



Canal &
River Trust

PRESS RELEASE

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

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LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL CELEBRATES 200 YEARS RE-CREATION OF 1816 INAUGURAL BOAT PASSAGE (Sat 15 – Sun 23 October, 2016)

England's longest man-made waterway, the Leeds & Liverpool Canal (127 miles long) celebrates its 200th anniversary this week. The Canal & River Trust and the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society are marking the occasion with the greatest long distance water party staged through northern England.

They are re-creating the inaugural 1816 boat passage by Lancashire and Yorkshire merchants and on Saturday (15 October) they set off from Leeds aboard the historic, former working boat, Kennet, on a nine day epic voyage – eventually arriving in Liverpool nine days later on Sunday 23 October.

Organised by the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society, which runs Kennet as an education boat, and supported by Canal & River Trust, which cares for the canal, the journey will be a culmination of a year of festivities and celebrations.

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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

Brass bands, 12 mayors, flotillas of boats, peels of church bells, hundreds of school children and crowds of well-wishers are expected to greet the boat as it makes its stately progress through Yorkshire, Lancashire and Merseyside, past mills and moorland, through Bingley, Skipton, Burnley, Blackburn, Chorley, Wigan, Burscough and some of the country's most spectacular scenery. The flotilla will have to negotiate 91 locks, climb nearly 500 feet over the Pennine hills and cruise through the one mile Foulridge Tunnel.

Flotillas "decorated with flags and streamers", accompanied by "hearty cheering of immense assemblage of spectators" greeted the original ceremonial boat journey in October 1816. That trip lasted only five days but this week the Canal Society crew will take a more leisurely pace so more people can celebrate in daylight hours.

Kennet trip organiser Harold Bond said: "Back in 1816, press reports state that the ceremonial first boat was greeted by peeling church bells, brass bands and cheering crowds, and canal barges were be-decked in flags and streamers.

"We are hoping to re-create that amazing atmosphere of celebration again. The response to our invitation to get involved has been brilliant so we have every chance of staging a celebration worthy of those entrepreneurial merchants and inventive engineers who were responsible for building this waterway two hundred years ago.

"Kennet will be decked out in bunting to symbolise the two great shire county roses. We are hoping to be greeted by a sea of red and white as our procession sails along."

Chantelle Seaborn, local waterway manager with the Canal & River Trust, said: "This epic boat journey is a wonderful way to mark the 200th anniversary of one of the most significant waterways in Britain. The opening of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal played a key role in Britain's Industrial Revolution and encouraged the development of the textile industries in Lancashire and West Yorkshire.

"Today there are fewer industries along its banks, but the canal still brings many benefits of leisure, tourism, nature and regeneration to the communities along its route. There is tremendous pride in our wonderful heritage and we are delighted so many towns, cities, schools and organisations have come forward to be part of this incredible long distance celebration."

Canal History: The original five day journey in 1816 represented a triumph of grit and determination for getting the job done. There were numerous debates about the exact route of the canal. Construction began in 1770 at either end and by 1777 the canal was open from Leeds to Gargrave and from Liverpool to Parbold. At this stage the money ran out and work stopped until 1790. The route was then altered to take in the growing industrial towns of East Lancashire but it was not until 1816 that the last section between

Wigan and Johnson's Hillock, near Chorley, was finished, finally creating a trans-Pennine link between the two great cities.

In its heyday, the canal carried cotton, coal, wool, limestone, sugar and other vital commodities through the rapidly expanding industrial communities of Lancashire and Yorkshire. From the Second World War onwards, it suffered declining cargo traffic and narrowly escaped closure in the 1970s. Two hundred years on, the canal is still cherished but now as an oasis for wildlife, a thriving centre for tourism, recreation and leisure and a catalyst for regeneration.







For more details about the bicentenary celebrations go to the Canal & River Trust website <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-regions/north-west-waterways/leeds-and-liverpool-bicentenary>

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- 1. A FULL LIST OF PUBLIC EVENTS AND MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES IS AVAILABLE IN A SEPARATE ATTACHED NOTE. For what's happening in your area, please open "Kennet event listings".**
- 2. BLACK AND WHITE HISTORIC MOVING IMAGES AND STILLS PHOTOS ARE AVAILABLE. Please contact Lynn Pegler email: lynn@peglercommunications.co.uk. Mobile 07783 686246.**

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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