


# 1 The Leeds & Liverpool Canal




These notes are designed to help you with homework and other projects. It will help you to find out:

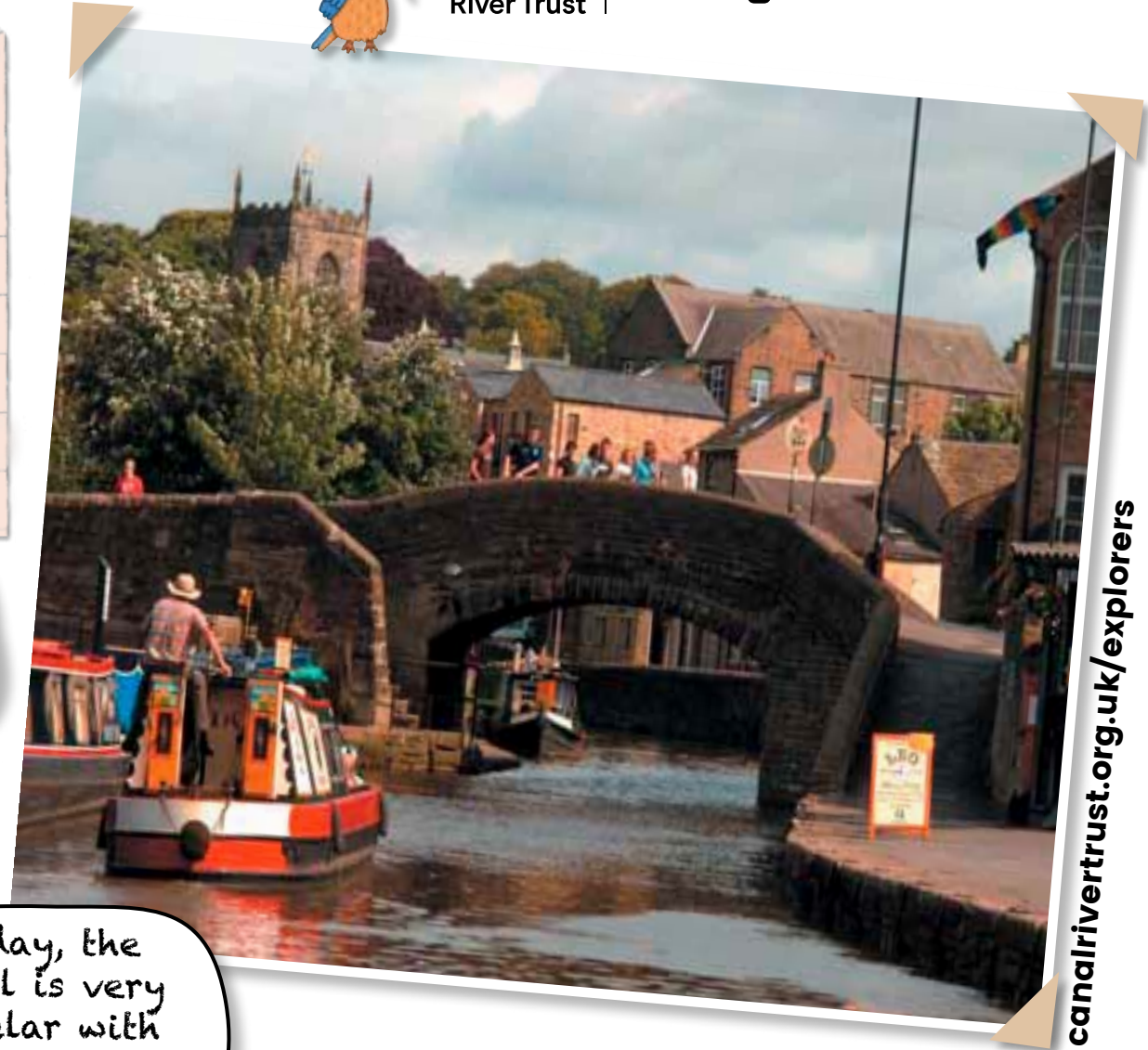
- ✦ Why the Leeds & Liverpool Canal was built
- ✦ Who built it and when
- ✦ Why it took so long to complete.



The canal is 127  $\frac{1}{4}$  miles long (205 km) - the longest in Britain!



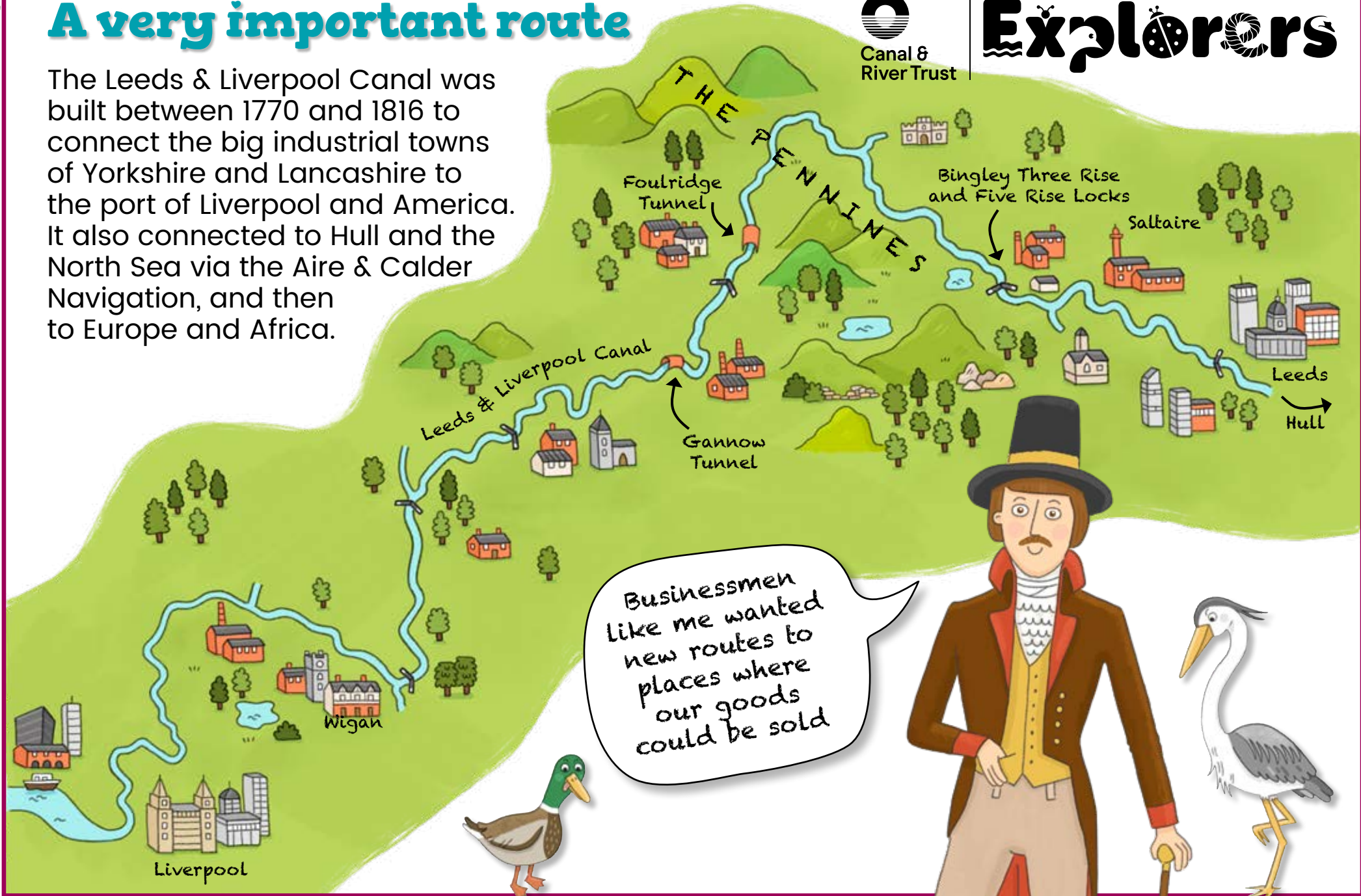
Today, the canal is very popular with holiday-makers



The Leeds & Liverpool Canal was once a vital route connecting the east to the west of England, and the rest of the world by sea.

## A very important route

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal was built between 1770 and 1816 to connect the big industrial towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire to the port of Liverpool and America. It also connected to Hull and the North Sea via the Aire & Calder Navigation, and then to Europe and Africa.



## Big problems

Building the canal was very difficult because it had to cross the high Pennine Hills. 200 years ago, no one had done this before.

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal was built in stages and took 46 years to complete. Several canal engineers worked on it. John Longbotham (died 1801) was the first to be chosen.



All the digging was done with picks and shovels

I could dig a trench measuring 36 ft (10 m), 3 ft (1 m) wide and 3ft deep (1 m) in a day

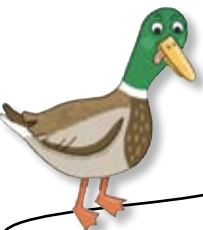
All the engineers had to solve big engineering problems such as how to get boats up and down steep hills and valleys, and how to tunnel through very hard rock.

None of the engineers did the building themselves. That was the job of tens of thousands of men (called navvies) and some women who worked on canals all over England.

# 4 Bingley Five Rise Locks

John Longbotham had to work out how to get boats up and down the steep valley of the River Aire. He did it by designing two great flights of locks at Bingley.

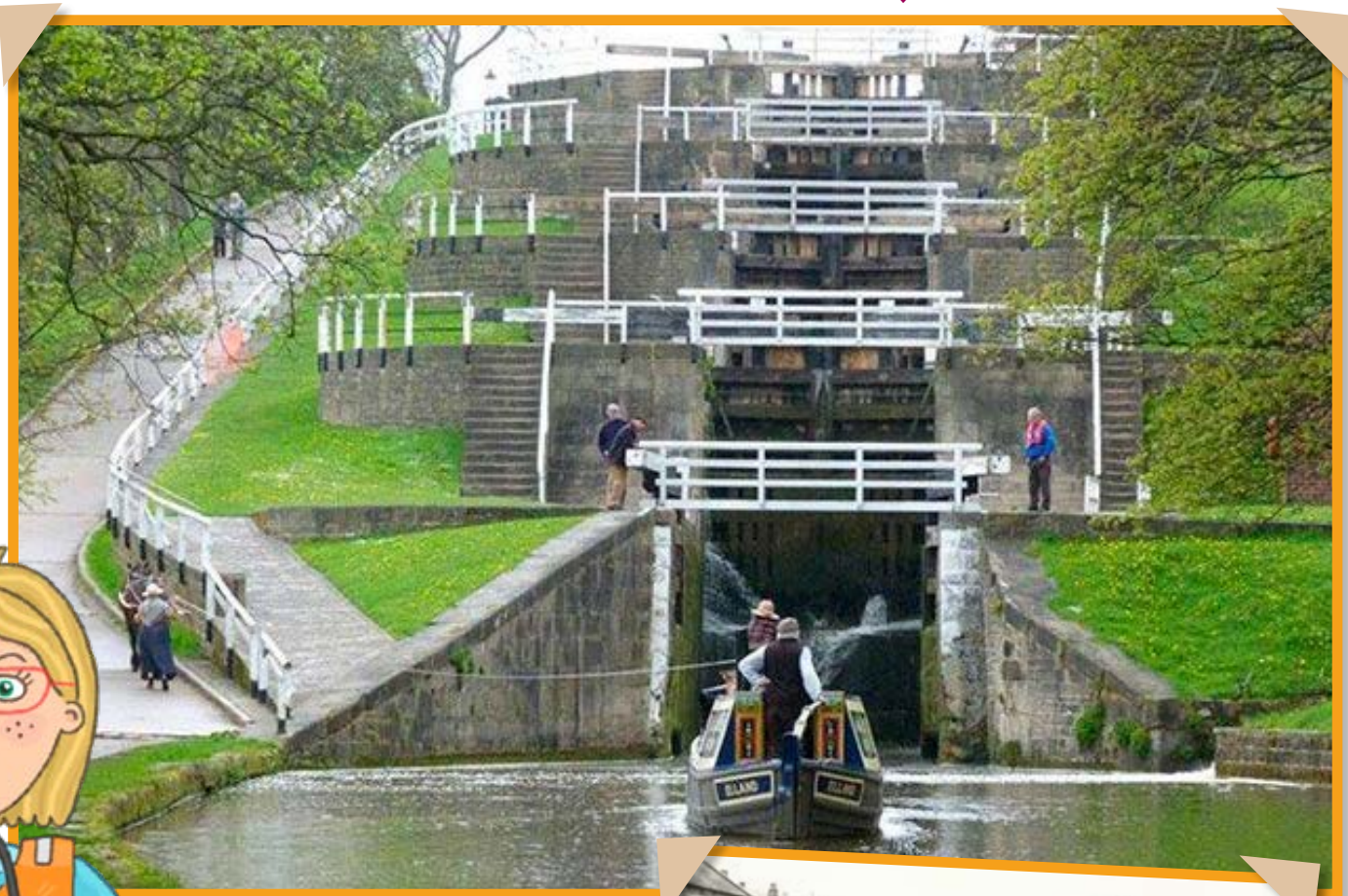
Bingley Five Rise and Bingley Three Rise Locks are built like a giant staircase. Five locks open directly from one to another, with the top gate of one forming the bottom gate of the next one.



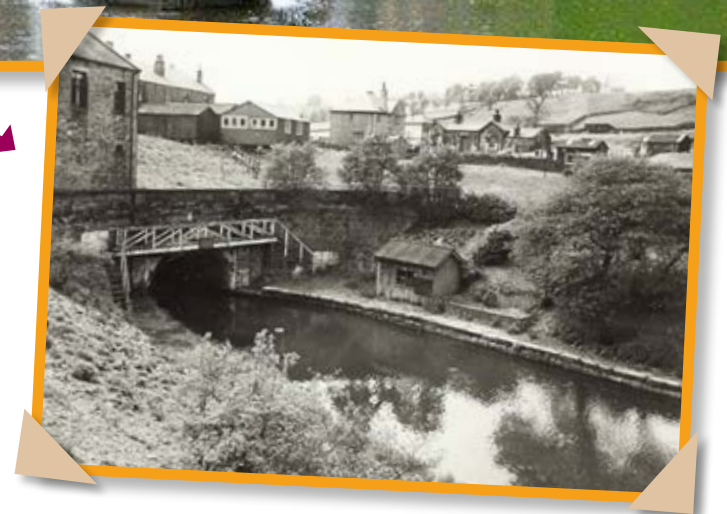
The locks raise boats 60 ft (18 m). That's almost the height of five double-decker buses



Bingley Five Rise Locks



Foulridge Tunnel was another challenge. The rock was poor and the tunnel collapsed many times.



## 5 Cargo and boats

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal was built to transport raw materials such as coal and manufactured goods to the important ports of Liverpool and Hull. From there, it was transferred from barges to ships and sent abroad.



People also used the canal to move local goods such as treacle and cheese to towns along the route. Each town had a wharf for loading and unloading goods and warehouses for storage.

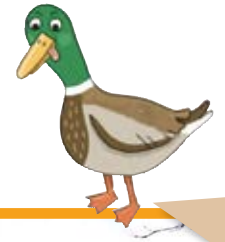


You can still see old warehouses.

The great port of Liverpool where ships waited to take goods to all parts of the world.



The Leeds & Liverpool is a broad canal with short locks designed for wide boats (barges).



Sir Titus Salt, a Victorian industrialist, built his textile mills on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. Fleeces and cloth were loaded and unloaded straight from the boats.

## 6 Family life

The Leeds & Liverpool was a long distance canal. In 1900, it took 56 hours to get from Leeds to Liverpool by boat.

The cabins of Leeds & Liverpool short boats were too small for big families. The crew was usually two men who lived on the boat full time.

Burscough was the main centre for the families of long-distance boatmen. There were pubs where families exchanged gossip and bought supplies, and stables where horses were fed and rested overnight.



### The Leeds & Liverpool Canal today

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal was very successful and was still used for carrying cargo until the 1980s - much longer than most canals. But as it became cheaper and quicker to deliver goods by road and railway, it was used less often.

At Burscough, there was a hospital for sick horses

After the Second World War, people interested in restoring old canals worked hard to keep the canal in use.

