

## RURAL RAMBLE

## NEATH CANAL TRAIL

*A historic walk of great natural beauty along the Neath Canal*



The Basin was the junction between the Neath (Glynneath-Briton Ferry) and the Tennant (Aberdulais-Port Tennant) Canals; also a loading and transfer point for freight traffic. Commercially, the Neath Canal was carrying 150000 tonnes of coal by 1820 rising to a peak of 200000 tonnes, mostly transferring to the Tennant Canal. The Tennant crosses the river Neath on an aqueduct (extant in poor condition) south of the basin, followed by a lock.

The Neath Canal was surveyed as far back as 1791 by Thomas Dadford and built between Abernant and Briton Ferry by 1795 by engineer Thomas Sheasby. The 17 kilometre route cost £40000 and had 19 locks, three of which (Clyne, Abergarwed and Resolven) are on the route described.

Commercially, it was important carrying 150000 tonnes by 1820 and at its peak 200000 tonnes, most of it passing to the Tennant Canal at Aberdulais. Decline set in after 1845, the final dividend being paid in 1896; commercial traffic ceased by 1916 though tolls were still raised until 1934 for other traffic.

### ***The Route in detail***

Alight from the bus at Aberdulais Falls (GR 772994). Cross the road, turn right along the pavement for 50 metres then drop down left, cross over the Tennant

Canal and under the railway, turn right to a minor road and cross the river. Turn left then right alongside the Aberdulais Canal Basin; cross the basin on a skew bridge and from here on it is a straightforward walk along the towpath.

The trail runs parallel to the River Neath (left); and wooded hillsides (right) as far as the restored Clyne Lock (GR 798002), where the B4434 comes alongside the canal. There is a bus stop if you wish to start or end the walk here.

There is a brief wooded section before the trail opens out and crosses the river on the reconstructed Ynysbwlllog aqueduct, passes under the A465 and continues on the other side of the valley\*. Near Abergarwed the path splits into a broad track; keep to the right hand side following the river bank until you see a footpath on your right near some large sheds (GR 818023). This takes you over the river, under the A465 and over the railway, rising gently to the B4434 at Melincourt; turn right and after 100 metres, turn left along the short, steep and rocky path to Melincourt Waterfall (GR 825026); it is well worth the effort!

Retrace your steps back to the junction of paths (GR 818023), this time following the one to Abergarwed and B4242, turn right and walk for one kilometre along the pavement passing the Farmers Arms (left). From here, it is a short walk to the link road to the village, passing the restored canal basin (left) and the A465 on a footbridge to the bus stop at John Street (GR 828029).

At Resolven, a short walk further along the canal is recommended for its sylvan beauty.

\*note that a small bridge near Abergarwed (GR816022) is passable but not a public right of way; an alternative is to use the main road through Abergarwed.



## Information Panel

<b>Start point:</b>	Aberdulais Falls (GR 772994)
<b>End point:</b>	Resolven Canal Basin (GR 827030)
<b>Map:</b>	O.S. Explorer 165/166 or Landranger 170
<b>Distance:</b>	10 kilometres
<b>Time:</b>	3 hours
<b>Terrain:</b>	Easy to moderate
<b>Refreshments:</b>	Aberdulais National Trust Tea Rooms
<b>Toilets:</b>	Aberdulais National Trust Resolven Canal Basin
<b>Trains:</b>	Neath 3 kilometres
<b>Bus stops:</b>	Aberdulais Falls (adjacent) Resolven John Street (250 metres)
<b>Parking:</b>	Aberdulais National Trust roadside (free but limited) Resolven Canal Basin (free) The X7 bus connects Resolven with Tonna (1 kilometre walk thence to Aberdulais Falls)
<b>Buses:</b>	The start is on the X8 and T6 routes both every hour weekdays' daytime. The end of the walk is on the X7 every hour weekdays' daytime.