

**MONTGOMERY WATERWAY RESTORATION TRUST
YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ADFER CAMLAS MALDWYN**

Montgomery Canal Forum

26th March 2007

held in the Ludlow Room, at the Shirehall, Shrewsbury.

Minutes

1. The Chairman, Michael Limbrey, welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Montgomery Canal Forum.

2. Apologies for absence were received.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the Montgomery Canal Forum of 10th July 2006 were approved subject to the amendment of "English length" to "Welsh length" in para 10.

4. Montgomery Canal Partnership

Stephen Lees, British Waterways, reported that the intention was to reduce the membership of the Montgomery Canal Partnership to create a smaller group dealing with strategic issues, to meet twice each year. The Montgomery Canal Forum arranged by the Trust would also meet twice each year and would serve to keep a wider group of interested organisations informed of progress.

Cuts in BW expenditure as a consequence of substantial reductions in DEFRA funding for the waterways had reduced the money available the Montgomery Canal. Nevertheless there was still sufficient in the budget to ensure that the current restoration work and the post of Restoration Manager would continue.

Two culverts had been repaired and vegetation cleared on the length beyond Gronwen and contracts to complete the work were imminent.

A volunteer team organised by SUCS, funded by an HLF grant and IWA, were working at Crickheath Wharf which they hoped to complete in 18 months. WRG had a camp planned to work on this length during the summer. Stephen anticipated that work to extend the nature reserve at Aston would commence in September or October 2007.

On the Welsh side Sue Perry had left but a grant to promote tourism of £582,000 would enable her to be replaced and a number of small-scale improvement works and marketing projects undertaken. It was hoped to encourage local businesses to assist in the provision of waterway activities such as canoeing on the Welsh length.

5. Llanymynech

Stephen Lees reported that progress with the heritage site was also important for the restoration of the canal as it provided a destination for the English length. Some £900,000 had been made available for the development of the site: the Hoffman kiln is to be roofed to protect it from the weather and cycle routes established. Dilys Gaskill, Llanymynech & Pant Parish Council and Shropshire County Council, reported that the site had won the community category in the Waterway Renaissance Awards. This was a great achievement. There would be a "Kiln warming day" later in the year and a heritage discovery day on 12th May.

6. Shropshire County Council

John Harrison, Shropshire County Council, reported that the Council's relationship with the canal had changed from an active partner to that of an interested observer. The Council no longer had money but would always be available for advice and non-financial help. They had three outstanding issues mainly connected with the Llanymynech and how the canal fits into the wider issues of the area, such as the rail link, cycle and walking routes. The priority for the canal had reduced in the Council's present Tourist Strategy mainly because it had been thought that a lack of money for further works meant few changes in a reasonable time scale. He agreed that this would need to be revised because of the substantial progress that, contrary to the Council's expectations, had in fact been achieved. But the Tourist Strategy could not be altered quickly. Development in the Queens Head area was unlikely – he thought priority would be given to the Oswestry area: partly because it was thought, by the Council, to be more important and partly because of highway problems.

7. Newtown

Nicholas Bostock raised the possibility of public/private partnerships and wondered about the possibilities for the Newtown end of the canal. Stephen Lees said that the issue was still alive and explained the problems there. Tony Hirst drew attention to the proposal for a river crossing to a new terminal basin.

8. Oswestry Borough Council

Richard Burman, Oswestry Borough Council, said he was pleased that Shropshire County Council recognised the value of the work done by Lou Kellet and in particular the creation of the Post Office at Maesbury; he mentioned DEFRA's help in financing her work. Apart from the Post Office there were no shopping facilities for those enjoying the benefits of the canal anywhere nearby.

9. Oswestry Rural Parish Council

Phil May, Oswestry Rural Parish Council, was disappointed about the County Council's view of development at Queen's Head. He also mentioned the lack of facilities in the area.

10. Countryside Council for Wales

Ken Parry, Countryside Council for Wales, said that his Council were about to appoint a replacement for their representative, Andy Law. From the nature conservation point of view he was concerned about the lack of dredging and certain areas were silting up. One of the Council's tasks was to produce a report to achieve favourable habitat management and condition by 2015. The CMS would form the basis of that report.

Maggie Ellis, Friends of the Montgomery Canal, pointed out that boats help to keep the canal clear of weeds. Parts of the canal were impassable and wondered if money could be found for weed cutting. Stephen Lees thought it might be possible but the main problem was the silt and shallowness of the canal. The parts of the canal best for flora were in fact those most used by boats.

11. Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council

Tony Hurst, Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, said that the latest report by IWAAC continued to give the Montgomery Canal top priority. 'Get on and finish it' was the message.

12. Inland Waterways Association

Alan Platt, Inland Waterways Association, announced the plans for a major national campaigning event to highlight the Montgomery Canal to take place in August/September 2008. A trailboat and public event aimed at attracting 2000 people was proposed for the last weekend in August and a narrow boat rally at Maesbury on the following weekend. Walks and other activities are planned along the length on the canal throughout the week. The

IWA, Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust , Friends of the Montgomery Canal and Shropshire Union Canal Society are co-operating to stage the event. Approval by the IWA as a National Campaign rally will give some funding and national publicity.

13. **Friends of the Montgomery Canal**

Maggie Ellis mentioned the sad loss of Geoff Gilman who had been Chairman of the Friends since it was formed. A bench near where he lived was to be unveiled in his memory on 14th April.

The purpose of the Friends is to raise the profile on the canal locally and events have been organised that have achieved that objective very well. The following are planned for later this year;

March 31st	Litter Pick –Welshpool Town Wharf, 10.30am.
May11th	AGM. Llanymynech Village Hall, 7.00pm
May12th	Llanymynech Discovery Day, 1.00pm at the wharf.
May 26 th	Wizard & Fairy Fun day at Burgedin Lock Cottage and the Wern 1.00 to 5.00pm
June 10 th	Dinghy Dawdle: Ardleen to Llanymynech – 10.30am

14. **Other events**

Harry Arnold, Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust, mentioned that the Graham Palmer stone would be replaced later in the year – the date was dependent on WRG timetable of visits to the area. The Chairman said that the IWA also hoped to erect a plaque at Frankton marking the spot where Rolt found his famous narrowboat *Cressy* – again the exact date had not been fixed but it may be possible to combine the two events.

15. **Next Forum**

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. It was encouraging to hear the positive enthusiasm to complete the restoration from most of the people attending the Forum. There was no doubt that, despite some difficulties, progress on the English length should see the Canal restored to Llanymynech in the foreseeable future. The next meeting was fixed for 17th September 2007.