

WATERWAYS HERITAGE SPOTTER

The canals that form a network across the UK were mostly built between 200 and 250 years ago, linking even older river navigations. They are all designed differently with the unique bridges and locks as well as tunnels, aqueducts, warehouses and other features all helping make up the waterways heritage of Britain. It is vital that we protect this heritage, so that future generations can understand how important inland waterways were in the industrialisation of this country. Take a walk along your waterway and see what you can see.



1 A Bridge

Most canals have bridges built to a specific design. This is because navigation companies and business owners built their own canals to carry raw materials or products from their mines or factories and they each required something different depending on what was being carried and what the landscape was like. Some of the bridges have fancy stonework. Some have names and some have numbers. Bridges over river navigations tend to be more individual, having been built at different times. Take a look at the bridges on your walk and see if you can spot any interesting designs.

2 A Lock

A lock is a chamber with a gate at each end, enabling boats to go up and down hill. Take a closer look at the locks you can see. Like bridges, they are all a bit different, and most waterways have their own individual designs. Most canal locks look very similar to when they were first designed in the 18th century, while some river navigations have locks with guillotine gates dating from 20th century improvements. Can you see how they work? They really are fascinating. But make sure you stay safe.

3 A Canal Side Building

Have a look up and down a canal. Are there any buildings that are close to the water? Some of these might be lock keepers' cottages if they are near a lock. In the past, there was always someone living close to the lock who would help the boats get

through and keep the lock working properly. This was really important when the canals were very busy and the boats were carrying commercial goods. Sometimes canal-side buildings had a place for the boat to pull in underneath the building to make it easier to load and unload the boat. Can you see any evidence of that?

4 A Tunnel

There are many tunnels on the canals, especially where the landscape is hilly. Some of them have a towpath running all the way through the tunnel next to the water. Can you see a tunnel on your walk? Most of the tunnels are straight so you can see the light at the end, but some of them bend a bit. If you go into a tunnel, have a look at the way they are made. If they are brick lined, look at how all of the bricks have been shaped to form a perfect arch. Isn't it amazing that they are still there, 250 years later?

5 An Aqueduct

There are lots of aqueducts on the network, which carry canals across gaps such as valleys or ravines, or over roads and railways. Some of them are built of brick or stone, and some are iron. If you are lucky enough to see one, take a closer look - they are really impressive feats of engineering.

Turn over to see how you can help find some of the smaller examples of hidden waterways heritage

SPOT THE SMALLER THINGS

Although larger structures like bridges, locks, tunnels and aqueducts help shape the heritage of the waterways, there are many smaller features that tell an important story of their industrial past.

Many of the smaller features that still exist today were installed by canal designers to help make the lives of the people working the waterways a bit easier. Originally the boats were pulled by horses and it was important that the horses were helped along their way by little improvements to the infrastructure.

Smaller features of Hidden Heritage can be found all along the waterways so make sure you keep an eye out as you walk up and down the towpaths. A good place to find some of these features is near locks and bridges.



1 Strapping Posts

Strapping posts were important pieces of equipment for working loaded horse boats. They are vertical posts that are often near a lock. The boatmen would “strap” the rope around the post in order to stop a loaded boat, or to help it turn around a junction. A horse boat could pick up a lot of momentum as it was being pulled along but had no brakes so strapping posts were essential to stop boats crashing into the lock gates. Some lock gates have strapping posts, enabling the closing of the gate at the same time as stopping the boat in the lock.

2 Starting Pins

This small curved metal pin can sometimes be found on locks. Its purpose was to help get a horse drawn (or bow hauled) boat out of a lock by using a rope and a pulley block against this pin to create momentum to propel the boat forward. It meant that the horse didn't have to pull the heavy boat from a standstill.

3 Rope Marks

Grooves worn into metal, masonry and wood are lasting reminders of the number of boats that would have been towed by a horse along the waterways, with the rope always finding the same slot to carve out the gouges still seen today.

The towpath side of bridge arches is a common place to find rope marks, but you can also find them on bollards, railings, and even sometimes on paddle gear at locks.

4 Mile Posts/Mile Stones

Cast iron mileposts and stone milestones are features of many waterways, with some even having 1/2 and 1/4 mile markers in between the mileposts. Not all waterways had them, but those that do each had their own unique design.

As well as marking distance, they were also used to help calculate tolls for cargo carried along the canals.

5 Rollers

Rollers were sometimes installed to protect masonry from rope damage or to prevent the towline from taking the shortest route between boat and horse on some of the tighter bends.

6 Balance Beam Spikes

Some waterways have lock gates with specially designed spikes to keep them in the open or closed position. Can you see a pin on the lock gates?

7 Date Stones

Date stones can be found in all sorts of places, including on bridges and aqueducts. Keep an eye out for them, they might be quite worn by now.

The waterway network across the UK is such an important part of our country's history, and yet it is under threat from a lack of protection, insensitive development, climate change, insufficient funding and a loss of skills. Help save waterways heritage.

Find out more at:
WATERWAYS.ORG.UK/HERITAGE
[#SaveWaterwaysHeritage](https://www.instagram.com/SaveWaterwaysHeritage)