



PRESS RELEASE

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

Issued: 16 May 2017

LOST LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL MILEPOST RESCUED FROM RAILWAY SALEROOM AUCTION

One of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal's heritage mileposts has been rescued from a railway memorabilia auction and restored to its rightful place on the towpath in East Lancashire, thanks to the eagle-eyed chairman of the Canal & River Trust's North West Partnership.

Last year the Canal & River Trust charity, which cares for 2,000 miles of canals, launched an appeal to restore or replace all the missing and damaged mileposts along the 127 mile canal as part of the Leeds & Liverpool's 200th birthday celebrations.

The Trust's North West Partnership chairman, Bob Pointing, was involved in launching the *EveryMileCounts* bicentenary campaign but by complete coincidence came across the missing canal milepost while checking out the catalogue for a sale of railway antiques at a saleroom in Poynton, Cheshire.

He worked with the Trust's legal team to get the item withdrawn from the sale and negotiated for it to be returned to its rightful owners, the Canal & River Trust.

And this month after being carefully restored and repainted by volunteers, the milepost has finally been returned to its original location on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal towpath at Church, near Accrington.

Bob Pointing said: "It was amazing stroke of luck to come across the milepost advertised in the sale catalogue. I'm a bit of a railway history bore and was intending to attend the auction in search of some old Furness railway items.

"I was so surprised when I saw one of OUR mileposts offered in the sale with a note suggesting it would make 'a useful garden ornament'! Presumably it must have been stolen or mislaid at some point. Sadly it is too late to find out who the culprits are after all these years but we are just delighted to have the milepost restored to its rightful place alongside the canal."

This particular milepost is significant because it marks the half way point of the trans-Pennine canal – the longest man-made waterway in England. Since the *EveryMileCounts* project started over a year ago, £5,770 has been donated by individuals and groups, and more than 100 volunteers have donated their time and expertise to painting and repair work, including damaged half and quarter mile posts.

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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

The project has resulted in the restoration of 32 missing mileposts, 80 missing or damaged distance plates and over 100 missing half and quarter mile posts.

Although the canal is 200 years old, the original cast iron mile markers date back to the 1890s. They were installed as a response to legislation introduced to regulate canal freight tolls - the *Railway and Canal Rates, Tolls and Charges Order* of 1893. This prompted the whole of the canal to be re-surveyed and new mileposts, along with half and quarter mileposts, installed along the towpaths.

Over a century later and now gleaming in their new black and white paint, the milestones provide an attractive reference point for walkers, cyclists and boaters.

To find out more information about donating or volunteering with the Trust or to view a short film about the bicentenary celebrations, check out the Canal & River Trust website 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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