

PRESS RELEASE

Issued: 6 June 2025

LIFT OFF! ANDERTON BOAT LIFT CELEBRATES ITS 150TH ANNIVERSARY WITH A FABULOUS VICTORIAN FAIR

Lift Off for a fabulous Victorian Fair on 26 & 27 July 2025 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Anderton Boat Lift, the world's first major commercial boat lift, Cheshire's Cathedral of Canals, in Northwich.

Raising the roof at this unique Scheduled Monument, the Canal & River Trust charity will be transporting visitors back in time to 1875 by hosting a spectacular free family festival over the anniversary weekend.

Visitors will be able to enjoy magical, historical activities and events, including Victorian games, circus entertainers, fairground organs and slot machines, jugglers, aerialists, stilt walkers, illusionists and circus workshops.

Guided tours and delicious food will be available and for a small fee, guests can also book one of the popular boat trips along the River Weaver Navigation or join a Lego 'make and take' workshop to create an exclusive 150th anniversary model of the boat lift to take home.

Designated one of the Seven Wonders of the Waterways, Anderton Boat Lift was designed by engineer Edwin Clark to connect the Trent & Mersey Canal with the River Weaver Navigation 50 feet below and opened on 26 July 1875. The lift has successfully carried boats between the two waterways for most of its 150 years. It was converted to an electric system of pulleys and counterweights in 1908 but has only been completely out of action for a couple of decades in the 1980s and 1990s due to safety concerns about corrosion.

At the turn of the Millennium, more than £7 million was raised to fund a major restoration and the boat lift began operating again on 26 March 2002, with an official opening the

Canal & River Trust

E: press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk **W:** www.canalrivertrust.org.uk **Twitter:** [@CanalRiverTrust](https://twitter.com/CanalRiverTrust)

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: National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port.

following year by HM King Charles, then Prince of Wales, on 28 April 2003. Since then, it has attracted thousands of visitors to Northwich to marvel at the incredible engineering masterpiece and enjoy a trip aboard the Edwin Clark boat, named after the lift's designer.

Jon Horsfall, Canal & River Trust North West director said: "We would love to see as many people as possible join us to celebrate this special anniversary. Anderton Boat Lift took the canal world by storm when it formally opened to boat traffic on 26 July 1875. It was a huge success and attracted distinguished engineers, scientists and guests from all over the world to marvel at the ingenuity of its creation.

"Today it is an incredibly important part of our industrial heritage but preserving it as a working monument is increasingly a challenge. A major planned upgrade has been postponed due to spiralling costs and sadly there has been a problem with the lift gates for the last six months. We are hopeful this will be sorted out by our charity's engineers very soon and the boat lift can resume its task of transporting around 3,000 boats a year between the two waterways. It would be wonderful if this could happen in time for its big birthday celebration. We are keeping our fingers crossed!

"Whatever happens we will enjoy a fantastic anniversary celebration for a truly unique and much-loved, special historic structure."

The Victorian Fair will be open 9.30am – 4.30pm each day. During the main summer season, Anderton Boat Lift and visitor centre is open six days a week (closed Thursdays), 9.30am – 4.30pm, offering four fascinating guided boat trips a day along the River Weaver Navigation. There is a charge for boat trips, but entrance to the visitor exhibition, shop and café are free.

During the rest of the summer season, visitors will be able to enjoy a host of other fantastic events, including Pirates Weekend (June 21/22) and Steampunk Lift Off Weekender (September 20/21).

For more information about visiting, check out the Canal & River Trust website: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/anderton-boat-lift-visitor-centre> or call 01606 786777.

- ends-

For further media requests please contact:

Lynn Pegler

m 07783 686246 e lynn.pegler@canalrivertrust.org.uk

or Cath Logan (Marketing Manager)

m 07788898052 e cath.logan@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Canal & River Trust

Notes to Editors

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day.

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk @CanalRiverTrust

History of the Anderton Boat Lift

1875. Anderton Boat Lift was opened in 1875 to connect the Trent & Mersey Canal, and routes to the Potteries, with the River Weaver Navigation, which links into the River Mersey and the Port of Liverpool. It replaced the need for extensive warehousing, three double inclined planes and four salt chutes at Anderton Basin and provided easy passage from one waterway to another without the need to transfer goods between boats.

Hydraulic engineer Edwin Clark was commissioned by Sir Edward Leader Williams and the Weaver Navigation trustees to design the lift. He created an impressive cast iron frame, encasing two counter balanced caissons, each propelled from below by a giant hydraulic ram or cylinder. However, the use of salty river water as a hydraulic fluid caused major corrosion problems and in the 1880s and 90s the lift was out of action on several occasions for repairs.

1908. Eventually the Weaver trustees and their engineer Col. John Saner decided to replace the hydraulic rams with electric motors and a system of counterweights and overhead pulleys that would allow the caissons to operate independently of one another. Construction work was carried out around the busy boat lift and the new super structure eventually opened in 1908, with the loss of only 49 operating days.

The Boat Lift then continued to operate successfully for another six decades, with the aid of regular repairs and replacement of the wire ropes. Commercial traffic on the waterways declined during the 1950s and 60s, and in 1983 extensive corrosion was uncovered during repainting. The lift was declared structurally unsound and closed.

2002. After consultation with English Heritage, it was decided to restore Anderton Boat Lift to hydraulic operation again, using specialist hydraulic oil. The counterweights were removed and rearranged in the grounds as a maze for visitors to enjoy. The restoration project took two years and Anderton Boat Lift re-opened as a visitor attraction on Tuesday 26 March 2002, complete with a new glass-topped trip boat, the Edwin Clark, to offer sight-seeing trips through the lift and along the river. A new visitor centre was then constructed and the whole visitor destination was officially opened the following spring by HRH The Prince of Wales on 28 April 2003.