

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION – HERITAGE DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Proposed installation of bridge name plaque

Ynysmeudwy Uchaf Bridge, Swansea Canal



Figure 1 Ynysmeudwy Uchaf Bridge - north elevation



Figure 2 South elevation

Overview

This statement has been prepared to support a Listed Building Consent application by Glandwr Cymru (Canal & River Trust in Wales) for the installation of a bridge name plaque at Ynysmeudwy Uchaf Bridge, Swansea Canal.

The bridge is a grade II listed Structure.

Date of preparation

January 2024

Applicant

Glandwr Cymru – Canal & River Trust in Wales

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Background history of the Swansea Canal and Ynysmeudwy Uchaf Bridge

The Swansea Canal was built to serve the collieries, iron works and copper works in the Tawe valley. The first section of the canal from Swansea to Godre'r-Graig was opened in 1796, the whole length of 16.5 miles was completed by 1798. Only five miles of the canal is navigable today, yet it is still a green and pleasant walking and cycling route, nestled at the bottom of the steep-sided Swansea Valley.

The Swansea end was highly industrialised serving numerous copper and spelter works, collieries and chemical works. This led to the City of Swansea becoming known as 'Copperopolis' in the 18th and 19th centuries as is one of the earliest industrial centres of Wales, and was widely regarded as the world centre for copper-ore smelting and metal manufacturing. The late 18th C saw extensive growth of collieries in the Tawe Valley. Four short branch canals were constructed, and a network of 60 horse drawn tramways gradually linked mines and quarries to the canal corridor.

The canal was engineered in the greater part by Thomas Sheasby. A short section (about 1 mile) at Trewyddfa was built by the Duke of Beaufort as a private canal to charge tolls but was part of the main line. Civil engineering works included 36 locks able to carry 25-ton boats, and five aqueducts to carry the canal across major tributaries. The locks raise the canal through 373 feet from near sea level at Swansea to reach Abercraf at its highest point.

In 1848 the railway opened and the canal began to fall into decline. In 1872 GWR purchased the canal and by 1931 the canal ceased to carry trade, though continued to be a useful source of water for local industry. The British Transport Commission abandoned sections in 1949 and 1957. Infilling of canal sections continued until 1981. The Swansea Canal Society was formed in 1981 and has been working towards restoration of the remaining sections of the canal.

Ynysmeudwy Uchaf Bridge is located on the Swansea Canal. It is one of three farm access or accommodation bridges between Pontardawe and Ynysmeudwy. The bridge is at the Uchaf or Upper Farm. The underside is supported by pre-formed railway lines to cater for heavy vehicles travelling to the nearby Bryn Tinplate Works.

Significance of the heritage asset

Statutory List Description

Name of Property: Ynysmeudwy Uchaf Overbridge on Swansea Canal

Reference Number: 11204

Grade: II

Date of Designation: 26/10/1979

Description:

Canal bridge, late C18, over the Swansea Canal. The 16-mile Swansea Canal was opened in 1798 to Hen Neuadd, Abercraf, declined after the railway opened in 1852 and closed in 1931. The ruins of the former Ynysmeudwy Pottery Brickworks and later Bryn Tinplate works lie to the south. The iron ribs on the underside were added to strengthen the bridge at the expense of the Bryn Tinplate works. The tinplate works were built in 1880 on the site of the pottery which had closed in 1877.

Canal overbridge, rubble stone single arch bridge. Segmental arch with tooled cut stone voussoirs and soffit of 5 iron ribs bolted on each end. Parapets of large rubble stone slabs only on NW the rest presumably removed and repaired with cement. Small buttress on NE towpath side. This side also has a ramp access to towpath level.

Reason for designation:

Included as an intact canal overbridge apparently of the late C18.

Nature of the proposed work

In 2023 the Swansea Canal celebrated its 225-year anniversary. As part of the celebrations Glandwr Cymru, the Canal & River Trust in Wales, in partnership with the Swansea Canal Society has been hosting a range of exhibitions, events and activities.

Installation of Welsh place name signs on some of the canal bridges has been included as part of the events to mark the opening of the canal in 1798.

A name plaque is proposed, attached to Ynysmeudwy Uchaf bridge.

Proposed design

The plaque is oval in shape and measures 390 mm by 340 mm and is 3 mm thick. It is painted black with white lettering and border. It is weatherproof, constructed of cast aluminium.

Fixing is via bolts into mortar joints only to cause minimum disturbance to the historic masonry and so be reversible should removal be required at any time.

A visualisation of the plaque is shown below showing logos and other details:



Figure 3 Proposed plaque

The wording will be bilingual and will read:

Pont Ynysmeudwy Uchaf

Ynysmeudwy Upper Bridge

Impact Assessment

It is proposed that, as far as possible, the sign will be attached into the mortar joints and so the physical impact will be limited.

The proposed location is on the approach wall. The commemorative plaque will be visible to walkers and other towpath users when visiting this section of the Swansea Canal. The position has been selected so that the main elevations of the bridge can be kept free of signage, aside from the existing bridge number.



Figure 4 Proposed location of plaque on approach wall -north side of bridge



Figure 5 Close up view of proposed plaque location

Access

The works will be conducted entirely from Canal & River Trust property. Public access to the bridge will not be affected by the works.

Conclusion

In conclusion it is considered that the proposed installation of the plaque is minor and will not have a deleterious effect on the aesthetic or historic character of the bridge. It is therefore respectfully requested that this application is approved.