



# MERTHYR TYDFIL ANGLING ASSOCIATION.



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Web Site: <http://www.mtaa.co.uk>

President: Mr Huw Lewis AM

Vice Presidents : Mr D Havard MP. Mr T.C. Lewis

Mr. W.G. Davies: Chairman.

1/08/09

Mr Mick Bates AM  
Chairman  
Sustainability Committee  
National Assembly for Wales

Ref; Access Inland Waterways in Wales

Cc : First Minister, Mr Rhodri Morgan AM, Mr Huw Lewis AM, Ms Jane Davidson AM, Ms Elin Jones AM, Mr Brynle Williams AM, Mr Alun Davies AM, Ms Leanne Wood AM, Angela Burns AM, Ms Lorraine Barrett AM, Ms Lesley Griffiths AM, Mr Carwyn Jones AM, Lord Rowlands CBE, Rhymney & Merthyr Tydfil. Mr D Havard MP Merthyr Tydfil.

Dear Sir,

May I introduce myself, my name is Wm Gareth Davies a resident of Merthyr Tydfil and chair of the Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association. Also a founder member and proud of the Association we have built.

I and my members are dismayed at the content of the meeting at the Royal Welsh, and the reference to lack of access to inland waters in Wales by other users. I can but talk about the land and fishing rights owned or leased to the Association.

The history of the Association is that it was formed from two small clubs in 1967, the aim was to procure by purchase or long term lease any Fishing Rights which came onto the market for the anglers and in the main people of Merthyr Tydfil.

As you may be aware the river Taff in 1967 was still running black from coal mines or grey from open sewers. That did not stop our forward thinking in that, sometime in the future, efforts by ourselves and other bodies would ensure that our river would be clean again. This forward thinking came to fruition this year, as for the first time the Rivers International Fly Fishing Championship was held on the river Taff (that river that ran black/grey) in South Wales at Merthyr Tydfil. This event has never before left the river Dee in North Wales. The English team had severe reservations about coming to the valleys' but after their first visit they were highly impressed. The river flow although controlled by reservoirs on the Taf Fawr and Taf Fechan has become one of the finest trout streams in Wales.

As I mentioned in the previous paragraph forward thinking was our ideal. In 1970 we purchased the Pontygwaith fishing at Merthyr Vale, the Merthyr Vale Colliery was still pouring its black waste into the Taff and the sewers were still pouring their noxious fluid into the river. I could carry on with a litany of our procurements over the intervening 42 years but space will not allow, of course, if you were interested then our portfolio could be made available to yourself and the committee. I briefly state that during the years we have purchased some 60 acres of land which we have either incorporated into a Local Nature Reserve or formed our own Nature Reserve alongside the Taff, called Pontygwaith nature Reserve. Through the reserve runs 3 Km of the Trevithick Tram Road, which we owned and upgraded with the aid of a Grant from Coed Cymru so that people could walk and Cycle through the area, the cost was £160,000.00. On completion we realised that we could not afford the insurance against 3<sup>rd</sup> party claims, so the tram road was gifted to the Merthyr Council. (We are certainly not going to gift our fishing and riparian rights to any freebooters.)

The fishing Rights we have purchased amount to 15 miles from Pontsticill to Quakers Yard with some 10 mile on long term lease. We have also purchased some 3 miles of fishing on the river Usk some one mile of which we are the riparian owner. (The Valuation of the Association property purchased by the people is £800,000.00)

All the above has been accomplished by the hard work and support of our members who are constituents of Merthyr Tydfil so that they could enjoy the peace of the river and conserve the wild life.

The Association membership runs at 250 juniors 200 OAP and 500 senior members. The fees per annum are OAP £25.00 Senior £50.00 Junior £25 with a reduced fee of £15 for Junior under eleven. We keep our fees as low as possible due to the fact we have high unemployment in the area, with I may add no help from government local or otherwise.

Now the access issue – can you honestly say that the theft of our rights to give to others is correct? Where were these people who are now demanding open access when the river ran black/grey. How much resource have these people put into the environment.

On resource – financially, everyone pays for a licence to carry a rod (adult full licence £75.00) apart from permit fees.

Some 12 years ago we met with the local canoe club and offered the use of our owned facilities with the proviso that from late spring to early Autumn, all paddling to cease by 5.00pm.

Only to be re-buffed with the adage “We want access at any time 365 days a year” for the princely sum of £0.00. Yes, they are correct in saying they take nothing from the river (neither does a golfer from the golf course) whereas our annual bill for maintenance and stocking amounts to £15,000.00. (This excludes rental charges) What of the people who go to recreational centres, do they obtain these services for £0.00. It is interesting to note that on many waters owned by Clubs/Associations a days fishing is cheaper than a days canoeing at the canoeing centres Tryweryn). Yet they want to use our facilities for nothing but charge for theirs.

As I have mentioned Angling not being an Olympic sport does not get the support given to Canoeing, locally there has been built a white water/polo area on the Millennium lakes at Treharris, also Cardiff Bay is to see many thousands spent on providing a special area for canoes, again at no cost to the participant but fees are charged to use the facility.

We have always been prepared to enter into access agreements, (as already illustrated) we were already party to the now defunct Usk agreement that had run for over twenty years. This was dismantled by the canoeists when they changed their name last year and had the effrontery to say that under their new name they had never signed any agreements.

The question must be asked who has torn up agreements on Tawe, Taff, Usk and many others – The Welsh Canoe Union, who have conveniently disbanded and now call themselves Canoe Wales who have not brokered any agreement, convenient.

The British Canoe union are on record saying that they had 156 miles of the Rivers Teme, Clun, and Onny to paddle under agreement now reduced to ten miles. The question must be asked, why did they lose 146 miles. (I have a report of this situation in my possession)

Problems – If Paddlers are not identifiable and regulated the attitude of some can, and will cause bank side strife. Yes anglers can cause a problem but they can be identified through licence/permit.

If my sources are correct then it would appear that the 90% of canoeists will have nothing to do with the canoe union and would be happy to reach agreement with riparian owners and fishing clubs.

Perhaps we should form a canoe section within our Association. I am pretty sure we could accommodate them.

The question of liability - (as already mentioned Trevithick tram road) is of extreme concern to us in this time of persons seeking compensation for falling branches etc.

Example - This incident happened in 1994 - Association Bailiffs undertaking a routine patrol spotted about 30 children and 2 adults in canoes in the pool below the weir at Merthyr Tydfil. Our Bailiffs warned the person in charge of the party of the potential dangers and illegality of their presence on the river but the response was regrettably less than co-operative. In the event several canoes sank and children in obvious distress were rescued by the bailiffs. We certainly have no wish to be embroiled in a case of misadventure by the acts of other would be users. (written evidence available)

We have photographs of canoeists illegally using the fish pass at the same weir in Merthyr as a launching jetty (Please note the river level in April) they can be made available to you. As mentioned earlier the river flow is controlled by reservoirs which contribute 9 million gallons of water per day as compensation flow, hardly enough to float a toy boat, and any craft on this shallow water will certainly destroy any hopes of fishing for many hours. I make this point as in future greater demand for water will undoubtedly put pressure on our rivers to supply water for our consumption.

To conclude we are not opposed to sharing our river as long as those who wish to share it pay their way, respect the environment, and behave responsibly. Anglers have to respect Close Seasons for fishing is it to much to ask that canoeists also accept that 24/7 open access is not the way forward. I Remain

Yours Faithfully

W G Davies (Gary)  
Chair Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association