



Canal &
River Trust

DISCOVER THE HIDDEN SECRETS OF BRITAIN'S MUCH-LOVED WATERWAYS

14 October, 2016

Next month (Nov) the charity, Canal & River Trust, launches its national programme of free, public open days offering behind the scenes peaks at some of our most extraordinary waterway locations in England and Wales.

The 12 open days, part of a six-month, £43 million restoration and repair programme to canals and rivers across the country, are a great way to see the charity's 'hidden history', admire the expert workmanship that went into making the canals over 200 years ago and meet the engineers keeping them working today.

This year the public will be given the rare chance to see up close some of the finest examples of working industrial heritage in the world, whether climbing down into the iconic Marple Lock Flight on the Peak Forest Canal, walking along a 800-metre drained stretch of Wales' picturesque Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal or discovering the history of St. Pancras Lock in the bustling centre of London.

Each open day provides the opportunity for local communities to learn about the history and heritage of their area from one of the charity's skilled heritage advisers, engineers and other workers who attend the events and provide free tours. The charity's army of passionate volunteers will also be on hand to share their unique knowledge of the waterways and surrounding area with visitors.

Richard Parry, chief executive of the Canal & River Trust, says: "The Canal & River Trust cares for a remarkable network of historic waterways which are still working just as they were designed to 200 years ago. Keeping them open and safe requires a huge amount of planning, investment and craftsmanship and involves a wide range of knowledge and expertise, from civil engineers and hydrologists to heritage experts and ecologists.

"By showcasing this work to the public we can give them a glimpse into the craftsmanship of the waterways' original 18th Century design and explain the scale of the Canal & River Trust's work to care for them now. We hope this will inspire more people to get on board and support our mission to unlock the potential of every stretch of our canals and rivers."

Last year the Trust's construction team unearthed some weird and wonderful items when it drained the canals in preparation for the essential works. Items included a bag of bullets, WW2 hand grenade, 16ft dead python and a Volkswagen Camper Van.

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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

Richard added: "The team will once again be recording what they find and we're intrigued to find out what they unearth this year!"

As part of its maintenance programme, the Trust will be working on around 164 lock gates across the country. The new lock gates are made in the Trust's specialist workshops at Bradley in the West Midlands and Stanley Ferry in Yorkshire.

Lock gate making and fitting is a skilled and traditional trade and one that remains essential to the waterways. Lock gates are constructed with tremendous strength as they have to control huge water pressures, take the hard usage they get from the thousands of boats which use them each year and survive for a long time underwater and at the mercy of the elements. Each lock gate is hand-crafted by a skilled team of carpenters and made from sustainably-sourced British oak. A single lock gate weighs on average 3.6 tonnes, can take up to 20 days to make and has a working life of 25-30 years.

To find out more about the Open Day programme and the events happening near you visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/open-days

ENDS

For media requests, interviews, images and footage please contact:

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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.

The Canal & River Trust carries out a year round programme of works to maintain and repair the 2,000 miles of canals and rivers in its care so they can be enjoyed by the 33,000 boats and 10 million towpath visitors each year. Many of the biggest projects are carried out during the winter months to minimise the impact on waterway users. This year, essential maintenance will include the replacement of worn-out lock gates and repairs to aqueducts, reservoirs and tunnels.

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Event locations and dates:

OPEN DAY LOCATION	OPEN DAY DATE
Trent & Mersey Lock 72, Middlewich Branch, Northwich	Nov 26 th , 2017
Elland Road Bridge, Calder & Hebble, Leeds	Nov (specific date TBC)
Marple Lock Flight, Peak Forest Canal, Marple, near Stockport	Jan 21 st , 2017
Audlem Lock, Shropshire Union Canal, near Nantwich	Jan 21 st , 2017
Llangattock relining project bridges 115-116, Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal, near Abergavenny	Jan 28 th , 2017
Tringford Pumping Station, Grand Union Canal	Jan (specific date TBC)
Doncaster Lock, Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigations	Feb (specific date TBC)
Junction Lock 17, Trent & Mersey Canal, Fradley	Feb (specific date TBC)
Stoke Bruerne	Feb 4 th & 5 th , 2017
St Pancras Lock, Kings Cross, London	Feb 4 th & 5 th , 2017
Turner Wood Lock, Chesterfield Canal	Feb 25 th & 26 th , 2017
Stourbridge Lock 3, Dudley Canal	March 11 th , 2017

*Please note events marked TBC are yet to have confirmed event dates. Please continue to check www.canalrivertrust.org.uk for updates.