

PRESS RELEASE

This August Bank Holiday weekend will see the welcome return of a canal boaters' tradition in Torfaen that dates back over three decades. The Open Hearth Public House, Griffithstown and the Crosskeys public house at Five Locks, Pontnewydd (now in private ownership as a home), were two public houses that each held a Boater's Signing Book. It was traditional for any boat that arrived at the Southernmost end of the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal to mark the occasion by signing the books. The records of names of the boats, skippers & crew, comments and funny ditties stretched back over three decades. Due to the passage of time, change of hands of the Open Hearth and sale of the former Crosskeys pub into private ownership, both boater's signing books together with the boaters' histories and traditions have been lost. All attempts to find the books and recover the history have failed.

The Facebook group "Bridge 46 to Five Locks" have commissioned a brand-new Boater's Signing Book to be made. The Facebook group was initiated in August 2020 to bring pressure to bear on both the Developers of the new housing estate at Bevan's Lane and the Local Authority, Torfaen County Borough Council to keep the integrity of the canal intact, maintain the towpath and restore navigation under Bridge 46 to Five Locks. The Facebook Group now has over 2,500 members from all over the world who are all canal lovers and fans of the beautiful Mon & Brec Canal.

Spokesperson for the Bridge 46 to Five Locks group Mark Sullivan said *"Reinstating this old tradition of signing the Boater's Book is another step in raising even more awareness of the beauty of the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal here at the Southern end. We are very proud to have this magnificent canal running through the heart of Torfaen. Through the combined efforts of everyone involved, the canal can be nurtured back to life and its full potential reached and respected. With this book, we hope will come a new, clearer strategy to help maintain this wonderful green corridor within the reach of all within Torfaen. We thank wholeheartedly those that have joined us and those that have supported us over the*

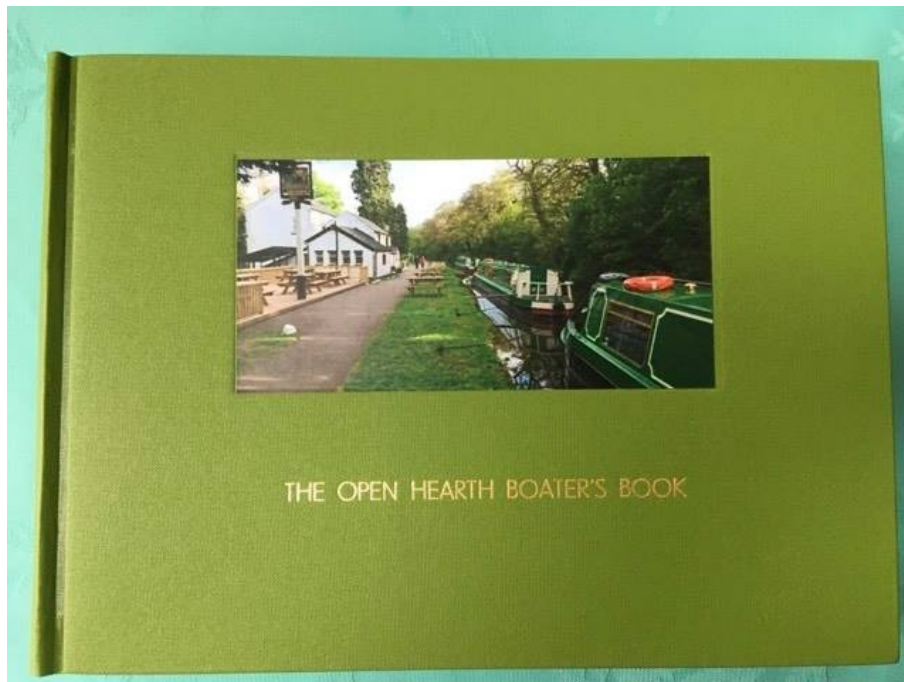
last 11 months. We all look forward to seeing our aims achieved with all of you on board and get navigation restored to Five Locks and potentially, who knows how far beyond “.

The new Boater's Signing Book is sponsored by Landlord Gareth & Landlady Kirsty of the Open Hearth. The new Boater's Signing Book will be kept at the Open Hearth and all Boaters that arrive at the southern end of the Mon & Brec are invited to cruise to the Open Hearth from as far away as Brecon, sign the book, enter the details of their boat, crew and whether or not they made it all the way under Bridge 46 to the end of the navigable part of the Mon & Brec Canal at Five Locks. Gareth & Kirsty were so pleased to have been invited to be custodians of the new Boater's Signing Book and immediately offered to be the sponsors of the book and facilitate the re-instatement of this much loved and very popular Boater's tradition.

Gareth said “We are thrilled to be the custodians of the new Boater's Book and look forward to welcoming all those that travel our way down the beautiful Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal. We always look forward to seeing the different canal cruisers and narrowboats that travel down and our daughter loves welcoming them by waving to them as they cruise past. We have enjoyed welcoming many boats in the past that have moored alongside the Open Hearth. We love to hear the stories of where the crews have come from and tales of their adventures along the way as they relax and enjoy a drink and some good food. It will be lovely to be able to look back through the Boater's Book over the coming months and years and remember those that stopped by and enjoyed the beauty on offer in our lovely part of the world “.

The presentation of the Boater's Signing Book will take place at the Open Hearth public house on Saturday 28th August at 10.00. Invited guests will be Gareth & Kirsty, Landlord & Landlady of the Open Hearth, Members of the Bridge 46 to Five Locks Facebook Group Admin Team, Mark Sullivan, Phil Hughes, Brian Boon, Ruth Kedward, Tracey Leake-Jones, Steve Hale & Jackson Kedward.

Photos:-



DEDICATION

This boater's book is dedicated to the memory of all those that designed and built the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal. We remember with admiration all those that used this historic waterway for their trades and income and we remember the sturdy and tenacious horses that pulled the heavy loads.

Today the Monmouthshire & Brecon canal is a much loved and still very well used waterway. The biodiversity and marvels of flora & fauna abound to entertain and encourage the users that now populate the waterway with leisure boats. To all those boaters we say welcome to the Southern end of the Mon & Brecon. Honour our beloved canal by recording your visit here to THE OPEN HEARTH this day.

The reinstatement of the tradition of "Signing the Boater's Book" was instigated by the Facebook Group "BRIDGE 46 TO FIVE LOCKS" in conjunction with the Landlord and Landlady of The Open Hearth.

We wish you all safe travels and a return visit to sign the Boaters Book again. Good wishes from Gareth Hobbs & Kirsty-Marie Smith (landlord & Landlady of The Open Hearth) and the Admin team of Bridge 46 to Five Locks group Phil Hughes, Mark Sullivan, Ruth Kedward, Brian Boon, Steve Hale, Jackson Kedward and Tracey Leake-Jones.

Keep all the people in the boat and keep the wet side down

Canal users, whether they be walkers, cyclists, fishermen, photographers, indeed anyone that enjoys the canal from the towpath all delight in the sight of a pretty boat gliding over calm water. The boaters themselves will tell

you, that their chosen leisure pursuit or lifestyle choice for their floating home for some, is an experience of all the senses. The sights, sounds, smells and taste of canal life is complemented by the feel of the gentle movement of a canal boat, jute ropes in your hands, the warm sun on your back and a gentle breeze on your face.

As Ratty says to Mole in the story by Kenneth Grahame of Wind in the Willows, "There is nothing, absolutely nothing, half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats".

Written by Tracey Leake-Jones

Bridge 46 to Five Locks Facebook Group

