



Canal &  
River Trust

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# PRESS RELEASE

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

Issued: 20 January 2017

## **LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL BICENTENARY LASTING LEGACY**

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal bicentenary celebrations last year have been hailed a great success by the Canal & River Trust and the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society.

Thousands of people got involved in dozens of festivals, special events and projects to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of England's longest man-made waterway. The main focus for the year was in October when the Kennet heritage education boat, run by the Canal Society, performed an epic nine-day ceremonial voyage from Leeds to Liverpool.

Hailed as one of the North's greatest ever water parties, church bells rang, bands played and 12 mayors, school children and well-wishers came out in their thousands to greet the boat on its 127-mile journey – a replica of the original procession by Lancashire and Yorkshire merchants in 1816.

The Trust's Explorers programme, engaging with children and young people, brought the wonders of the waterways to nearly 200 schools along the canal route.

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Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Canal & River Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address: First Floor North, Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1BB

And the Trust's *EveryMileCounts* campaign, supported by a £36,600 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, has restored or replaced dozens of missing or damaged mileposts along the canal.

Over £5,000 has been donated by individuals and groups to support the project and more than 100 volunteers have donated their time and expertise to painting and repair work, including damaged half and quarter mile posts.

Volunteer groups have come from many different organisations including Cookson's canal action team, Maghull in Bloom, Barnoldswick in Bloom, Scarisbrick Marina, Thwaites Brewery, the Bingley JAMES motor education group, Princes Trust Blackburn, U3A Aintree, volunteer lock keepers and towpath taskforce volunteers in Sefton, Wigan, Blackburn, Burnley and Skipton.

Chantelle Seaborn, local waterway manager for the Canal & River Trust, said: "The public response to the invitation to get involved in the bicentenary celebrations for this special canal was truly amazing. It proves that the Leeds & Liverpool is still valued as a living waterway for leisure activities, wildlife and heritage. There is a tremendous affection for the canal which was obvious in all the towns and villages along its route.

"We were particularly pleased by the response to the *EveryMileCounts* campaign which now leaves a lasting legacy from the celebrations. By the end of February we are expecting to have replaced 32 missing mileposts, 80 missing or damaged distance plates and over 100 missing half and quarter mile posts. We are particularly grateful to all those individuals and groups who have donated time and money to make this happen."

Although the canal is 200 years old, the original cast iron mile markers date back to the 1890s. They were installed as a response to legislation introduced to regulate canal freight tolls - the *Railway and Canal Rates, Tolls and Charges Order* of 1893. This prompted the whole of the canal to be re-surveyed and new mileposts, along with half and quarter mileposts, installed along the towpaths.

Over a century later and now gleaming in their new black and white paint, the milestones provide an attractive reference point for walkers, cyclists and boaters.

One of the highlights of the year was the re-naming of a lock at Bank Newton – the Mike Clarke Lock in honour of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society's founder and president Mike Clarke.

He said: "It is not often a historian gets involved with making history, but that was certainly the case for me with the celebrations for the bicentenary, in 2016, of the completion of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

"It was certainly a memorable year, with some 8000 visitors to the Canal Society's heritage

boat Kennet during the summer. Then the thousands who came to celebrate the event as Kennet passed along the canal in October showed just how valued the canal is by people who live along its banks. This re-creation of the first voyage from Leeds to Liverpool brought together people with a wide variety of interests in the canal and their community. It showed how worthwhile were the time and effort of both volunteers and Canal & River Trust staff, not just for the anniversary, but for promoting its wider use in the future.”

A film documenting the bicentenary highlights has been made by North Star Digital and is available to view on the Canal & River Trust website [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk).

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors:**

### **EveryMileCounts Summary**

	Merseyside	West Lancashire	Wigan	Lancashire (including Blackburn)	North Yorkshire	West Yorkshire
<b>New posts</b>	7	2	2	17	1	3
<b>New plaques</b>	10	4	6	24	15	9
<b>Total posts refurbished (including 1/2 &amp; 1/4)</b>	23	28	20	110	52	65

Approx miles of canal	15	15	11.5	45.5	17.25	23
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**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.

[www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk) @CanalRiverTrust @crtcomms

### **About the Heritage Lottery Fund**

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)  
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