



Monmouthshire, Brecon &
Abergavenny Canals Trust

Canal Connections

SUMMER 2019



CHERNOBYL'S CHILDREN VISIT GOYTRE WHARF

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



Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust

CHERNOBYL'S CHILDREN

As you can see from the photographs on the front cover and below, we recently welcomed a group of children from **south eastern Belarus** to **Goytre Wharf**. The visit was organised by the **Friends of Chernobyl's Children (FOCC)**, a local voluntary organisation which, every year, brings children to Monmouthshire from the area most affected by the **Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station** disaster.

The explosion at the Number 4 nuclear reactor on 26th April 1986 has had a long-lasting effect on the surrounding area, and even now, over 30 years later, the environmental impact is significant. The food in this area is grown in contaminated land, which leads to poor general health and weakened immune systems. **FOCC** was established in 2001 in Monmouthshire, and is entirely voluntary and self-funding. The co-ordinator, **Jane Hines**, has been involved since the charity's inception, and has visited Belarus on several occasions in that period.



The children normally come for their initial stay when they are 7 or 8 years old, with successive visits over the next five years. During their time in Wales they can take advantage of the clean air of the area, and also be treated to good food, both of which are so vital in boosting their general health and wellbeing. They stay with host families, some who have children and some without, and, where possible, they are placed with the same host family each year, although this is not always an option. They return home with a bag of donated clothing, plus a year's supply of vitamins and other useful items such as seeds and stationery.

During their day at **Goytre Wharf**, the children were blessed with glorious Welsh weather (not always the case!), and enjoyed a boat trip on the canal on the **MBACT** Trip Boat "*Edith Elizabeth*", as well as taking in all the beautiful countryside all around them. We look forward to welcoming them again next year. If any of our members feel that they would like to help out **FOCC**, you can contact Jane at janehines@live.com



Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust

COMMUNITY BOAT – THE LORD RAGLAN – PROGRESS REPORT

We were hoping to be able to announce in this issue that our **Community Boat – the Lord Raglan** – had completed the final part of its refit, and that had now successfully been awarded its licence to operate by the **Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)**. At the time of writing, despite all the significant work carried out by the restoration team of volunteers, we still await final **MCA** approval, which would then enable us to carry the full complement of 30 passengers, including two disability wheelchairs. At the end of July, we overcame one of the last hurdles when the boat successfully came through the **MCA Heel Test** at the second time of asking. This time, instead of providing human guinea pigs for the trial (see *Spring Newsletter*), we used 120 bags of sand to provide the ballast, and for this we owe a debt of thanks to **Robert Price (Builders Merchants) Ltd** (see picture opposite).



At this point, it may be a good idea to reflect on how far we have come with this project. The boat was originally built at **Birkenhead** in **1984** by trainees at the **Monks Ferry Training Partnership**, which, we believe, had links to the shipbuilders **Cammell Laird**. It was operated for many years on the **Neath Canal** by the **Enfys Trust**, and is unique in that she is double-ended, with a motor and rudder at each end so that she can travel in either direction. **MBACT** acquired her in **2011** from a scrapyard where she had been languishing for more than two years. She was then transported by road to **Uskmouth Power Station** in **Newport**, where the initial restoration work would take place. The renamed **Lord Raglan** is unrecognisable today from the original vessel. Whilst retaining the core steel shell, the boat has undertaken major remodelling and refurbishment work. We have increased the window areas, renewed sections of the hull plate, installed new motors and battery bank, and added new cabling. We have also totally relined and refitted the boat internally.

That we have achieved this much as a voluntary organisation is little short of remarkable. We could not have come this far without the financial support we have received in the form of grants from the **Brecon Beacons National Park Authority** and the **Brecon Beacons Trust**. We have also received a considerable amount of support from local and international companies with donations of equipment and services. Our sincere thanks go to **SSE** and **Simec** at **Uskmouth Power Station**, **Hempel UK Ltd.**, **Energys Batteries**, **Lynch Motor Company Ltd.**, **Promart Marine**, **Noel Fitzpatrick Ltd.**, **Rockwood UK Ltd.**, **Lee Sanitation Ltd.** and **Rolec Services Ltd.** Without all their help and support, this project could not have happened.



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COMMUNITY BOAT – THE LORD RAGLAN – PROGRESS REPORT

But a lot of the cost has been borne by the Trust, an outlay we are hoping to recoup when the boat is fully operational and earning its keep. After the initial steelwork remodelling and repair work undertaken by **SSE** and **Simec** at **Uskmouth Power Station**, most of the refurbishment has been carried out by **MBACT** volunteers, who have worked tirelessly over many years to transform the boat to its current state.

As a recap, our project aim is to base the **Lord Raglan** at **Goytre Wharf**, from where we plan to run regular trips on the canal for families, school parties and other organisations, with an emphasis on special trips for disabled and disadvantaged groups. The boat will be run as a community resource, with any surplus income over and above the running costs being used for education, canal maintenance and regeneration. The boat is environmentally sustainable, being electrically powered, and is fully equipped with a wheelchair lift and a disabled friendly toilet.

MBACT now needs help to transform the boat from a static resource to a fully functioning part of the community, with the added advantage of making people aware of our beautiful canal and its surrounding environment. Support during the first season of operation will be particularly important as we seek to put management systems in place so that we can organise a professional operation from the outset. To this end, we have been successful in obtaining grant aid via the European-funded **Vale of Usk Rural Development Programme** initiative. This grant will be used to run a crew training programme, develop a schools education module, and establish an information system. With this in mind, we are still looking for volunteers to assist in operating both the Trust's boats, along with **Visitor Centre/Ticket Office** staff to be based at **Goytre Wharf**. Anyone interested, please contact **Richard** on **07974 005483** or **Luke** on **07740 331697**.

We are also still on the lookout for experienced **Skippers**, experienced boaters who hold an **MCA Boatmasters Licence**, and also suitably experienced **Helms**, ideally with a **RYA Helmsman Certificate**, although training can be offered to help achieve this level. Again, please contact **Richard** or **Luke** on the telephone numbers above if you are interested.

Finally, a reminder that we also run a smaller trip boat – **Edith Elizabeth** – also based at **Goytre Wharf**. This boat is distinct in that it can be used as either **one 26 foot boat**, seating a maximum of 12 passengers with a minimum of two crew, or as **two 13 foot craft**, each seating a maximum of 6 passengers with a minimum of two crew. This boat is currently fully operational, and is running trips every day throughout the school holidays, and at weekends during the rest of the year. The price is **£3 per adult, £2 per child**.



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MBACT DUCK RACE 2019

The **2019 MBACT Duck Race** will be held on **August Bank Holiday Monday – 26th August** – at **Llangynidr**, outside “*The Coach & Horses Inn*”, starting at 3pm. The Postcode for Sat Nav is – **NP8 1LS**.



Prizes this year include the following:

- A £200 voucher towards boat hire donated by **Road House Narrowboats, Gilwern**
- Meal for two donated by **The Horseshoe Inn, Llangattock**
- Meal for two donated by **The Star Inn, Mamhilad**
- Meal for two donated by **The Horseshoe Inn & Country Kitchen, Goytre**
- Tea for four at either **Goytre Wharf** or **Fourteen Locks Canal Centre**

MBACT would like to express their extreme gratitude to the above organisations for their generosity in donating these excellent prizes. Other prizes available include bottles of spirits and wine which have all been generously donated by Trust supporters.

Duck Race Tickets are still available from **The Green Flute Café Goytre Wharf, The Horseshoe Inn Llangattock, Crickhowell Adventure Centre, Fourteen Locks Canal Centre, and The Coach & Horses Inn Llangynidr**. They will also be available from the **MBACT** stand at the **Llangynidr Agricultural Show** on **Sunday 25th August** (the day before the race). The Show Ground is adjacent to the canal in the village – Postcode **NP8 1LS**.

The Trust has already had successful days selling tickets at the **Cwmbran Big Event** and **Pontypool’s Party in the Park**, which were both well attended. The picture on the right shows **MBACT Chairman Richard Dommett MBE** talking to an interested punter at Pontypool. Also pictured are Richard’s wife **Monica** and **Duck Race Organiser Bernard Illman**.





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HINTERLANDS WALES

Hinterlands is a national arts project led by the **Canal & River Trust (CRT)** inviting artists and communities to explore canals as a creative space in five locations across England and Wales.

Hinterlands Wales, a partnership between CRT and the Welsh arts organisation **Peak**, is focused around **Pontypool** on the **Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal**. Following a pilot in Spring/Summer 2018, the project consists of two programme strands: **Ahoi! What Grows Here?** and **Performance Butty**, and is taking place across two seasons in 2019-20.

AHOI! WHAT GROWS HERE

Saturday 21st – Sunday 22nd September – Map Launch - Abergavenny Food Festival

Artists Ella Gibbs, Owen Griffiths and Rebecca Chesney launch our alternative food and fauna map of the **Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal**. They can be found at The Farmyard, Castle Street Market.



Saturdays 5th 12th 19th and 26th October – Autumn School - Junction Cottage, Pontymoile Basin

A series of Saturday workshops, talks and events held in the garden at Junction Cottage, including a community lunch, meadow planting and a foraging walk. More details will be available soon via the Peak website and Hinterlands twitter feed (see details at foot of page).

PERFORMANCY BUTTY

Sunday 1st – Sunday 8th September – Summer School – Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal

Artist Stefan Caddick and invited guests will collaborate with groups of young people as they journey from Brecon to Pontymoile Basin over the course of a week in a customised canal boat – MBACT's very own 'Lord Raglan'. The workshops are for 16 – 25 year olds and are free of charge. For more information please contact rachel@peak.cymru - Tel: 01873 811579.

Email: melissa@peak.cymru Web: www.peak.cymru Twitter: @HinterlandsWAL; Instagram: @peakcymru



Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust

FOURTEEN LOCKS CANAL CENTRE

TRIPADVISOR CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE

Congratulations are due to **Fourteen Locks Canal Centre**, which has been awarded a **Certificate of Excellence** by **TripAdvisor** for five consecutive years of consistently high ratings. The **Certificate of Excellence** honours hospitality businesses that deliver consistently great service, and is based on the ratings awarded by visitors. It is awarded to approximately 10% of total businesses on **TripAdvisor**. The certificate, shown here, is a just reward for the fantastic effort put in by **Kate Wickens** and her team, which has seen visitor numbers increase every year since Kate took over as Centre Manager. Take a bow Kate!



FOURTEEN LOCKS CANAL & CONFERENCE CENTRE



ROCK THE LOCK - 2019

Rock The Lock proved to be extremely popular again this year with over 500 people attending during the day. The weather gods shone kindly upon us as the rain stopped just as the first act was beginning and a great day was had by musicians and spectators alike. We raised £145 in donations on the day – thank you to all who contributed. We also sold tickets for the Duck Race and the Gift Shop also proved popular. Thanks are particularly due to Kelvin who donated over £200 worth of pictures of Chartists Murals. A reminder that all the musicians involved provided their services free of charge – so a big thank you to them also. Plans are already in place for **Rock the Lock 2020**.

BRITISH NORDIC WALKING EXEL CHALLENGE EVENT

This event took place on Sunday 30th June and we had a fantastic turnout of over 50 Nordic Walkers from groups all over the UK. There was a choice of either 5k or 10k walks – the 10k route took the walkers along the the Crumlin Arm of the canal towards Newport, and then back up the main canal towards Cwmbran, before returning to the centre to sample traditional Welsh Cakes and Bara Brith, both homemade in the Centre Café.

PLEASE NOTE THAT WE ARE NOW OPEN UNTIL 5PM DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS

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





Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust

NEWS ITEMS

TORFAEN CANAL VOLUNTEER GROUP

The **Torfaen Canal Volunteer Group** meet monthly under the stewardship of **Hugh Woodford** with the sole purpose of trying to keep the canal, towpaths and surrounding areas around **Cwmbran** tidy. This is a thankless, but rewarding, task and the **MBACT** committee would like to express their sincere gratitude to Hugh and his team for their diligent work. The group meet monthly, either in **Cwmbran Retail Park** (near B & Q) or in **Pontnewydd Park**. To give you an example of their work, their last three visits to **Cwmbran Retail Park** have resulted in **38, 38** and **37** sacks of rubbish being collected, plus lots of other assorted detritus, along with a rescued hedgehog. Hugh is always on the lookout for new volunteers to help out, and future dates are listed below – just turn up on the day – all sessions start at 10:00 a.m.:

Sunday 15th September – Pontnewydd Park

Sunday 6th October – Cwmbran Retail Park

Sunday 10th November – Pontnewydd Park

THE ADVENTURE TRIANGLE PROJECT

Further meetings and representations have been made with **Torfaen CBC** regarding proposed improvements to the canal at **Five Locks** and **Mount Pleasant (West Pontnewydd)**, along with an update on the proposals for **Pontymoile Basin** (see *Spring Newsletter*). The discussions have included the impact that the **South Sebastopol** housing development is having on the canal. It is hoped that we will be able to include a more detailed look at these issues in our Autumn Newsletter.

STANDING ORDERS/CHEQUES

A further reminder to all members who currently pay their membership fees using the **Standing Order** method that you need to contact your bank to amend the amount payable to our new rate. We are still receiving payments at the old rate which is necessitating us contacting the member requesting an additional payment. We have also recently experienced problems when banking cheques as the bank will no longer accept cheques made out in our abbreviated name. Please can you therefore ensure that all cheques/standing orders are made payable to: "**Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust**". We thank you for your co-operation with this.



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NEWS ITEMS

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

At their July meeting, the **MBACT Committee** unanimously voted to grant **Honorary Life Membership** to **Ron and Eileen Shackell**. Ron and Eileen have been long-time supporters of the **Trust**, including over twenty years of volunteer work. We feel that **Life Membership** is a worthy recognition of their efforts.

DUCK WEED

Those of you have walked the southern end of the canal recently would have noticed that much of the surface of the canal is overgrown with **Duck Weed**. This has often been an issue in areas of the canal which do not get much boat traffic, but the situation has been particularly bad this year as a result of the hot weather we have been experiencing. A similar problem occurred after last year's hot spell, and it has got so bad this year that an angling group in **Pontnewydd** have taken things into their own hands and cleared an estimated quarter of tonne of weed from the canal because it is killing the fish there as they are being starved of oxygen. Other areas badly affected are **Ty Coch**, **Pontymoile** and the **Crumlin Arm** at **Fourteen Locks**, where the the problem seems to be **Azolia (Water Fern)**. We plan to look at this issue in more detail in the Autumn Newsletter.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

All at Fourteen Locks Canal Centre unless otherwise stated

Monday 12th August – Sunday 1st September – **HOLIDAY TRAIL** – 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
10 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Sundays)

Thursday 22nd August – **PEBBLE DECORATING WORKSHOP** – 10 a.m – 3 p.m.

Monday 26th August – **ANNUAL DUCK RACE** – Outside The Coach & Horses, Llangynidr – 3 p.m.

Wednesday 28th August – **PAINTING POTTERY WORKSHOP** – 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Saturday 7th September – Saturday 5th October - **ART EXHIBITION (Christine Duggan)** – 10 a.m.

Saturday 19th October – **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** – 11 a.m.

Saturday 26th October – Sunday 3rd November – **HALLOWEEN TRAIL** – 10 a.m – 4 p.m.

Friday 29th November – **CHRISTMAS FAYRE** – 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.



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AND, FINALLY – A POETIC CONTRIBUTION FROM A TRUST MEMBER



MY DUCK RACE

by Dafydd Duck



"It's the time of the Annual Duck Race,

To support the Mon. and Brec. Trust.

My get-up-and-go is raring to go.....

It's the winning-post, or bust!

I'll begin with power-swimming,

And, then, a last-minute spurt.

I'll swim, as I've never swum before....

I just hope I don't get hurt....

(Some ducks can be awfully rough....)

And, when it's finally over,

I'll enjoy a glass of beer,

And toast "The Coach and Horses".

And look forward to next year!!"

Please visit my Poetry Blog:

ffionoriginalpoems.blogspot.com

Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust
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