



## PRESS RELEASE

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

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### **'MR LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL' MIKE CLARKE HONOURED WITH LOCK NAMING CEREMONY**

Mike Clarke, renowned canal historian, founder and president of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society, was honoured during the canal's bicentenary year with a lock being named after him near Gargrave in North Yorkshire.

Bank Newton Lock no 38 was re-named the Mike Clarke Lock in tribute to his tremendous contribution to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal – a close association which spans nearly five decades.

At the event, Mike, 67, also launched a new enlarged edition of his popular book *'The Leeds & Liverpool Canal, a history'*.

Born in Liverpool, his love affair with England's longest man-made waterway began in 1972 when he acquired a traditional Leeds & Liverpool boat and spent the next five years living aboard, restoring it to its original condition.

Living and breathing canal life, he was also fascinated by the industries associated with the waterway. For many years, he was employed as a restoration engineer, eventually working at the Lancashire Textile Museums in Helmshore which provided a useful technical background for his extensive historical research. His first book on the canal's history was published in 1990.

After that, he launched himself as a freelance industrial historian and has never looked back. Over the years he has published a range of books and articles, made several TV appearances, including a programme for Bavarian television, spoken on canals at conferences across Europe and in China, travelled extensively in Eastern Europe. He serves on the committee of Inland Waterways International and from May this year will be president of the Railway & Canal Historical Society.

In 1997 Mike became the driving force behind the founding of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society, with the aim of encouraging better public knowledge and understanding of our waterway heritage. He now serves as its president, having seen the society grow into a flourishing group with more than 170 members.

The Canal & River Trust, the charity which cares for 2,000 miles of canals, decided the canal's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary year would be a fitting moment to create a lasting tribute to his achievements by re-naming a lock in his honour.

Chantelle Seaborn, North West Waterway Manager for the Trust said: "Mike Clarke is 'Mr Leeds & Liverpool'. More than anyone else, he has promoted this wonderful waterway to the public. His energy and enthusiasm have inspired hundreds of adults and children over the decades. He has generously shared his time, expertise, knowledge and resources with countless individuals and organisations, including the Trust.

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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

“I cannot think of a more fitting tribute to this remarkable man than to leave a permanent reminder of his wonderful contribution on a lock of the canal that has become part of his DNA.”

When invited to choose a lock, Mike decided on Bank Newton overlooking the Yorkshire Dales National Park because of its beautiful countryside.

He said: “I have visited canals over much of the world and have rarely found anywhere that compares with the awe-inspiring view over the Dales offered by the Leeds & Liverpool Canal at Bank Newton in Yorkshire.

“To have a lock named after you is a great honour and I very much appreciate the gesture from the Canal & River Trust.”

He and other VIP guests arrived at the lock naming ceremony aboard the Kennet, a specially converted education boat which Mike and other canal society volunteers use to tour along the Leeds & Liverpool promoting its heritage to visitors.

Speeches by Canal & River Trust North West Waterway Partnership chairman, Bob Pointing and the Trust’s national chief executive Richard Parry were followed by a performance of ‘As Torrents in Summer’ by Gisburn Singers.

Mike's new book can be purchased directly from him, and details are on his website [www.mikeclarke.myzen.co.uk](http://www.mikeclarke.myzen.co.uk), or at £40 through bookshops, ISBN 0-9519236-8-4.

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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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