



Canal &  
River Trust

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## PRESS RELEASE

*Celebrating the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Bicentenary (1816-2016)*

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### LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL SPECIAL BICENTENARY AWARDS PRESENTED

A towpath taskforce from Sefton, a Bingley youth charity and the Kennet heritage education boat are among eight groups and individuals presented with special awards by the Canal & River Trust to mark the bicentenary of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

The Trust, which cares for 2,000 miles of waterways, presented the awards at a celebration dinner at Blackburn's Dunkenhagh Hotel on Wednesday 19 October to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the completion of Britain's longest single man-made waterway.

Hosted by 'Super Slow Way' poet, the 'Bard of Barnsley', Ian McMillan, the evening marked the half way point of the epic voyage by the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society aboard the historic boat Kennet, replicating the first trans-Pennine journey by Lancashire and Yorkshire merchants in 1816.

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Kennet left Leeds on Saturday 15 October and enjoyed a spectacular welcome on Wednesday afternoon at Eanam Wharf, Blackburn, where they were greeted by two Lord Lieutenants, seven mayors, an Army band, church bells, and hundreds of school children. The crew then joined with more than 200 guests to enjoy a celebratory dinner, speeches and presentations in the evening.

The Inland Waterway Association (IWA) was awarded the North West Waterway Partnership Chair's Award for community engagement for their national campaign festival at the Eldonian Village, Liverpool, in June. The Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society were given the North West Waterway Manager's Award for their outstanding contribution.

Other special bicentenary award winners included Les Dundon, from Sefton, being named Volunteer of the Year; 17-year-old Dylan Manning, from Burnley, winning Young Volunteer of the Year; heritage education boat Kennet – Best Heritage project; Sefton Towpath Taskforce – Best Natural Environment project; JAMES group, from Bingley – Best Culture, Education and Learning project; and Pennine Cruisers – Best Enterprise project.

Richard Parry, Canal & River Trust chief executive, said: “This awards ceremony and the epic voyage by the Kennet crew are the culmination of a wonderful year of celebrations marking the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this incredible canal.

“We were delighted to receive dozens of high quality entries from individuals and organisations on both sides of the Pennines, demonstrating the Leeds & Liverpool Canal is truly the embodiment of a 21<sup>st</sup> century living waterway.

“So many wonderful people and organisations have helped to conserve, promote and improve the canal, we thought it was right, that in the year when the canal comes under the spotlight, we should mark their contribution and say a special ‘thank you’.”

## **Winners:**

### **1. Natural Environment - Sefton Towpath Taskforce (Merseyside)**

The Sefton Towpath Taskforce is a group of committed volunteers who've transformed the canal bank around Litherland into a beautiful community garden. For years the mooring site had been looking tired and rundown but now thanks to the volunteers, the area has become a haven for bees and butterflies, and a source of pleasure for the whole community.

Many local people worked on the project. This involved a major litter pick and clean-up, the creation of a new path into the garden and planting wildflower seeds along the boundary which has helped to keep out litter. A wooden bee hive sculpture has been restored and a herb planter provides pick-your-own fresh herbs for local residents and boaters.

### **2. Culture, Education and Learning - JAMES Group (Bingley)**

The Joint Activities and Motor Education Service (JAMES group) from Bingley is a charity which works with at risk or vulnerable young people across Bradford and Keighley. They use a 54 foot wide beam boat which is moored in Shipley as a work boat for training exercises and also run two other boats for festivals and special events.

### **3. Heritage - Historic Short Boat Kennet (Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society)**

The Leeds and Liverpool Canal Society volunteers who run the heritage education boat Kennet do an amazing job of informing and engaging with the public. More than 35,000 visitors, including many school groups, have visited the boat to learn about the canal since the society took it over in 2011. A Heritage Lottery Grant has helped to make its education displays even better and each year, the converted historic short boat can be found at dozens of waterway festivals and events. In this special bicentenary year, the Kennet and its enthusiastic crew have been a focal point for the anniversary celebrations.

### **4. Young Volunteer of the Year (under 25 years) - Dylan Manning (Burnley)**

Dylan Manning from Burnley is one of the young stars of the waterway. He is a highly dedicated volunteer with the Brightwork project in East Lancashire and gives many hours of his time working on projects to benefit his local area. Dylan has worked as a volunteer with the Trust for a number of years

and as a result has gained new skills and confidence which means that he has even put himself forwards to train as a future volunteer leader.

#### **5. Volunteer of the Year - Les Dundon (Sefton)**

Les Dundon regularly contributes more than 20 days a month to helping the Trust with a variety of tasks. He originally started volunteering with the Sefton Towpath Taskforce but his skills and talents mean he's taken on a range of roles from helping educate the next generation with the Explorers team to working with the Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics project across the country. He has represented the Trust at exhibitions and festivals, rolls his sleeves up when it's called for and his friendliness and infectious enthusiasm have inspired other volunteers to come forward.

#### **6. Enterprise - Pennine Cruisers (Skipton)**

Pennine Cruisers are so much more than a canal boat hire company. Skipton Canal Festival which each year attracts thousands of people over the May Bank Holiday weekend, owes its existence and vibrancy to the enterprising Clarke family who run the boating company. The festival brings together the local community and businesses and dozens of boaters who now have it as a must-have event in their cruising calendar. Pennine Cruisers are passionate advocates for the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and great supporters of the Canal & River Trust. Their influence as a force for good on the canal goes way beyond running a successful business.

#### **7. Outstanding Contribution (Waterway Manager's award) – the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society**

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society is a huge asset to the canal. The society's contribution to its promotion this year has been truly remarkable.

#### **8. Waterway Partnership Chair's Award - IWA National Campaign Festival at Eldonian Village 2016**

The North West Waterway Partnership Chair's award is a new annual prize presented to projects or individuals who make an outstanding contribution to local communities along the canal network. The Inland Waterways Association National Campaign Festival, staged to mark the canal's bicentenary at the Eldonian Village in Liverpool this summer, has left a very positive lasting legacy. The festival attracted more than 12,000 visitors, many new to the waterways. Dozens of children performed or presented artwork, local businesses and community groups engaged, new partnerships were formed and IWA-hosted canal clean-ups look set to continue long into the future.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors:**

The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation's third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites.

We believe that *living waterways transform places and enrich lives* and our role is to make sure there is always a place on your doorstep where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature.

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