** as part of their canal restoration team, and **Picketsfield** was one of the first locks he was involved with at that time, and one that he still has fond memories of. Partly, this is because he has found an old family photograph of his wife and one-year old daughter taken at the site (see photo), but, from a professional point of view, he recalls that **Picketsfield Lock** was the most



challenging of all the early restorations he was involved with, mainly because of its isolated location, which resulted in the new gate having to be floated along the canal from the **Hungerford Marsh Lock**.

Richard then progressed through the ranks at **British Waterways** before finally moving to the **Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal** as **Waterway Manager** in **1989**. He retired from **British Waterways** in **2003**, and then became involved with **MBACT** as **Volunteer Restoration Manager** to concentrate on the canal restoration between **Newport** and **Cwmbran**.

The second reason why the new lock gates at **Picketsfield** is of interest to the Trust in general, and to Richard in particular, is the type of gates that are being installed. This is because they are of composite material, constructed predominately out of steel, and intended to last at least twice as long as a standard lock gate. This is similar to the design developed by **MBACT** for use in the **Ty Coch** restoration. Richard was heavily involved in the design and development of the modular gates used at **Ty Coch**, and last summer design engineers from consultants commissioned by the **Canal & River Trust** visited the site to inspect the lock gates, and, presumably, were impressed with what they saw.

Picketsfield remains a positive reflection on how the **Kennet & Avon** restoration was achieved in the early days, and the current project is a continuation of this with their own design of composite long-life gates. Both are a fitting tribute to our Chairman.



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NEWS ITEMS


TORFAEN CANAL VOLUNTEER GROUP – FUTURE DATES

Sunday 9th February – Pontnewydd Park

Sunday 8th March – Cwmbran Retail Park

Sunday 5th April – Pontnewydd Park

All sessions start at 10 am.



Tenders invited: creation of Community Boat Schools Education Pack


Our Trust is a small, local, volunteer-run charity, dedicated to the protection, improvement and restoration of Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal to benefit the local community.

After many years of hard work by our volunteers, re-modelling an old canal boat, we have commenced running a "not-for-profit" Community Boat on the Canal at Goytre Wharf, Llanover. Located within the Brecon Beacons National Park, the Wharf has historic lime-kilns, café, visitor centre, plus car and coach parking facilities.


Our Trust wishes to run schools' education trips, focusing on the canal environment. We wish to offer school parties an "Education Pack", based on the Curriculum for Wales 2022. The "Pack", containing graphics and video modules, should be designed for use by a Trust volunteer or teacher leading their class, and be capable of being hosted on a web page. Also required will be the provision of a basic historical and environmental information module for use by families.

To request further information, please email : info@mbact.org.uk


Tenders outlining your proposals are required no later that 17th February 2020.




Newport
Cwmwlle
Cwmwlle




monmouthshire
sir fynwy



Ynys Ewropeaidd
Ynys Ewropeaidd
Ynys Ewropeaidd



llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



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