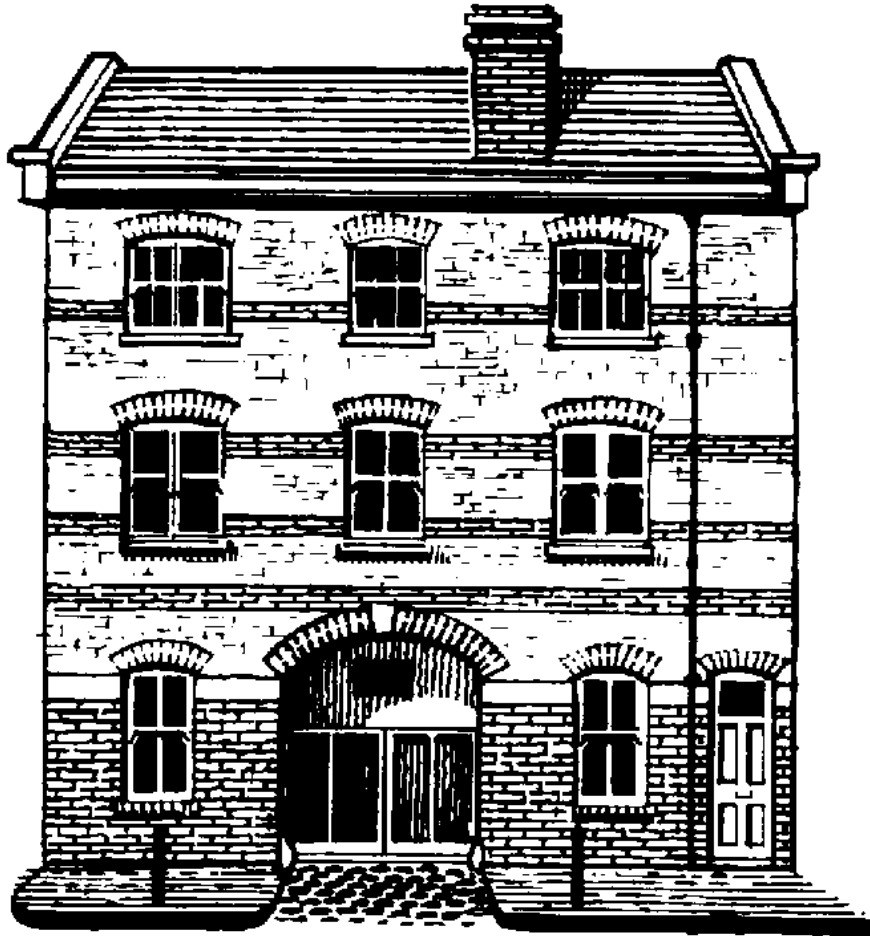


A different London.....



London Canal Museum Press Pack 2015

London Canal Museum – London's canals and more...

The London Canal Museum offers the opportunity to find out about the history of London's canals and their associated industries. Surprisingly, it is also about how ice was imported, stored, sold and distributed around London in the days before refrigeration. Visitors can learn about the role of horses and see historic film of a boat being taken along the Regent's Canal in the days before engines. They can hear more about the people who lived and worked on the canals.

The building itself is a delight. Set in the backstreets within a few minutes' walk of St Pancras International and the development site of King's Cross Central is this former Victorian Ice Warehouse. There is nowhere else in Britain where you can enter a building that once housed ice for sale which had come all the way from Norway – and where visitors can peer down the ice well that stored it.

The museum has a fascinating collection of exhibits and can answer questions such as where does the water for canals come from? How do locks work? How did a whole family live in a tiny cabin on a working boat? What was the ice trade and why was ice cream so popular in Victorian times?

There's plenty for all the family with a Henrietta the Horse trail for children; a lock model to try and the opportunity to watch the wildlife and the boats from the terrace that backs on to Battlebridge Basin.

There is also a wide range of resources that can be downloaded to enhance your visit. There's an opportunity to view a documentary film on the museum's website or download an MP3 audio tour of the museum before a visit. There's also a fascinating MP3 guided walk along the canal to Camden Locks. The museum also has trails and additional information on many of the items in its collection on an app hosted on OOKL and which is available for the iPhone and on Android.

Martin Sach, Chair of the Canal Museum Trust says "we find our visitors come from all walks of life, and from all over the world, drawn by the timeless quality of canals. They want to find out more. Canals serve to remind us of their role in the industrial history of the UK, and also as a great leisure resource both on, and off the water."

Notes to Editors

Prices

Adults £4, Concessions (seniors, students) £3, Children £2. Family ticket £10

Opening Times

Open Tuesdays to Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays

From 10.00 to 16.30. On the first Thursday of each month, open late to 19.30. Last entry 30 minutes before closing.

How to get here

The museum is a five-minute walk from King's Cross station. For detailed travel advice see www.canalmuseum.org.uk/visit or www.canalmuseum.mobi

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London Canal Museum Online:

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Facebook:	facebook.com/canalmuseum	Google Plus:	google.com/+canalmuseum		
Pinterest:	pinterest.com/canalmuseum	Foursquare:	foursquare.com/canalmuseum		
Twitter:	twitter.com/canalmuseum	Multimedia guide:	canalmuseum.org.uk/ookl		

The London Canal Museum is run by the Canal Museum Trust and receives no external funding. Registered Charity Number 277484

www.canalmuseum.org.uk/press



The London Canal Museum – Did You Know?

- The London Canal Museum has been open since 1992. Since then it has welcomed around 230,000 people who want to learn more about London's canals
- The museum is housed in a former ice warehouse – the only place in Britain where you can peer down into an ice well that was used as commercial premises during the 19th century ice trade.
- You will enter the museum over the original cobbles, past the guard stones protecting the brickwork from the cart wheels, and on to the remains of the Avery weighbridge. The Avery Company was founded in the early 18th century and is still in business making weighbridges today.
- Horses were once housed in the building with stables on the first floor. You can view the horse ramp and hear more about their story in the museum.
- Whole families worked and lived on narrowboats in the heyday of canals. Enter the cabin of Coronis in the museum to experience what life was like.
- Leonardo da Vinci is reputed to have invented the mitre gate – used the world over in the construction of locks. Find out more in our Water and Locks exhibition.
- The museum backs on to Battlebridge Basin. Once a hive of industry from marmalade making to bottling Guinness. Now one of the capital's most desirable residential moorings.
- The museum is one of the most accessible museums in London with full access for wheelchairs, an audio tour for visually impaired visitors and numerous adaptations to ensure a welcome for all.
- The museum has been awarded a Sandford Award for quality provision in heritage education and welcomes over 2000 children and adults in learning groups a year.
- The museum holds a silver award in the Green Business Tourism Business Scheme.
- There are several 21st century ways of enhancing your visit to the London Canal Museum. View films in YouTube; download an audio guide to the towpath or use our multimedia app including film of artefacts in action.

Visiting the London Canal Museum

What to see and do

- The London Canal Museum tells the story of London's Canals from early days as important trade routes, to today's more leisurely pursuits.
- Peer into one of the two ice wells in the floor of the museum as you learn more about the history of the forgotten Ice Trade.
- Enter the cabin of the narrowboat Coronis and see what life would have been like for families living and working on Britain's canals.
- Children can follow the Henrietta the Horse trail, or try out activities in our Activity Zone
- Enjoy the view over Battlebridge Basin with its colourful collection of boats. Don't forget to find out more about the museum's vintage Bantam Tug.
- Take time to sit and watch atmospheric historic film including a horse drawn narrowboat being brought along the Regent's Canal.
- Steer a model narrowboat through a lock in our hands-on exhibit – or why not try your hand at knot-tying?
- View the enormous map of London's canals showing the location of lost industries and filled in canals and basins.
- Download an MP3 audio tour or an app for a multimedia tour... We offer a range of options including free museum or towpath tours and our fascinating "Artefacts in Action" series of short films.

Royalty-Free Pictures for the Media

Pictures on this page may be downloaded from the address given. They are also to be seen at www.canalmuseum.org.uk/presspics



www.canalmuseum.org.uk/press/pp1.jpg



www.canalmuseum.org.uk/press/pp2.jpg

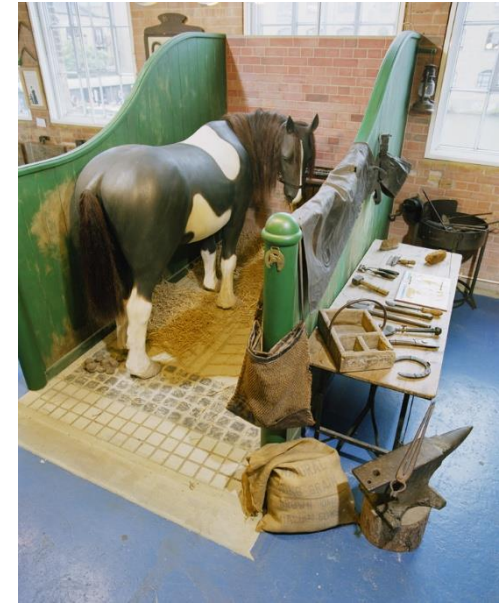


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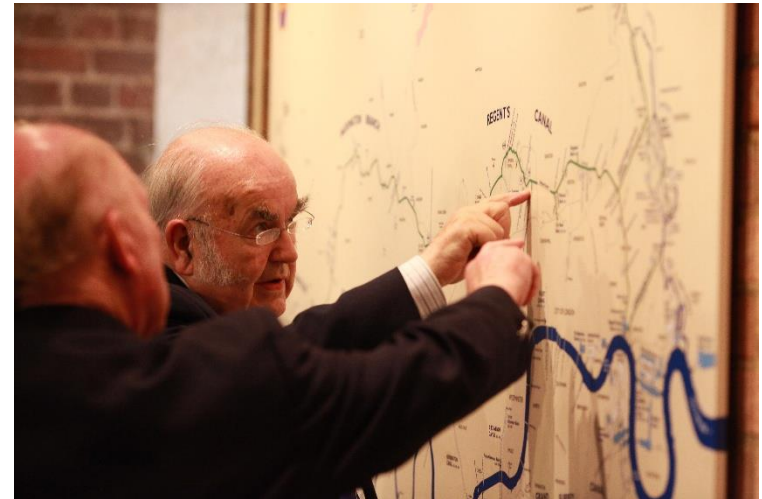
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Carlo Gatti's Icehouse – the history of the building

Background

The ice trade is now all but forgotten but was an important industry back in the 19th century. Ice in summer was originally the preserve of rich people – since the 17th century they had used it for making ice cream, chilling wine and other drinks and keeping food fresh. It was also used by the medical profession to relieve fevers, reduce swelling and as an anaesthetic.

From around 1850 the large-scale use of imported ice brought down the cost so that many more people could afford ice and ice cream, while fishmongers and butchers became large users.

There was therefore a need to store the imported ice and specially insulated buildings were constructed to store the ice all year round.

The Ice Wells at 12-13 New Wharf Road

Although we don't have a precise date for the construction of the ice wells, we know that the rate book of 1860 records an ice well occupied by Carlo Gatti, which was probably built in 1857.

Gatti had come to London from the Italian speaking part of Switzerland in 1847 selling continental style refreshments from a barrow. He progressed to opening a café but saw the opportunity to set up as an ice merchant. He could then supply ice to his own business and the restaurants, shopkeepers and large households throughout central and north London.

Gatti imported ice from Norway. It is said that Gatti's company had 28 wooden ships at work. These offloaded ice in the Regent's Canal Dock at Limehouse and took it by barge to several depots including this ice house at Battlebridge Basin. The trade in imported ice peaked in 1899 but then rapidly declined with the widespread adoption of mechanically produced ice.

The Ice Wells Building

The building has gone through many changes as it has adapted to changes in industry and use.

The ice wells

The original ice wells were built between 1850 and 1863. The one on view from above is 10.4m in diameter and the other which is under the floor of the museum is 9.8m wide. They are reported to be 12.8m deep. Originally it is thought that the wells were external structures in an open yard and that the building above the ice wells was not constructed until after around 1863.

A drainage plan of 1896 shows no floors in the main part of the building.

The weighbridge

The ice went out onto the streets in the early morning by horse-drawn cart. The loads were weighed on the weighbridge at the entrance which can still be seen.

The first floor and the horse ramp

The building was extensively reconstructed in 1904 – 1906. By this time mechanical ice production had taken over and the ice wells were only needed to store daily demand. The building was converted into an ice delivery depot. A new first floor was inserted which provided stables together with a horse ramp which enabled the horses to reach these new stables.

The ground floor

At the same time, a floor was built over the wells with a hatch left at the canalside end for ice to be stored there.

The later history

The building closed as an ice cart depot in 1926. During World War II the building was used by AEC as a depot for spare parts for London buses. In the 1950s earth and rubble from building sites was tipped into the ice wells through holes in the floor almost to fill them up and the building was used by a number of different occupiers for warehousing and light engineering.

The building was taken on by the Canal Museum Trust in 1989 and work undertaken to make the building suitable for use as a museum including excavating the wells to reveal them as they are today. The Trust has continued to repair and conserve this extraordinary building whilst also providing modern facilities for today's needs. In recent years the trust has undertaken roof works, replaced the rear glazed screen, made the museum fully accessible to disabled visitors, and carried out restorations of internal and external brickwork. In 2013 a major conservation project was carried out with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund to make structural repairs to the supporting piers on which the ground floor is suspended, and to the underside of the floor itself. The successful completion of this work ensured that future generations will be able to enjoy the historic building. The project also encompassed a range of improvements to interpretation and of opportunities for public engagement with the ice well heritage.

The Regent's Canal – 10 things you might not know!

1. Many Londoners don't know it's there. It's largely hidden behind buildings and snakes its way through a mix of urban landscapes. From the River Thames at Limehouse to Paddington, the nine-mile Regent's Canal is one of the best-kept secrets in the capital.
2. It's called the Regent's Canal after the Prince Regent, later King George IV. The famous architect and town planner John Nash was a director of the Regent's Canal Company and friendly with the Prince Regent, later King George IV, who allowed the use of his name for the project.
3. One of its bridges once got blown up by gunpowder! Macclesfield Bridge is also known as Blow-Up Bridge, a reference to an incident in 1874 where a boat carrying gunpowder exploded. The bridge was destroyed and three crew members were killed.
4. The Regent's Canal links in with other English canals – in fact you can travel from London to Leeds by canal. It would take you around 4 weeks.
5. The Regent's Canal goes through London Zoo and under Islington in a 886-metre (969 yd) long tunnel. Interestingly, the railway from St Pancras International goes above the canal, but the railway is in tunnels below the canal as it leaves King's Cross.
6. Ice warehouses were built along the Regent's Canal to store and sell Norwegian lake ice. This was a thriving industry in the late 19th century but fell away once ice could be made mechanically. You can still visit the only one remaining – now the London Canal Museum at King's Cross.
7. The canal almost became a railway. In September 1845 a special general assembly of the proprietors approved the sale of the canal at the price of one million pounds to a group of businessmen. As you might have guessed, the railway was never built.
8. Canals are home to wide ranging wildlife. This includes many terrapins that were let go after the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle craze of the 1980s. Why not visit Camley Street Natural Park which was created from an old coal yard back in 1984? It sits in the heart of King's Cross and is home to birds, plants and bats.
9. Measures were taken during World War II to make sure that the railway at King's Cross was not flooded by canal water. The threat of German bombs led to stop gates being installed near King's Cross to limit potential flooding of the railway tunnel below.
10. Finally – the route of the new Jubilee Greenway Walk opened by HM the Queen on the 29th February 2012 runs along much of the route of the Regent's Canal – from Little Venice to Camden and on to Victoria Park. Look out for the special glass Jubilee Greenway pavement markers.

The Ice Trade – 10 things you might not know

1. Norwegian ice was mainly exported to the UK between the 1850s and 1900s. When ice could be made mechanically, the trade declined.
2. People who worked in the ice industry were said to work "on the ice".
3. Only about a quarter of the weight of ice was lost between Norway and the customer in London. This was because the ice was packed together in large quantities, so the melting rate was slow.
4. Carlo Gatti was not Italian but Swiss. He was from the Tichino, a part of Switzerland where the Italian language is spoken.
5. Ice was imported from the United States to London in the mid 19th Century. The Wenham Lake Ice Company supplied Queen Victoria with ice from Wenham Lake in Massachusetts. Later, Norwegian lakes became the main source of London's ice.
6. North London's clay is ideal for the building of ice wells. Several were built close by the Regent's Canal for easy transport.
7. Ice wells were generally circular for good reasons. The thick circular brick walls are far better able to withstand the pressures of the surrounding ground than a square construction would do.
8. Blocks of ice are lifted or moved with pointed callipers known as "ice dogs". As the load is taken up, the weight causes them to grip the ice block tightly. Examples may be seen in the museum.
9. Cloudy ice was deemed inferior to clear ice: Americans preferred clear ice and shopkeepers preferred to use clear ice in their display counters. Even after the mechanical production of ice was perfected, natural ice long retained a reputation for being of higher quality (there was, of course, no difference).
10. The fishing trade was the largest user of the imported ice from Norway. Private customers usually bought their ice from fishmongers, butchers and chemists. The growth of pubs, hotels and the increased consumption of whisky and champagne fuelled demand for ice.