



Canal &
River Trust

Arts on the Waterways

Spring 2018 Newsletter

Simeon Nelson – Hydrosiren
Image: Beb Westoby

The Canal & River Trust's *Arts on the Waterways* programme continues to flourish by providing artists with time and space along waterways where they can slow down, research and make ambitious new work, responding to important social, environmental and heritage issues. At the same time, the programme supports the Trust's mission for living waterways to transform places and enrich lives. The arts are helping to change public attitudes to canals and rivers by engaging a greater diversity of people who live near them.

We are thrilled to welcome five exceptional Creative Producers who are now based at Trust offices in England and Wales: Melissa Appleton; Ian Sergeant; Jenine McGaughran; Tony Guillan and Clare Moloney. They've already made excellent progress, getting to know their local waterways and setting up artists and community partners to deliver the national arts programme called *Hinterlands*.

We are delighted to welcome the next Canal Laureate, Nancy Campbell, continuing the successful partnership with The Poetry Society. Nancy began her tenure along the towpaths, following the inspirational legacies of Luke Kennard and Jo Bell. *The Ring* arts programme also launched this March in Worcestershire with a book of poems by Heather Wastie, inspired by the Droitwich Canals restoration, and a residency on Diglis Island by sculptor, Rich White.

As well as upcoming art events, the Spring newsletter details several of the Trust's academic and strategic partnerships demonstrating how the arts are pushing boundaries and contributing to a vital sense of place, identity and wellbeing.



Stone bridge and towpath, Enfield Lock
Image: Clare Moloney

Hinterlands

The Trust is pleased to have embarked on stage one of *Hinterlands*, a new national programme of socially engaged arts projects along five remote stretches of waterways. Supporting the Trust's vision for 'living waterways that transform places and enrich lives', new arts activities and commissions involving local partners will connect and engage communities along stretches of waterways, or 'hinterlands', that are under-served by the arts and facing economic and social hardship:

- North East (Sheffield and Doncaster suburbs on Sheffield & South Yorkshire Canal and Stockton on Tees)
- West Midlands (Smethwick/Sandwell on New Mainline Canal and Dudley Canal)
- East Midlands (Leicester surrounding areas on the Grand Union Canal)
- London (Enfield on the River Lee/Lea Navigation)
- Wales (Pontypool/lower end of Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal, Torfaen)

With support from both Arts Council England and the Arts Council of Wales, five talented Creative Producers have been appointed across the Trust's regions to collaborate with local communities and artists to help transform these under-used environments. They will devise innovative proposals for participatory and socially engaged arts programmes to take place during 2019–20. Find out more about *Hinterlands* and check the Trust for details of the forthcoming engagement events over the coming months.

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Nancy Campbell
Image: Bjorn Valdimarsson

Canal Laureate

In January established poet, Nancy Campbell, took on the role of Canal Laureate, from Luke Kennard. An expert kayaker, Nancy has a keen interest in arctic, marine and water conservation. She is working on a range of new poems including one about the Twaite Shad, a herring like fish, which – thanks to a new fish pass – will once again be able to swim up the River Severn to spawn. Nancy has also written a special 'rain-poem' which will be stenciled onto various towpaths around the country in hydrophobic paint, revealing the poem only in wet weather. In collaboration with artist, Pierre Tremblay, she is also producing a new film in response to the Regent's Canal. Nancy's writings, observations and upcoming events will be published on *Waterlines*, the Canal Laureate's website, and you can learn more of her adventures via Twitter @CanalPoetry.

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Rich White at Diglis Island
Image: R Farkas

The Ring

This March has seen the launch of *The Ring*, a cultural first for Worcestershire, that brings together an exciting line-up of international and local artists to produce a series of extraordinary new artworks on the county's waterways. The successful event took place in Diglis House in Worcester with the contributing artists in attendance. A special book of poems called *The Muck and Shovel Brigade* by poet and songwriter Heather Wastie was also launched. Heather's poems spark with wit and warmth, inspired by encounters with characters who led the restoration of the Droitwich Canals which reconnected the famous Worcestershire ring of canals to the River Severn and from there to the open seas!

Bristol-based sculptor Rich White has, in the last few weeks, begun his residency on Diglis Island. Just a short walk from Worcester City centre, the island lies at the junction of the Worcester & Birmingham Canal and the River Severn. It has changed little since it was first used in 1815 to lift heavy timber, boats and coal, and the striking old crane remains today. Rich is constructing a large-scale sculpture that references these uses and when constructed will, piece by piece, become visible from the towpath. You can visit during open days planned for 13 April, 23 June and 30 August. Visit the website events calendar for these and other forthcoming events.

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Saint Pega setting sail for Crowland with Beccelm, Harley Roll Y.6, roundel 15 (Crowland, late 13th century)

Higher Education collaborations

Arts on the Waterways has been working with universities on several cultural research projects. Our most recent is with the Cultural Geography team at Queen Mary's, University of London, whose researchers aim to evaluate Hinterlands as a case study of how contemporary art contributes to placemaking, heritage and regeneration in remote waterway and post-industrial communities.

King's College, University of London and the Trust are jointly supporting scholar Bethany Whalley on her PhD research into cultural representations of water today and in the medieval past, with a focus on inland waters of the everyday. Beth is collaborating with the Trust to inspire curiosity about the premodern past of canals and rivers. You can follow her projects here, including her intriguing collaboration with The Ring project in Worcestershire to examine the origins of local place names. She is also working on a symposium later this year entitled *Hydrocommons: Water in Academia and the Arts*.

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Burnley Canal Festival, 2017
Image: Huckleberry Films

Super Slow Way

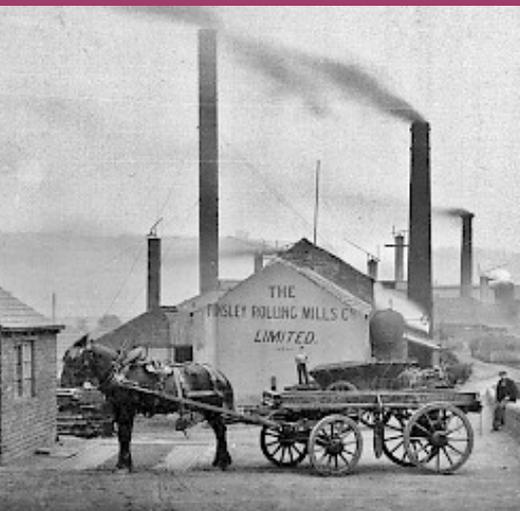
We are very pleased that Arts Council England has committed a further £1 million towards the next phase of the influential *Super Slow Way* programme. The programme is supported by the Canal & River Trust, local authorities of Pendle Borough Council, Burnley Borough Council, Hyndburn Borough Council and Blackburn with Darwen Council, Arts Partnership Pennine Lancashire (APPL) and UCL as an academic partner.

A new series of original socially engaged arts projects will be commissioned for the next phase reflecting the special mix of cultural and creative diversity often hidden within the communities that live along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal corridor of Pennine Lancashire. The project will increase the numbers of local people participating, particularly those who might not have previously had access to such activity.

Laurie Peake, project director for *Super Slow Way* said, "In projects such as Festival of Making in Blackburn, the award-winning Beyond Labels project with Hollins Technical College in Accrington, the fabulous Burnley Canal Festival and the Shapes of Water, Sounds of Hope project in Brierfield, we have established some great relationships along the canal corridor, with local authorities, arts and community organisations and, most importantly, residents, and have exciting plans for the future which we can now put into action!"

You can find out more about future events, as they evolve, on the [website](#).

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Tinsley Rolling Mills archival photograph
Image: Tinsley Art Project

Major commissions

The Trust has been working on various long-term arts commissions aimed at engaging local people to transform waterway places and make lives better by water. In Birmingham, the Trust is playing a major role in **Port Loop**, a 21st century housing scheme led by Urban Splash, with canals surrounding the site, where contemporary public art by leading artists will feature.

We are also working closely with artist Alex Chinneck to create *Onwards & Upwards* – four sculptural chimneys, each up to 30 metres high and spread across one mile of our Sheffield and Tinsley Canal. The chimneys are planned as a bold expression of the region's cultural ambition, inspired by the area's steel and industrial history. E.ON, British Land, Sheffield City Council, Sheffield City Region Local Enterprise Partnership and the Trust are part of a consortium aiming to bring this mile-long sculptural experience along the towpath to life. It will link Sheffield & Rotherham by foot, bike or barge and will be Sheffield's largest ever public art commission.

Arts on the Waterways will continue to develop major commissions that are free, open and accessible to all over coming years with leading arts partners and world class artists.



Shad in hand
Image: Wye and Usk Foundation

Unlocking the Severn

If the World Heritage Site at Ironbridge was the heart of the Industrial Revolution, then the River Severn was the principal artery. However, as with all arteries they can get clogged. During the C19th navigation weirs were constructed to power the revolution, but these choked the natural heritage of the UK's longest river. This resulted in the loss of fisheries heritage including Sturgeon and Allis Shad and caused significant declines in other species. Today, the water quality problems caused by the Industrial Revolution is much improved but the barriers remain.

The Canal & River Trust and Severn Rivers Trust with others are leading a major project, *Unlocking the Severn*, that plans to address these historic blockages during 2018–21, reopening the entire River Severn and lower River Teme for all fish species. Artists (storyteller, choreographer and puppet maker) are working with children in three schools in Worcester to build up to a big celebration event in Worcester city on 21 April with a parade and a big picnic with live music, activities and stalls at the Hive in the afternoon. The event is particularly aimed at families to celebrate the themes of reconnecting people with rivers and the importance of opening up rivers for migrating fish. For further details please see the [website](#).

The project is a partnership between the Severn Rivers Trust, Canal & River Trust, Environment Agency and Natural England. Funded by the European Union's LIFE Nature Programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund. This five year project is the largest river restoration of its kind currently running in Europe.

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The Boaty Theatre, rehearsal, Ellesmere Port

Theatre partnerships

The Boaty Theatre Company has been based at the National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port, since 2010. As well as their regular programme of new commissions they offer actor and technician training, production experience and performance opportunities to local creative people of all ages. Their latest play – *Dungeness* – about love, commemoration, protest and LGBT+ communities – has been selected by the National Theatre Connections as one of the new works they are following this year. You can find out about forthcoming performances [here](#).

Yorkshire-based Mikron Theatre has been touring canals and inland rivers for many years, showing new productions rooted in social history and contemporary issues to raise awareness and debates among broad audiences. Backed by Arts Council England and others the company will be touring again this Summer with their famous narrowboat, *Tyseley*. In 2018, they are celebrating 70 years of the NHS and 100 years of fighting for the female vote with their two latest productions which you can book on their [website](#).

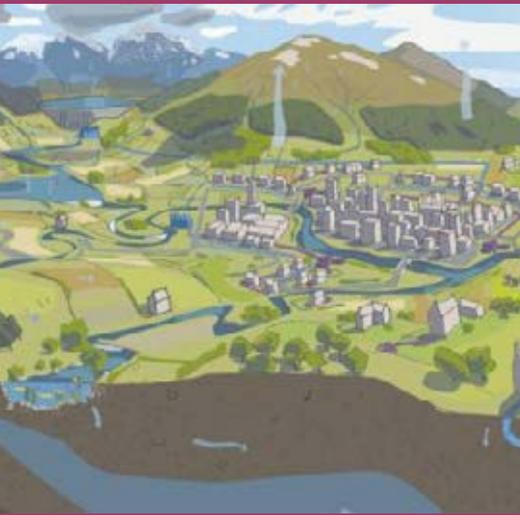


Illustration by Jo Salter, artist Ruth Levene's project 'The Water Cycle'

Test Sites: Calder Valley

The Trust is pleased to be a leading partner on *Test Sites*, Arts Catalyst's series of creative inquiries into environmental issues such as flooding, pollution and species loss and their impact on local wellbeing and ecosystems.

At each site, Arts Catalyst are inviting local people and groups to work with artists, scientists and other experts. In 2018 the artist Ruth Levene and medical anthropologist Megan Clinch will collaborate with the Canal & River Trust to research health, wellbeing and the resilience of communities and ecologies along the Calder & Hebble waterway.

From 22 March–12 May you can see an exhibition of works-in-progress by Ruth Levene and other Test Sites artist, Neal White, at Arts Catalyst's centre near King's Cross, London. Ruth Levene presents *Working Waters*, an installation of maps and models created from her investigations into the flows and stewardship of water in the Calder Valley.

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Coventry Canal
Image: Canal & River Trust

Coventry City of Culture

The Coventry Canal is at the core of Coventry's history, its identity and future plans. We are thrilled that the city has been selected by DCMS as the third City of Culture in the UK. The cultural programme will be built on a commitment to tackling inequality and celebrating diversity, and shining new light on the city's talents. There will be 1000 events over 12 months throughout the city's community spaces including on the city's canal. The Trust is in discussions over potential opportunities for collaboration during 2021 and in the run-up programme from 2018.

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Heather at Foxton
Image: Andrew Carpenter

Alarum Theatre

Last summer Alarum theatre produced an extraordinary tour of theatre, poetry and songs along the waterway route worked by women on boats carrying war supplies. Skippering the boats from London to Birmingham the 'Idle Women', as they were nicknamed, would return via Coventry to collect coal to take back to London. In May this year, the producers and boaters, Kate Saffin and Heather Wastie, plan to perform again along a different route worked independently by one of the women, Daphne March, between Worcester, Tipton and Cannock. They then plan to move north in June and July in recognition of another intrepid boatwoman, Nancy Ridgway, one of a very small number who worked on the big barges on the Leeds & Liverpool canal.

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Slow Boat
Image: Ikon Gallery

Ikon Slow Boat: Looping the Loop

The Trust is pleased to support the latest phase of Ikon Gallery's Slow Boat programme, *Looping the Loop*. The boat has been transformed with a new design by Lamorna Conlon (a member of Ikon Youth Programme), to boast a bold and striking exterior which reflects the colours used by the gallery's founding artists.

Slow Boat, crewed by members of the Ikon Youth Programme (IYP) alongside a selection of artists, is navigating the Birmingham, Sandwell and Ladywood canals from Icknield Port Loop to the Smethwick Pumping House, engaging local residents in workshops, performances and screenings.

Providing a distinctive social space, Slow Boat's residency programme is a unique opportunity for artists to explore ways of working with new audiences. During spring 2018, Japanese artist, Rie Nakajima, will perform on Slow Boat as it moves between her exhibition at Ikon Gallery and Max Eastley's sound installation at Perrott's Folly. You can find details of the events [here](#).

Ian Hyde, Ikon's Deputy Director said: 'As an educational charity encouraging engagement in contemporary arts, the boat and the project will allow us to reach new audiences and take Ikon's ethos and work to communities along the local canal network.'

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MEGAN, Night Lite Nottingham
Image: Nancy Campbell

Enchanted Water, Nottingham Light Night

On 23 February the Canal & River Trust was delighted to host the first *Enchanted Water* at Nottingham Castle Wharf, for Nottingham Light Night 2018. Working with partners from Nottingham City Council, Beeston Canalside Heritage Centre, Nottingham Trent University and the Carrington Street Heritage Project the event included light installations, giant film projections, family activities and poetry readings on board narrowboat trips along the canal.

Community workshops held before the event generated images and words about the canal: how it has changed from its industrialised past, how it is now and what it will become in the future. Museum and heritage development students from Nottingham Trent University produced a film depicting life along the canal and Nancy Campbell, Canal Laureate, wrote *Elements*, a new (and possibly the first) poem for the Nottingham-Beeston Canal. For an audience of over 1000, Nancy performed the poem on board the narrowboat trips, along with Nottingham poet Leanne Moden who read poetry and storytelling inspired by the community workshops

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Super Slow Way, 'Shapes of Water, Sounds of Hope', Suzanne Lacy
Image: Graham Kay

Practice Purpose Place Symposium

Contemporary arts experiences have, in recent years, been increasingly sited in forests, waterways, churches, landscapes and heritage buildings through the work of creative producers at the National Trust, Forestry Commission, Canal & River Trust and Churches Conservation Trust.

In partnership with Exeter University, and with the support of Arts Council England, a symposium is being planned this summer to showcase and interrogate these programmes. The day will look at 'practice of place', artistic quality, engagement and instrumental claims such as wellbeing through a series of provocations, respondents and debates. Look out for forthcoming details on the Arts on the Waterways website.



Jennifer Reid at MK50 workshop
Image: courtesy the artist

Milton Keynes 50th Birthday artist residency

To celebrate Milton Keynes 50th birthday, and with funding from the Arts Council, the Trust appointed Jennifer Reid, a 19th Century Industrial Revolution broadside ballad singer, to create a song book about the Grand Union Canal in Milton Keynes.

Jennifer is a ballad singer who during her residency in 2017, inspired by 19th century literature, created a book of songs and dialect stories about the canal and the people who use it in Milton Keynes. Jennifer had a busy summer; she stayed on a canal boat for a week, received mentorship with the artist Neville Gable, exhibited her work at the MK Gallery, and performed at canal festivals.

Drawing on experiences, opinions, feelings and people that Jennifer encountered, and in response to the unique Grand Union dialect, she created wonderful new songs relating to communities of the Grand Union Canal. Some of these songs 'The row between the canal and the city' – a conceptual piece – can be found [here](#), along with other information and links to her songbook

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Tim Eastop
**Executive Producer,
Arts on the Waterways
Programme
Canal & River Trust**

[Arts on the Waterways webpage](#)

✉ tim.eastop@canalrivertrust.org.uk

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