

PRESS RELEASE

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HORSE-DRAWN BOAT IS TOP ATTRACTION AT EASTER HISTORIC BOAT GATHERING AT NATIONAL WATERWAYS MUSEUM, ELLESMERE PORT

Saturn, the last-surviving Shropshire Union flyboat, paired with its new horse Flower, will be joined by dozens of historic boats from across the country, congregating at the National Waterways Museum in Ellesmere Port for the annual Easter Historic Boat Gathering Festival, over the bank holiday weekend (29 March -1 April).



Canal & River Trust

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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: National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port.

Hosted by the Canal & River Trust charity, the four-day festival offers visitors the opportunity to get up close to fascinating old working boats and enjoy a fantastic range of waterway-themed activities and music.

For the first time in many years, the traditional Good Friday convoy from Chester to Ellesmere Port will be led by a horse drawn boat. Flower and Saturn, along with around 30 historic boats, will leave Chester City Centre early Friday morning and travel along the Shropshire Union Canal, arriving at the Museum between 11am and 1pm.

Located at the junction of the Manchester Ship Canal and the Shropshire Union Canal, the National Waterways Museum site will stage a wide range of special attractions over the holiday weekend, from craft workshops and children's activities to steam engines working in the Power Hall.

Flower, an eight-year-old mare, will be demonstrating her new towing skills by taking the former Cheshire cheese cargo flyboat Saturn through on-site locks in a series of demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday at 11.45am and 1.45pm.

There will also be a chance to see fascinating rare canal treasures at the National Waterways Archive, giving visitors the potential to track down their own long-lost family connections to the nation's historic canal network. The Collections Team will also be demonstrating the use of new ground-breaking photogrammetry technology, now providing 3D access to historic artifacts, thanks to a project supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

Foot-tapping music will be provided by Loctup Together and Sea Shanty Rebels on Saturday and Sunday between 11am and 3pm, and visitors can make their own Easter Bonnets on Easter Saturday for a special Easter Bonnet Parade.

Throughout the weekend, work by the Cheshire Artist Network will be on display in the Island Warehouse Gallery, and on Sunday and Monday (11am – 1pm) Ellesmere Port Model Boat Club will be staging displays in the top basin.

Chris Done, visitor services manager with the Canal & River Trust, said: "The 2024 Easter Historic Boat Gathering promises to be a fantastic celebration of our wonderful canal heritage. It will be brilliant to have a horse-drawn boat leading the Good Friday festival convoy for the first time in many years. We're particularly looking forward to seeing Flower towing Saturn through the site and spending the weekend with us giving lock demonstrations.

"We hope visitors will enjoy the opportunity to explore the fascinating flotilla of historic boats and, moving into the 21st century, see how the latest photogrammetry techniques are revolutionising access to precious objects.

“For families, there is a special children’s trail and boat-themed playground. Hopefully this spectacular waterway festival will be the launch of a fabulous summer season for everyone.”

The museum will be open 10am – 4pm over the Easter weekend and then five days a week (Wednesday – Sunday) for the rest of the season. Explorers activities for children will be taking place during the Easter school holidays on Tuesdays and Thursdays (April 2,4,9,11).

From May to September, special themed Sundays will feature a range of attractions from Steampunk to Living History and Canal Town. A day devoted to horse drawn boats will be hosted on Sunday 11 August and music lovers can enjoy a concert from The Old Time Sailors on the evening of Friday 17 May. The Canal & River Trust would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in volunteering at the museum.

For more information about visiting and to book discounted tickets, visit the museum website <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/national-waterways-museum>.
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Canal & River Trust

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.

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About Flower the horse

Flower, the eight-year-old mare which will pull the Shropshire fly boat Saturn, is owned by David Ray and his eight-year-old daughter Elizabeth. David is the managing director of Norbury Wharf, a successful marina, boat yard and boat hire company on the Shropshire Union Canal in Staffordshire.

Both father and daughter are proud to be leading the Easter Boat Parade for the first time.