



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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29<sup>th</sup> January 2018

Images available via dropbox -

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/eutusocm4medykn/AAAGBiV2sTxsZkliQuHJwcUa?dl=0>

### **UNLOCKING LEEDS WITH STORIES OF THE PAST**

- Unique arts event on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> February as part of National Storytelling Week
  - Free public open weekend planned for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> February
- New handmade lock gates being installed at the first lock on the Aire & Calder Navigation at Leeds Dock

To celebrate the old lock gates being replaced with brand new handmade gates at Lock 1 on the Aire & Calder Navigation, the Canal & River Trust is unlocking the stories from the past during a special arts evening and open weekend.

During National Storytelling Week on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> February from 6pm, people can travel back in time to hear waterway stories from the past from a giant talking storybook and a haunted unknown navy, one of the men who helped to build the navigation, deep inside the dark lock. The stories in '*Hidden Depths: Unlocking stories from below the waterline*' are inspired by real life characters and events throughout the years.

The stories will continue over the weekend as visitors will be able to walk down into the huge drained lock, right next to the Royal Armouries in Leeds Dock, to see the old gates up close and talk with the experts from the charity about the work taking place. Archive photographs of the Aire & Calder Navigation and plans of the dock dating back to 1850 will be on display and there will be special sword fights down in the drained lock performed by the Royal Armouries team at 11am and 2pm on both days.

There will also be family activities, a pop-up museum of artefacts from the National Waterways Museum and a chance to find out if you have what it takes to be one of the new Volunteer Lock Keepers the Canal & River Trust is recruiting for.

Tom Wright, development & engagement manager for the charity in the North East, says: "It's not every day you get to walk down into a drained lock and this particular lock hasn't been drained in 30 years so it's a great space to explore. I'm really looking forward to finding out what the team from the Royal Armouries are fighting about and hear stories the unknown navy will be regaling on Friday night deep in the lock. Make sure you book a ticket for the Friday night!



Canal &  
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“With free entry to the Royal Armouries Museum which has a great view overlooking the lock, this is certainly an event not to miss. As well as learning all about the works and the history of the area, we’ll show visitors why we think Leeds is a city full of culture and creativity. Join us for a weekend of unearthed secrets and whispers from the past.”

The lock gates are being replaced as part of Canal & River Trust’s annual £38 million, five-month programme of repairs to England and Wales’ waterways between November and March. The charity carries out an annual programme of restoration and repairs to the nation’s waterways during the winter to minimise the inconvenience of navigation closures to boaters during the busy summer season. The lock gates at Lock 1 on the Aire & Calder Navigation have come to the end of their life and are being replaced with brand new handmade gates made bespoke at the charity’s lock gate workshop in Wakefield.

Martin Pollard, from the construction team working on Lock 1, says: “After a tricky start to the works due to high river levels, we now have the stop planks in which hold back the water. We’re starting to drain the water out of the lock and clear the silt which has built up over the years. We’ll then use the 60-tonne crane to lift out the rotten and waterlogged seven tonne old gates and replace them with brand new five tonne gates. Leeds Dock has had a lot of regeneration over the last few years and we’re pleased the navigation can get in on the act with these new gates!”

Richard Parry, chief executive of Canal & River Trust, says: “Our teams work year-round to keep the waterways open and safe for everyone to enjoy, which requires a huge amount of planning, investment and craftsmanship as well as a wide range of knowledge and expertise. By opening up the lock to the public we can give them a glimpse into the waterways’ original 18<sup>th</sup> Century design and explain the scale of the Canal & River Trust’s work to care for all of our waterways now. We really believe that whatever you do life is better by water so we want to inspire more people to support us to ensure we can continue to make our waterways great places to enjoy.”

**To find out more about the Restoration & Repairs programme and the open days happening across the country go to <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/open-days>**

**ENDS**

**For further media requests, interviews or images please contact:**

Claire Risino, Campaigns Manager, Canal & River Trust

**T: 07785 920 863 E: [Claire.risino@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:Claire.risino@canalrivertrust.org.uk)**

**Notes to editors:**

The free public open weekend in Leeds is on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February, 10am to 4pm both days. There is plenty of parking available in Leeds and the train station is just a 10-minute walk away.



## Canal & River Trust

The evening story event – ‘*Hidden Depths: Unlocking stories from below the waterline*’ – starts at 6pm with 30 minute performances until 9:30pm. Tickets can be reserved on Eventbrite.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/events/2018-02-02-hidden-depths-unlocking-stories-below-the-waterline>

Please wear sensible and waterproof footwear i.e. flat boots, trainers. Dogs are welcome but will not be allowed in the locks. There will be a space to leave bikes and buggies. Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult to go in the locks. Unfortunately, the locks are not suitable for wheelchairs but there will be a viewing area next to the locks.

There has been a lock of sorts at Leeds Dock for over 300 years for boats to circumnavigate the weir, which dates back to the medieval period. The Aire & Calder Navigation Company made the River Aire navigable as far as Leeds in 1704 but a lock structure as we recognise it wasn't built until the 1800s. William Bartholomew, the chief engineer between 1853 and 1895, developed the ‘Tom Puddings’ – compartment boats that were connected to form a train pulled by a tug boat – which took coal to Goole and later the power stations. In 1834, Leeds Dock was known as Potato Dock as potatoes were the main cargo brought through the dock.

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.

[www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk) / @CanalRiverTrust / @crtcomms / #winteropendays

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.

As part of its winter maintenance programme, the Trust will be working on over 200 different sites across the country.