



PRESS RELEASE

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London's Regent's Canal celebrates its 200th birthday

A stretch of the Regent's Canal from Little Venice to Camden, named after the Prince Regent, later King George IV, is today celebrating its 200th birthday.

The two-mile section was formally opened on 12 April, 1816 and two centuries later, the Canal & River Trust – the charity that cares for the waterway – together with the Friends of Regent's Canal and the London Canal Museum will be marking the anniversary.

Built to fuel Britain's industrial revolution as a significant trade link in the 19th Century, the canal pre-dates iconic London buildings such as Big Ben and survived bombings in the Second World War. Following a period of decline in the mid-twentieth century, due to fierce competition following the evolution of the railway network, the canal is now experiencing a renaissance as a leisure, transport and nature destination, with more people using it than at any time in its history.

Following the opening of waterway between Little Venice and Camden, the remaining length of the canal from Camden to Limehouse was opened in 1820.

Sam Thomas, Canal & River Trust customer operations manager, said: "The Regent's Canal is used more now than any time in its history. We always refer to it as being one London's best kept secrets but you could argue that it's not much of a secret anymore. The section from Little Venice to Camden that we're commemorating encapsulates what the canals in the capital are all about. In just a few miles it traverses through such an array of locations and communities. There's a paradox; a 200-year old space that cuts right through the heart of one of the most modern cities in the world. It's an industrial marvel, but full of nature. And it's quiet, but you're never far from the throng of London. It's also amazing to consider how the city has evolved around the canal over the last two centuries. We're delighted to be joining the Friends of Regent's Canal and the London Canal Museum to celebrate this stretch's 200th anniversary. The success of the canal is built on the people that love and use it, so we hope it continues to go from strength to strength."

An event to celebrate the anniversary is being held at the Regent's Canal Information Centre on the canal side in Camden. More information on the history of the canal can also be found at the London Canal Museum in King's Cross.

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Ian Shacklock from the Friends of Regent's Canal, said: "This event will serve as a warm-up for bigger celebrations in four years time and it is an important milestone for Camden Town which became connected to the Midlands in 1816. I hope this will raise public awareness of all the hard work and engineering skill that went into the canal's construction and that it will encourage people to visit the Regent's Canal Information Centre at this historic site."

Roger Squires, trustee at the London Canal Museum, said: "The Regent's Canal provides a central focus for the London Canal Museum's displays. Our new Regent's Canal display identifies what a major development opportunity it offered to the northern fringe of London when it was built between 1812 and 1820. Although it has changed drastically since that time, and found many new uses, it still offers a key feature in the townscape and continues to provide an amazing local resource."

A brief history of the Canal:

- The Regent's Canal Company was formed in 1812 to cut a new canal through London
- The canal took its name from the Prince Regent, later King George IV
- Progress suffered a setback in 1815 after Thomas Homer, who was responsible for proposing the plan for the canal, embezzled funds
- The same year also saw fighting break out between canal workers and gardeners on land adjacent to the canal
- 1874 saw a famous incident, when a boat carrying gunpowder blew up, destroying Macclesfield Bridge, not far from Regent's Park. The bridge is now known as Blow-up Bridge
- The stretch was used to carry timber, coal, building materials and food in and out of London
- The Regent's lost commercial traffic to the railways and by the 1960's, lorries were taking much of the rest
- Despite this the late twentieth-century saw a renaissance of the canal as leisure, transport and nature destination

Today, the canal is one of the busiest in the country, enjoyed by millions of people each year, using it for boating, cycling, walking and sightseeing. It's home to an array of wildlife from herons and swans to fish and terrapins. A number of trip boat operators also navigate the route from Little Venice to Camden, which takes in the idyllic channel into the Maida Tunnel, the beautiful Lisson Grove Moorings, Regent's Park, London Zoo, the famous floating Chinese Restaurant before turning left into Dead Dog Basin at Camden. In recent times major Hollywood blockbusters, such as *Jason Bourne* and *Spectre*, have used the canal as a back drop

For more information visit canalrivertrust.org.uk <http://www.canalmuseum.org.uk/>
<http://friendsofregentscanal.org/>

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