



PRESS RELEASE

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MAKEOVER FOR HISTORIC BOAT AT STOKE BRUERNE

Stoke Bruerne's oldest floating resident has recently received some important conservation work from the charity, Canal & River Trust and the Friends of the Canal Museum.

Built in 1935, *Sculptor* is one of just a few historic working boats remaining on the canal and moors along the Grand Union Canal just outside the Canal Museum. Originally owned by the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company *Sculptor* was used to carry a variety of cargo such as cotton and coal from London to the Midlands. During WWII *Sculptor* was called into action to help with firefighting duties in London and helped extinguish fires caused by incendiary bombs.

As part of the work *Sculptor* was taken out of the water so that weeds, muck and slime could be cleaned off the bottom of the boat. Once on dry land the boat was inspected and, after being given a clean bill of health, was repainted. The metalwork within the boat was also given a fresh bright red paint job and a new stove and chimney was installed.

Boat conservation is an important part of the work of the museum. Last year the museum received funding from Museum Development East Midlands to work with accredited conservator, George Monger, to develop a conservation management plan for *Sculptor*.

George said: "As part of the museum collection it's important to keep *Sculptor* looking good but it's also important that we preserve her history and the stories she can tell through her fabric."

While *Sculptor* was out of the water George spotted some mystery bolts on her hull that may be the last evidence of her days as a fire boat. Perhaps they were the bolts that held her hoses.

The museum has now been successful in applying for funding from the Association of Independent Museums for George to continue to work with the volunteer team on *Sculptor*.

Stephanie Furniss, from the Canal Museum, said: "It's lovely to see *Sculptor* out on the canal and it always creates a talking point when people come and visit the museum or enjoy a pot of tea in the café. Having a museum exhibit out on the canal really helps to tell the history of the waterways and, now it's had a bit of makeover, it looks even more impressive."

Kathryn Dodington, from the Friends of the Canal Museum, said: "Not many people realise that before roads and railways, canals were the motorways of their day and if it wasn't for boats like *Sculptor*, it would have taken months to send goods up and down the country. It's thanks in part to the care and dedication of volunteers that *Sculptor* has survived so well and can still help us tell the history of our waterways."

For more information on the Canal Museum visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

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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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