

# Just passing through... Cowbridge welcomes a rather 'abnormal load'

**ON Sunday morning (January 9) the main road through Cowbridge groaned under the astonishing weight of what the authorities quaintly call 'an abnormal load'.**

In reality, the abnormal load was a giant 'deaerator vessel' and lorry weighing in at 120 tonnes – in fact there were two in convoy, the 'baby' one and its transporter tipping the scales at a mere 95 tonnes.

The deaerators were manufactured by the Bridgend company Vessco, and were heading to Barry docks for export to the Middle East. The haulage was arranged by Kings Haulage of Bristol.

Dave Salter, the production manager at Vessco, the manufacturing company in Bridgend, explained: "The biggest vessel is 22.5 metres in length, weighs 84.75 tonnes, on the outside has a diameter of 4.5 metres and is 20mm thick.

"All the items needed for manufacture were from UK suppliers and the vessels are now heading to the West Qurna oil field in Iraq.

"It has been a great effort by a highly skilled workforce."

As you can see from Glyn Evans' photo-

## REPORT by TIM CHAPMAN

graphs, the load had to tip-toe rather carefully through Cowbridge.

Western Power Distribution helped during the operation in Cowbridge to make sure power lines were not damaged. Power workers extended the height of cables crossing the main road using cherry pickers. They also had to raise the cables on Primrose Hill.

The electricity was off for less than 20 minutes in the town. The disruption in Cowbridge was minimal, with the convoy making its way through in less than 15 minutes.

Leigh Lewis, the abnormal loads officer for South Wales Police, explained: "The deaerators had to go through the town because they couldn't go under bridges on the M4 or A48.

"The load could not go along the Port Road from Culverhouse Cross into Barry, and instead went along Five Mile Lane with any branches that were obstructing it being cut away by the Vale Council as it made its way along.

"At the end of Five Mile Lane the convoy turned left along Port Road, before making its way down the Docks Link Road and Cardiff Road to the docks.

"The load left

Bridgend at 7.50am and arrived at the docks in Barry at 2pm.

"Everyone had done their homework well and the operation went very smoothly."

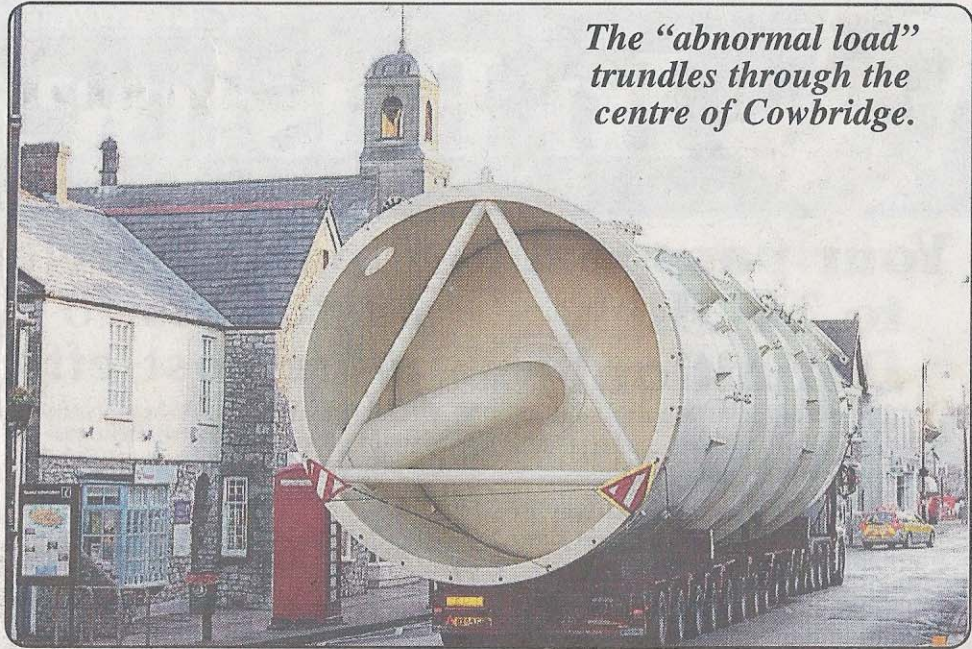
Businesses in Cowbridge only knew about the load late last week.

The chairman of the Chamber of Trade, Alun John, said: "We found out on Thursday. Why

didn't they let The GEM know what was happening so they could advertise it?

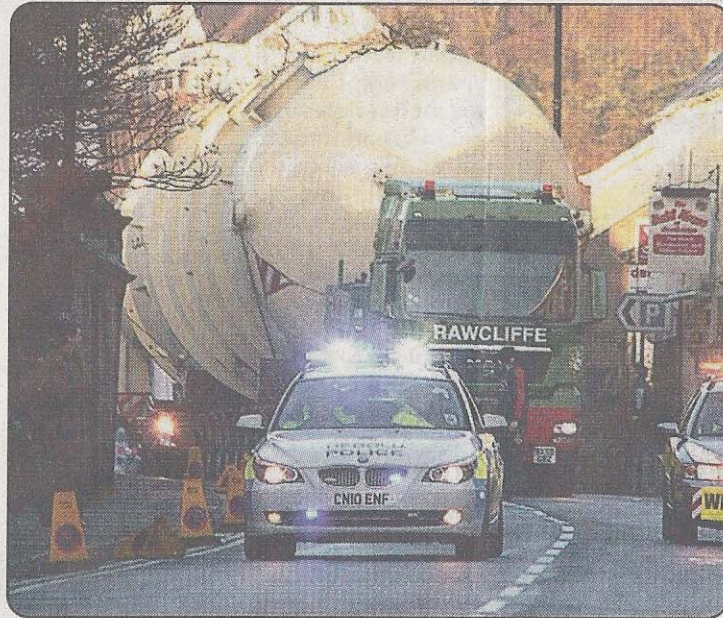
"My concern was that the weight of the load might cause a problem for the drains around the town hall, but I suppose engineers have checked out the route."

*Which leaves just one question: what is a deaerator? A deaerator removes air from water and then injects it into oil industry systems.*



*The "abnormal load" trundles through the centre of Cowbridge.*

## PHOTOGRAPHS by GLYN EVANS



*ABOVE: It's a really tight squeeze as the lorries with their giant load make their way through Cowbridge.*