

Cymdeithas Melinau Cymru



# NEWSLETTER

Welsh Mills Society

HYDREF/OCTOBER 2011

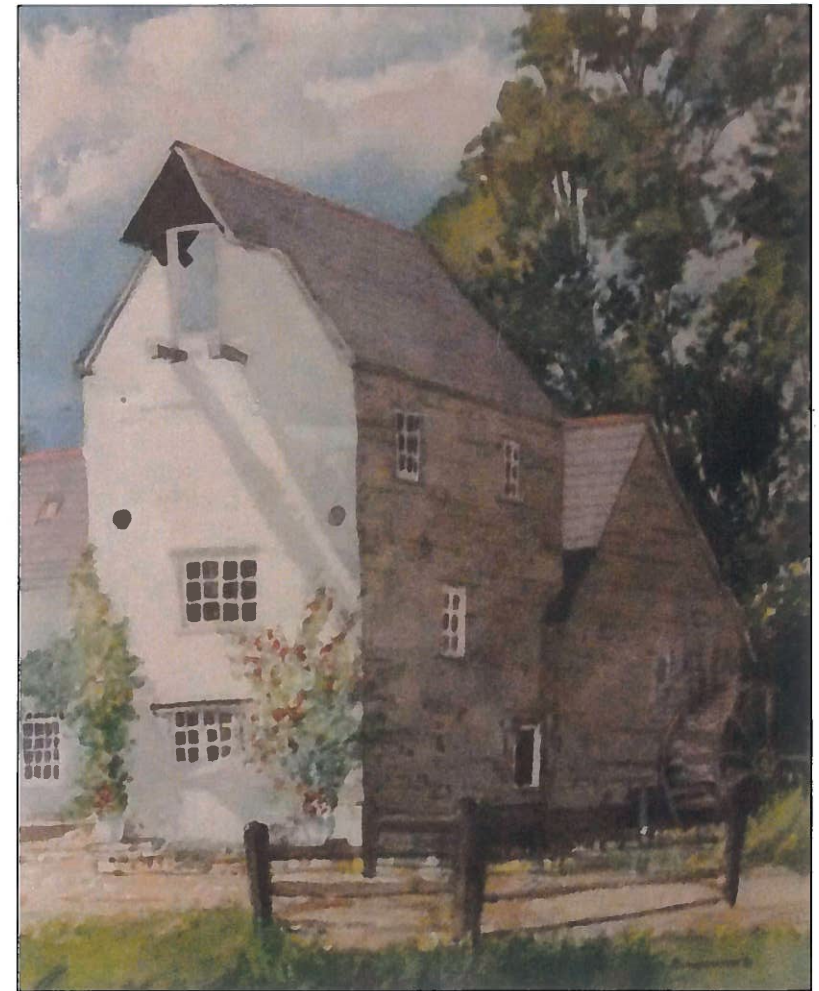
RHIF/NO 105



Melin Pant-yr-Ynn, Blaenau Ffestiniog (John Crompton)



Edwards of Llanuwchllyn generating set, Talybont, Ceredigion (John Crompton)



Melin Llanfytlin, from a painting (Gerallt Nash)

## EDITORIAL

Let's begin by reminding you all about the last Newsletter's editorial. It posed a mangled quotation, "What can your Society do for you?" How many of you have had a think about what you would like your Society to do and, more importantly, how many of you have communicated the fruits of your thinking to the Society, either via the Hon Secretary or through any member of the committee? If you haven't already done so (and the word is that the post-bag hasn't been exactly bulging), there's an AGM on the near horizon, an opportunity for lively debate on exactly this issue – what activities should the Society be planning for you to participate in and enjoy?

Meanwhile the Committee has also been considering some other matters, and the AGM will be placing proposals for some operational changes to the constitution by which the Society governs its business. We are not a registered company and therefore need not subscribe to the rigours of a standard company constitution, but it is good to have written guidance appropriate to the size and functions of our organisation. The proposed changes are set out in a paper enclosed with this Newsletter, and the Secretary has penned a short explanation below.

The Committee has also revisited the matter of the Society's archive of mill records, which for some years now has now been held in the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW) in Aberystwyth. This may appear to build divisions with England which benefits from the good work of The Mills Archive but this has never been the intention. The Committee feels that the Welsh records should be held in a public archive in Wales and the NMRW is the appropriate national archive. Digital photos and drawings, etc., can be accessed directly via Coflein, the NMRW's online catalogue and archive, [www.coflein.gov.uk](http://www.coflein.gov.uk) and can be made available on many sites, including the Mills Archive. Now that recording work is being carried out actively amongst our members, in particular the impressive work of John Brandrick, we have reaffirmed the intention to, and arrangements for, contributing to the NMR. It is hoped that a recognisable Welsh Mills Society collection can be built up within the NMR, and that some of the material will contribute to Casgiad y Werin Cymru, People's Collection Wales, [www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk](http://www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk) thereby helping to further the Society's profile.

## COVER STORY

The unique and most attractive windmill, the subject of our cover photograph, is reputed to have been designed by Inigo Jones and built in 1632. Originally it had a central timber structure containing a staircase and hoist, but it was refitted in 1860 with two pairs of stones mounted on a wooden hurst-frame about four feet above floor level. The cap was turned by gears meshing on a rack on top of the tower, turned by hand. The mill worked until 1910, is now cared for by Warwickshire County Council and is open occasionally, when someone brings a ladder to allow access.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**SATURDAY 22nd OCTOBER - AUTUMN MEETING AND AGM**, at the Village Hall, Llancarfan, Vale of Glamorgan, at 10.30 for 11.00. The programme and booking form is enclosed with this Newsletter; please make sure that bookings are posted to Mike Hall by 12 October.

Please note that there will not be a coach for the afternoon visits as the sites are very close together, and so the cost of the day has been reduced. This is the Annual General Meeting, of course, and the Committee is recommending some minor changes to the Society's constitution, so please read Hilary's explanation (below) and the enclosed copy of the said constitution with the proposed changes, and make your comments appropriately.

**SATURDAY 26<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER – MILL MEMORIES, SPAB MILLS SECTION AUTUMN MEETING**, at the Mills Archive, Watlington House, 44 Watlington Street, Reading. Registration is from 09.30hrs and there is a varied programme of talks including one on Kent windmills by our own member Alan Stoyel. There is also an opportunity for members' contributions, due notice being given to Mildred Cookson by 1 November at [mildred@stonenut.demon.co.uk](mailto:mildred@stonenut.demon.co.uk). Cost for the day is £35.00, to include coffee/tea, a miller's lunch and afternoon tea. Application forms can be found on the SPAB Mills website, <http://www.spab.org.uk/spab-mills/courses-and-events/>

## PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE WELSH MILLS SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

The constitution, first created at the establishment of our society in 1984, has been amended several times to meet our changing needs. The last such change was in 1996 and in the fifteen years since then the Committee's workload has increased significantly. To deal with this we have co-opted more and more members to the Committee but at our last meeting in July we decided it was time to regularise the position and propose appropriate changes to the constitution. The amended draft with the proposed changes is being mailed to all members with this newsletter and the Committee will be seeking approval for the changes at the forthcoming AGM in October. The main change is an increase in the size of the Committee from nine members to twelve and a reduction in the number of people who can be co-opted to the Committee from three to two. We have also made a couple of small changes to other parts of the constitution (mostly timing of notices) to reflect our existing working practices.

If you have any queries about any of these changes, or if you would like to comment on the changes but are unable to attend the AGM on 22 October, please get in touch with me (by the 20<sup>th</sup> October please!).

Hilary Malaws, Hon. Secretary  
01974 261428

Email: [Hilary.Malaws@btinternet.com](mailto:Hilary.Malaws@btinternet.com)

Y Felin, Tynygraig, Ystrad Meurig, Ceredigion, SY25 6AE

## NEWS FROM THE MILLS

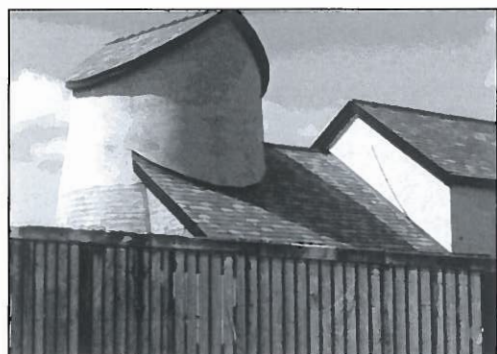
**Y Felin Fach, Blaenpennal** – The work on the roof is now finished. The new galvanised buckets and soleboards for the waterwheel were delivered on 5<sup>th</sup> September, and will hopefully be fitted before the weather deteriorates, leaving an opportunity for internal work to carry on over the winter.

**Talgarth Mill, near Brecon** featured recently in the first of the BBC series Village SOS which has been looking at community schemes seeking to restore energy and viability to rural settlements which have been losing their traditional services. The restoration of the mill and

provision of a bakery and café has been supported by the National Lottery and the Welsh Government through its Sustainable Development Fund.

The mill was built in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century on the site of two much earlier mills, a corn mill dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and a 14<sup>th</sup> century fulling mill. During the First War it became a fulling mill, and was then again used for grinding corn and beans for local farms to the late 1940s. From about 1911 it also generated electricity for lighting the town. But in the 1950s the machinery was removed to prevent the owner being charged by the Water Board. The shop was rented to the butcher and a building company operated from the mill itself. Now the mill is once again grinding flour, and open on a regular basis.

The content of the Village SOS programme was a bit short on detail of the actual work carried out on the mill machinery, and the part the WMS played in supplying parts, but no doubt a personal visit will reveal all.



George Lees sent this photograph of **Pentre Berw windmill, Anglesey**, showing progress in late July towards once again converting it into living accommodation.

The mill probably dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and it was converted to a dwelling before 1929. By 1974 the tower was derelict and roofless, and had lost some of its upper walls. By 2006 it had been further truncated, and had received a low-pitched corrugated iron roof. Now it appears

to have been built back almost to its original height, and will perhaps be more easily seen from the old A5, Telford's Holyhead road, as it passes beneath the rocky outcrop on which the mill stands. It is the only one of Anglesey's surviving mill towers which is not listed.

At **Felin Gwnnws, Tynygraig**, the two pairs of stones recovered from Llangwryfon earlier in the year have been moved inside in advance of winter, and are now safely propped against the wall. It was interesting to see how "unround" they are.

#### MUCKY MILLS GANG

If you would like to be involved in, or would like to suggest future projects, please contact Andrew Findon for details. There may be funding for travel expenses for those involved in such projects.

#### CASEWORK



As a follow up to information received, Chris Plummer, Andrew and Eileen Findon arranged to visit Myddfai Mill (SN 77452975) near Llandovery, to check on the current condition. The mill is not listed, and currently being converted for domestic use. The builder was on site and allowed access for a quick survey and photos to be taken. The waterwheel was



removed some years ago, and replaced by a turbine to generate electricity. As part of the conversion process most of the remaining machinery had been removed to the yard. The fixed-rhynd stones and mesh floored kiln would seem to suggest that grinding oats may have been the last milling operation. It is hoped that we can contact the owner to discuss the future of the machinery. Photos of the mill and details of the machinery will be passed to John Crompton for the database.



On the way to Myddfai, Eileen spotted a millstone leaning against an outside wall of a building, which turned out to be Glasefin Mill (SN 73202875), where the owner related that there had been two waterwheels, of which he thought one was inside and one outside, but removed by 1943 when he came there. He understood that there had been 3 pairs of stones, of which one 4 ft stone we had seen outside, with a four armed fixed rhynd, and signs of an earlier curved fixed rhynd. You can see an old

photo of the mill on The People's Collection Wales, [www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk](http://www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk). The owner also related that he thought the water wheel from Myddfai Mill had been taken to a site towards Brecon, and gave contact details for the current owner.

Also on the list for a visit was Rhos y Bedw Mill (SN 63354445) near Ffarmers, Carmarthenshire, which is in the possession of a new owner, who would like to partly rebuild the mill building. It is currently little more than a pile of stones, and very overgrown. The mill pond remains and the owner says he has possession of the leat and weir. It is hoped that the new owner will join WMS so that we can give him further advice if he wishes to carry out any work on the mill, or research the history of the mill.



## MILLS FOR SALE

For members and others who might like to splash out a bit, a former mill house and mill at **Glan y Wern, Dolywern**, in the Ceiriog valley near Chirk, is on the market for just £1,790,000. You get a lot for your money, including a six-bedroom mill house, a detached stone building which has been converted into five small self-contained units, a former coach house converted to two further dwellings one of which has three en-suite bedrooms, the whole in four acres of ground with extensive river frontage. The machinery has gone, but the waterwheel is being repaired in advance of sale. The agents are Binnion Lindsay-Veal of 2, High Street, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 8DJ, 01299-827860. It wasn't possible to download a picture.

Not quite so expensive is **The Water Mill, Cefn-y-bedd near Wrexham**, being offered by Savills at £599,950. It is described as "a distinctive five bedroomed converted water mill originally dating back to 1846, and set in approximately 1.5 acres, with entrance hall, inner



hall, study, **mill workings room**, sauna, cloakroom, utility room, lower ground floor guest bedroom with dressing room and en suite shower room, garden room, drawing room, kitchen / breakfast room and conservatory, etc etc. As usual the agents don't include any information on what, if anything, survives in the mill workings room. Savills are at 22 Lower Bridge Street, Chester, CH1 1RS, tel 0843 4711 350.

For a mere £259,500, BJP of 50 Rhosmaen Street, Llandeilo SA19 6HA, tel 0843 4716 066 are offering a **Grade II listed semi detached cottage** set in lovely location on the fringe of Crugybar in the Cothi Valley a few miles north of Talley and Llandeilo. Why include it here? – because the details include reference to a **mill room** 5.75m(18'10") x 2.57m(8'5"), arranged on two floors with access to the vaulted roof area with mill wheel. Again there are no details or photograph of anything interesting which might remain.



If you really want a waterwheel with a house attached, Greenslade Taylor Hunt are offering **Millwheel House, Whitcombe Farm, Corton Denham** just north of Sherborne in Dorset. Be aware that the house is one of three properties which were created out of a large mill complex in the 1980s. With five bedrooms (two en-suite) and all the usual facilities plus a 31ft by 17ft lounge, there's plenty of accommodation – and you get the spectacular waterwheel!

In July Anglesey member George Lees noted that **Capel Coch Windmill, near Llangefni** was being offered for sale at a price in the region of £135,000. It was described as "a unique opportunity to purchase a Grade II Listed Mill with planning permission granted to convert into a residence with 2 storey extension to the side." The stone-built three-storey tower is probably one of the oldest surviving windmills on Anglesey, thought to date from the mid 18th century. It ceased working round about 1900, and the only fittings remaining are fragments of the wooden curb ring. The tower has been on the AT RISK register since 2002. As this Newsletter goes to press the mill appears to have been sold subject to contract; the agents are Morgan Evans of 28/30 Church Street, Llangefni. 01248 723303.



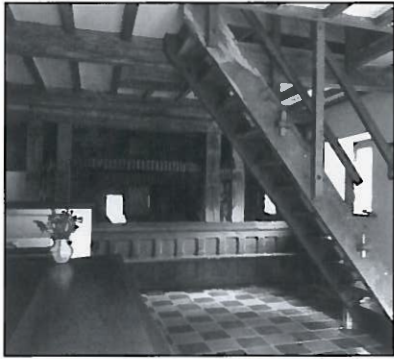
## A LONG-TERM CONSERVATION PROJECT

Roger Mears and his wife Joanie bought **Felin Uchaf, Llandeusant, Carmarthenshire** in 1979 as a derelict building, together with the associated stable/cowshed/cart shed. Six years later they also bought the two other buildings within the group, the miller's house and the oat-drying kiln, which were also derelict.

The mill is situated on the slopes of the Black Mountain at the western end of the Brecon Beacons National Park, in the valley of the Llechach, a tributary of the Tywi. The river had been dammed 350m upstream and the water supply to the mill travelled along the valley in a man-made leat, with a fall of approximately 5.4m. By 1979 there was no trace of the dam and the leat was dry. The mill is built against the hillside, on bedrock, and the cowshed is the other side of the tailrace from the mill. The miller's house is also built into the hillside on a site carved out of bedrock, with the valley road running in front of its door. The kiln is the other side of the road, inside a tight, sloping, bend, with access from the road to both the lower (fire) level and the upper (oat drying) floor. The mill had last been in use in 1928, since when it had been disused, except for general farm storage and sheltering sheep.

The mill itself has two floors and an attic. It is constructed of local stone and shows a variety of construction dates; all the evidence points to it having been there for several centuries. A wide door opening at the side of the first floor level of the mill allowed delivery of sacks of grain by cart from a road alongside, a similarly wide opening at the non-machinery end of the ground floor allowed the sacks of flour or fodder to be taken out. The hursting, framing the main machinery, occupies one quarter of





the ground floor and the millstones in their casings are above it on the first floor. All roof rafters and upper floor joists and boarding were either rotted or infected by woodworm, but the roof trusses, some of the purlins and the first floor beams were mainly sound. There were remains of shutters on some of the window openings, but there had never been any glazed windows. The machinery dates from around the mid-C19, presumably a replacement for original timber machinery. The internal machinery, of cast iron with wooden cogs, was substantially intact, but externally the waterwheel had lost most of its timberwork,

including all of the launder and much of the shaft, bearings, spokes and buckets, leaving the cast iron shrouds and central axle hubs in place. There was a certain amount of ancillary equipment, such as a winnower and two flour dressers.

The miller's house is on two floors, with two rooms on the upper floor. There is a date of 1889 carved into one of the roof trusses, suggesting that a major refurbishment of at least the house must have taken place at that time. At the time they bought the house its internal structure was in very poor condition and a demolition order had been served on it.

The kiln had stone walls with an open-slatted roof, with perforated tiles probably supported on a metal framework. By the time they purchased it the front wall had fallen into the road and the roof had fallen in with it.

Restoration has been on-going since purchase. Roger and Joanie started on the mill, converting it for domestic use. The ancillary equipment was put into and the remaining machinery was retained in situ. The hurst-frame occupied a quarter of the floor at ground floor level, with the mill stones in their casings above it. A simple kitchen with Rayburn was fitted into the ground floor and a lean-to housed the bathroom and a porch. The first floor was left undivided as a living room, and the open attic became a bedroom. The staircase was rebuilt, positioned between the milling end and the living end to make it possible to use when they realised their long-term aim of getting the mill working again. Rotted sections of the hurst-frame where they had been embedded in wet walls have been replaced. Once work to the mill was completed the cowshed was converted as bedrooms, living room and a WC. It was decided to restore rather than demolish the miller's house to provide guest accommodation. There are two bedrooms, a living room and the lean-to is used as kitchen and entrance lobby. The kiln was rebuilt as a single storey workshop and store.

All this work has been ruled by a strict policy of retaining as much as practical of the buildings and the evidence of their former use. Ken Major, then chairman of SPAB Wind and Watermills Section, made a report on what was significant, and research in Census records provided a sketchy outline of the mill's history. Roger attended the SPAB buildings repair course and found a local builder who proved to be equally sympathetic to good conservation practice, so that many small details have been retained and later building

work has been done with lime mortar. Roger and Jeannie have now established a charitable company, Adfer ban a Chwm (Revitalise hill and valley - see their website), to encourage and help the restoration of other derelict buildings in the area in order to address the problem of a serious shortage of affordable housing for local families.

#### A FARM WHEEL AT CWM PEN LLYDAN, NEAR LLANBRYNMAIR, POWYS.

Cwm Pen Llydan is a Grade II listed building in a remote location about 3 km from Llanbryn-mair, Powys. The tenant farmer in this photograph is Dafydd Roberts who came to work for Evan Morris Jones in 1919. The wheel was clearly there when he arrived but his



daughter Ceri doesn't remember seeing it as she grew up. The wooden launder mounted on the bank delivered the water from a nearby stream to the wheel which provided power to turn the butter churn in the pantry inside the house. All that remains today is the hole in the

wall which accommodated the drive shaft. There are some other modifications to the stream near the bank which allowed for washing clothes. This farmhouse was built in 1827 but the farm may be 17th century in origin.

The property which has never had electricity was bought by Jill and Dave Caterall five years ago with the intention of restoring it sympathetically. Luckily Ceri kindly made her photographs available so buildings and walls could be understood and repaired. Their next project is to install solar panels to work a submersible pump in a stream-fed underground tank.

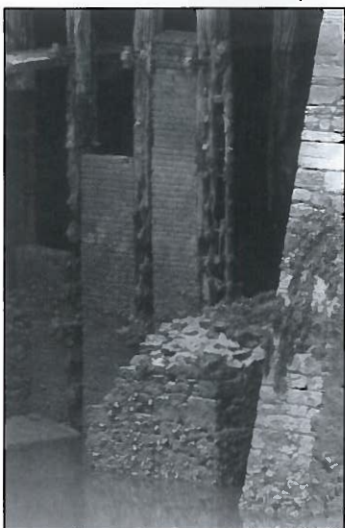
#### THAT TRIP TO BRITTANY Part 2

Among the attractive features of Brittany's landscapes are the many long inlets, river valleys drowned by the post-glacial rise of sea level. Their many tributary branches provide ideal sites for tide mills, and everywhere we travelled there were 'moulin' place-names - far too many to spend time looking at all of them. But of course, members of this Society are incapable of ignoring such sites entirely, and the planned itinerary was modified from time to time, merely in the cause of research, you understand.....



The Rance estuary, with St Malo guarding its narrow entrance, is navigable up to Dinan and beyond, with a large lock bypassing the Rance tidal barrage, built 1963-66 as the world's first tidal hydro-electric generation site. The barrage would have changed the sequence of rise and fall 'upstream', and would have altered, though not prevented, the working of tide mills. La Cale was a very large four-storey tide mill, clearly at one time an important player in the local economy, and possible a replacement for

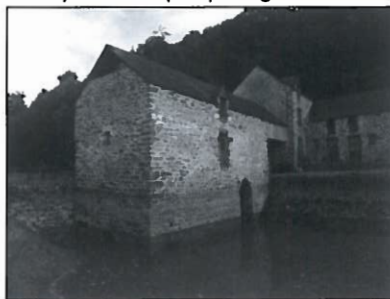
the several derelict windmill towers in the area. Now converted into flats, the wheel had been removed but its vacated "pit" had been retained, and the tidal pond converted into a marina. In another inlet at La Richardais, close to the



barrage, a millpond had been built against one bank; here the large mill building had been converted to a single dwelling. We were viewing across the inlet, and were intrigued and puzzled by the remains of a shutter arrangement, of which the frames and iron

brackets remained, guarding the seaward side of the very tall wheelpit opening.

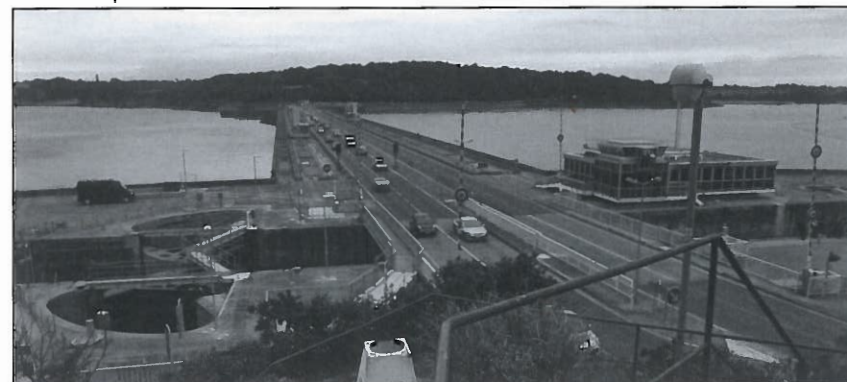
Our attention was drawn to the Moulin du Prat, near Pleudihen-sur-Rance on the east side of the estuary, by frequent tourist direction signs, though we found them difficult to follow, and eventually found ourselves walking a narrow footpath through the woods. The mill is a restoration work in progress; the building and tidal pond have survived largely intact, but much of the machinery appeared to have been damaged. The wheel had been rebuilt in a much



narrower form than would originally have occupied the wheelpit, and a new pit wheel had been fitted – the old one, with a missing segment, was leaning against the wall. Various bits of gearing and equipment lay outside the mill, and some portable machines have been placed in adjacent sheds. Also close to the village was another former tide mill, Moulin Mordreuc, now converted to a dwelling, which we didn't see.



The Rance Barrage itself, of course, is a form of tide mill, though dedicated to electricity generation rather than milling. After forty-five years of operation it is still the world's largest tidal power station, with twenty-four turbines capable of generating 240 Mw It is normally run at approximately 40% capacity, supplying an average 96 Megawatts and an annual output of approximately 600 GWh. The barrage is 750 m (2,461 ft) long and the tidal basin covers 9 sq miles.



ITEMS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER by December 28<sup>th</sup> 2011, please, to:



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