



A fantastic first for South Wales!

Ralph Morris looks back at the innovative Sailing Today-sponsored South Wales Boat Show



ABOVE: General view of the Show from the top of the tower

BELOW: Getting stuck in. John Goode afloat in a coracle



Factory fresh Jeanneaus from Network Yacht Brokers. Inset: The exciting new B25 from Custom Mouldings, Haverfordwest.



The inaugural South Wales Boat Show, in the magnificent setting of Margam Park, just east of Swansea, opened early on 17 June at the request of the police. Apparently the queue was backing up to the M4 motorway.

By opening time, at 1000, the car parks were filling up and organiser Ben Sutcliffe was delighted.

“My last exhibitor booked late Friday afternoon, which brings the total up to 100 – and we already have 18 bookings for next year.”

“One could hardly wish for a better vote of confidence,” said Andrew Davies (AM), Minister for Enterprise for the Welsh Assembly.

“The South Wales Boat Show is an excellent example of enterprise, innovation and networking. Major companies have backed the Show, because they realised it was an opportunity to promote and establish their goods”.

Foremost amongst them was Custom Mouldings of Letterston, Haverfordwest, who were exhibiting a brand new B25. Maybe not the most imaginative of names, but this prototype 25-footer, built in Wales is definitely worth a second look. With more than 20 demonstration sails already booked, Keith Evans is already delighted with the outcome. Exhibitors came from as far as Buckinghamshire (Witney Marine

with Polish-built Imexus and Viva) and Conwy (Network Brokers with a Sun Odyssey 2500 and Legend 35). Rob Woodward told us, “Our primary purpose in being there was to promote Jeanneau and our associates at Pembrokeshire Cruising and it’s provided lots of hot leads.” John Witney of Witney Marine, selling the Polish-built Imexus 27 (previously the Odin 820) had apparently made a sale and confirmed he had more interest here than at the London International Boat Show.

In addition to static yacht displays, Swansea Watersports offered Topper sailing on the Park’s lake, with a pontoon laid in a



planning a marina for next year!

The Wave (Swansea’s local radio station) broadcast live and there were enough chandlery outlets available to satisfy most tastes – including John Clibbert who having sold his shop, bought a lorry and has become a mobile chandler moving from Show to Show, collecting bankrupt and surplus stock along the way. “I’ve got three loads to pick up from Kidderminster when I leave here” he told ST. Many of the chandlers were accommodated in a large marquee, which also housed a small refreshments area, frequently caroused by the Baggywrinkle, Swansea Shantymen with working songs from the days of sail.

By Saturday evening well over 5,000 visitors had paid their £5 entrance fee and, though numbers tended to dwindle late in the afternoon in scorching 80° temperatures, all the exhibitors who spoke to ST said that they had “had a pretty good day”. Celtic Marine, after some initial problems getting one of their engines into the marquee, sold several outboards off



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Getting off to a good start: Sailing Today showing the way ahead. Witney Marine’s Imexus and Viva yachts in front of the house. Bargains galore on the numerous chandlery stands. Toppers afloat and ready to go.

matter of hours by VersaDock. Chris Wilson (of VersaDock) was inundated with enquiries and is

BELOW: When the Coastguard’s Watch stations were progressively closed down several years ago, the National Coastwatch Institution was formed by Tony King. Totally voluntarily funded, it first took over the derelict Bass Point coastguard station. It now maintains eyeball lookouts from Harlepool to Stepper Point, with over 1000 volunteer watchkeepers. Many of their sites have been taken over from the MCA, but they also fund new Lookout stations.



“The local Boat Show with something for everyone”



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: Our hardworking sales team setting up the stand before the morning rush. The lake where visitors could get afloat. The chunky Haber 800 makes its UK debut. The RNLI with an inshore rescue boat. An ideal show for trailer sailers. Richard Lewis and Hayley Woodhouse of Greens Marine, Welsh dealers for the Polish-built Imexus and Viva range of boats.



the stand. “If only 50 per cent of those who said they would visit our premises turn up, it will have been a real success,” they told us.

Sunday dawned grey, with a noticeable SW breeze troubling the placards that had been haphazardly mounted in Saturday’s windless conditions and an expectation, nurtured by the TV forecasts, that the weather was set fair for the duration. The organisers were concerned that visitors would prefer their gardens to a cold Margam

Park, but by late morning all the car parks were full to overflowing. Overall the Show attracted 12,000 visitors. Ben Sutcliffe told ST; “We’re pretty confident that, over the two days on the beautiful lawns of Margam Park, the exhibitors collectively sold over £1,000,000 of boats, equipment and services.”

By Sunday evening, there was little doubt in anybody’s mind that they would definitely be back for the 2007 event.

“Next year’s Show will be a day



longer, running from Friday 15 June to Sunday 17 June” said Ben.