

PRESS RELEASE

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HERITAGE OPEN DAY AT NEWLY RESTORED HISTORIC BURNLEY CANAL WHARF – SATURDAY 28 AUGUST

The recent £2.9 million restoration of Burnley’s historic Finsley Gate canal wharf goes on show to the public on Saturday 28 August with a special Heritage Open Day.

The Canal & River Trust charity invites visitors to step back in time to enjoy canal boat trips, a working forge, free willow weaving and guided tours around the impressive, restored stone buildings, once the heart of a thriving boating and trading centre on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal – the longest single manmade waterway in England.

Adults and children will be able to drop into the new education room to try willow weaving craft workshops, see a professional blacksmith at work on the restored forge in the old stable block and learn more about the fascinating heritage on a guided tour led by the centre’s sawmill worker.

The main warehouse has now been converted into the Finsley Gate Restaurant and the Sawmill café bar, and both will be open, serving lunches and light refreshments.

Boat trips will be available along Burnley’s famous Straight Mile embankment, one of the seven wonders of the waterways, followed by a cream tea. Tickets cost £12.50 each and need to be booked in advance. Only 32 places are available.

Sarah De Nurtcheylo, Finsley Gate community engagement officer with the Canal & River Trust, said: “For the last 18 months, the Grade II Listed stone buildings have undergone a miraculous transformation into a new community heritage and learning hub, café bar, restaurant, function room, guest house and garden.

“Two hundred years ago, this wharf helped to put Burnley on the map as a major trading hub for the cotton industry. Now the fascinating historic centre has been reinvented for the 21st century as a wonderful community hub. We would love people to come down to the beautiful canalside location, enjoy the wellbeing benefits of being by water and try out some of the new activities available.”

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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 Finsley Gate Wharf Heritage Day will be open 10am to 4pm. For more information and to book trips, please check out the link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lets-explore-the-heritage-finsley-gate-wharf-burnley-tickets>

History of Finsley Gate Wharf, Burnley

Opened in 1801, Finsley Gate was an important regional boating centre in the 19th century, fuelling the Industrial Revolution. Known locally as Mile Wharf, it is located on a sharp bend next to Burnley's famous one-mile-long embankment across the Calder Valley.

Funded by grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, and supported by Burnley Borough Council and the new site management company Finsley Gate Wharf Ltd, the restored complex is set to bring major economic and cultural benefits to the town, just as the arrival of the canal did over 200 years ago. The complex includes a working forge which will be firing up for regular demonstrations, thanks to two local blacksmiths, plus a wide variety of activities from yoga, paddleboarding and canoeing sessions to craft classes, school visits, heritage tours, light refreshments and fine dining.

In the 1880s, Burnley was the largest cotton-producing town in the world and by the turn of the century it boasted more than 100,000 looms, with 90% of the town's population employed in the industry. This thriving economy was supported by the canal which brought cotton from America, coal from the nearby pits, water to power the steam engines and a route to world trade.

By the mid-20th Century, the majority of the cotton mills had closed and commercial traffic on the canal had declined. The Finsley Gate site continued to be used as an operational office and yard for the canal, but it closed in 1995 and remained empty until this recent spectacular renovation.

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Notes to Editors:

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By

bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day www.canalrivertrust.org.uk.