

Chronology of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal

17th Century

1699 - Aire and Calder Navigation Act passed.

18th Century

1704 - Aire and Calder Navigation opened to Leeds.

1712 - Navigations proposed for the River Douglas to Wigan; and for the Mersey and Irwell to Manchester.

1713 - River Douglas Navigation Bill rejected by Parliament.

1720 - River Douglas Navigation Act passed – Thomas Steers and William Squire named as undertakers.

1731 - Alexander Leigh and Alexander Radcliffe take over as undertakers for the Douglas Navigation.

1736 - Mersey and Irwell Navigation opened.

1737 - Robert Holt replaces Alexander Radcliffe as undertaker of Douglas Navigation.

1738 - Work starts on building the Douglas Navigation.

1742 - Douglas Navigation opened.

1744 - Bill for the navigation of the River Aire from Bingley to Skipton – the 'Aire Navigation' – rejected by Parliament.

1757 - Sankey Brook Navigation opened.

1765 - Canal from Leeds to Preston proposed by John Stanhope.

A scheme for a canal from the Ribble to the Humber and Scarborough proposed.
Bridgewater Canal opened to Manchester.

1766 - Public meeting at Bradford to discuss Stanhope's scheme and subscription opened to pay for detailed plans. The scheme was too expensive, and cut down to one from Leeds to Liverpool, with branches to Bradford, Settle, Burnley, Clitheroe, Blackburn, Lancaster, Manchester and Wigan.

1767 - The original scheme thought too expensive and the proposed canal now to run from Leeds to Preston and Liverpool.

1768 - First meeting in Lancashire about the canal.

1769 - Liverpool promoters suggest that the canal should pass through Burnley and Blackburn instead of through Whalley as proposed by Longbotham. After discussion, the original route was chosen, though the canal to be built from both ends at the same time.

1770 - The scheme was still too expensive, and the original Act of Parliament was just for a simple canal from Leeds to Liverpool, with a connection to Wigan via the Douglas Navigation. The canal company would support proposals for Bills promoting the branch canals. First Leeds & Liverpool Canal Act passed, authorising a line via Skipton, Gargrave, Colne, Whalley, Walton-le-Dale and Parbold.

1771 - Dissention amongst Liverpool proprietors, with some now promoting a Liverpool Canal between Wigan and Liverpool to the south of the official line.

Bradford Canal Act passed.

1772 - Liverpool Canal Bill, proposing new route from Liverpool to Wigan fails to obtain Parliamentary assent.

Springs Branch Act passed.

Alexander Leigh's shares in the Douglas Navigation purchased.

1773 - Leeds & Liverpool Canal opened from Bingley to Skipton and Gargrave

1774 - The Bill for the Settle Canal is defeated. Leeds & Liverpool Canal opened from Liverpool to Gathurst, and then via Douglas Navigation to Wigan.

The Bradford Canal opens as well as the L&LC from Shipley to Bingley, including the 5-rise locks.

Leeds & Selby Canal Bill, and the Settle Canal Bill, fail to obtain Parliamentary assent.

1777 - Leeds & Liverpool Canal opened from Shipley to Leeds. Work on constructing the main line ceases, all available capital having been spent.

- 1780** - 'Upper Douglas Navigation' opened from Gathurst to Wigan.
- 1781** - Douglas Navigation closed except for short section at Dean Locks, following the opening of the branch canal from Burscough to Rufford and Sollom Lock (the 'Lower Douglas Navigation'). Access to coal wharfs on the river at Gathurst continues via a lock at Dean.
- 1783** - Second Leeds & Liverpool Canal Act passed, allowing the River Douglas Navigation to be purchased.
- 1785** - Springs Branch leased from Lord Thanet.
- 1790** - Third Leeds & Liverpool Canal Act passed, authorising the line to be altered to avoid the aqueduct at Whalley Nab.
- 1791** - Building of the canal recommences westward from Gargrave.
- 1793** - Bill for a deviation of the line through Burnley, Blackburn and Chorley, to the canal at Wigan fails to obtain Parliamentary assent.
Lancaster Canal Act passed.
- 1794** - Fourth Leeds & Liverpool Canal Act passed, authorising the deviation through East Lancashire.
Rochdale Canal Act and Haslingden Canal Act passed.
- 1796** - Leeds & Liverpool Canal opened to Burnley, following the completion of Foulridge Tunnel.
- 1799** - Southern section of the Lancaster Canal opened from Haigh to Wheelton.

19th Century

- 1801** - Leeds & Liverpool Canal opened from Burnley to Henfield.
Duke of Bridgewater agrees to Leigh Branch.
- 1805** - As a result of the Croston Drainage Scheme, the Rufford Branch is extended from Sollom Lock to Tarleton.
- 1809** - Bill for Leigh Branch fails in Parliament.
- 1810** - Leeds & Liverpool Canal opened from Henfield to Blackburn.
The use of the Lancaster Canal between Heapey and Haigh agreed.
- 1816** - Leeds & Liverpool Canal completed and opened throughout.
- 1819** - Fifth Leeds & Liverpool Canal Act passed, authorising the construction of the Leigh Branch.
- 1820** - Leigh Branch opened.
- 1826** - Liverpool & Manchester Railway Act passed.
- 1828** - Bolton & Leigh Railway opened to the canal at Leigh.
- 1830s** - Liverpool & Manchester and associated railways open creating competition for Liverpool-Manchester trade.
- 1843** - First trial of steam-powered tug.
- 1846** - Liverpool Dock Branch opened after construction by Jesse Hartley, Liverpool's Dock Engineer.
- 1846/48** - Railway competition commences along the main line of the canal
- 1848** - Leeds & Liverpool Canal Company takes over the carriage of merchandise.
- 1850** - Merchandise traffic leased to railway consortium.
Canal head office moved from Bradford to Liverpool.
- 1858** - Leeds & Liverpool Canal Steam Tug Company formed.
- 1864** - Southern section of the Lancaster Canal leased by the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.
- 1867** - Bradford Canal closed.
- 1871** - Steam tugs re-introduced.
Bradford Canal sold.
- 1872** - Bradford Canal re-opened.
- 1874** - Leeds & Liverpool Canal Company resume operation of merchandise traffic following the termination of the railway lease.
- 1878** - Bradford Canal purchased by the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and the Aire & Calder Navigation.

- 1880** - Steam-powered carrying boats introduced.
- 1882** - Basin at Liverpool reduced in size following the construction of new road to the north docks.
- 1891** - Sixth Leeds & Liverpool Canal Act, authorising construction of Winterburn Reservoir.
- 1892** - Seventh Leeds & Liverpool Canal Act, altering the rating of the canal. Seventh Leeds and Liverpool Canal Act, altering the rating of the canal. Last two shares in the Douglas Navigation purchased. Douglas Navigation removed from the canal's official title.
- 1893** - Leeds & Liverpool Canal, Rates, Tolls and Charges Order introduced by Parliament.
- 1897** - Trial of electric power for boats.

20th Century

- 1903** - First trial of diesel power for boats, with the Leeds & Liverpool Canal having the world's first full diesel engine powered boat.
- 1905** - Eighth Leeds & Liverpool Canal Act, extending the time allowed for the construction of further reservoirs.
- 1921** - Canal Company disposes of its carrying fleet
- 1922** - Bradford Canal closes permanently.
- 1928** - Ninth Leeds & Liverpool Canal Act, altering the tolls charged.
- 1930** - Canal Transport Limited set up to undertake merchandise traffic.
- 1948** - Following nationalisation, canal controlled by the Docks & Inland Waterways Executive.
- 1953** - British Transport Waterways set up and takes over responsibility for the canal.
- 1960** - Regular traffic over the summit level ceases.
- 1963** - British Waterways Board formed.
- 1964** - The last traffic on the main lines finishes.
- 1965** - IWA National Rally held at Blackburn, with local MP, Barbara Castle, attending.
- 1968** - Barbara Castle pushes through a new Transport Act which protects canals for leisure use.
- 1972** - Regular trade on the canal ceases when the coal traffic to Wigan Power Station stops, though some irregular traffic continued.
- 1980** - Household coal deliveries by boat cease.
- 1985** - 'Canal Corridor' improvement scheme set up by Lancashire County Council and Wigan M.B.C., with Kennet converted to an exhibition boat.
- 1997** - L&LC Society formed.

21st Century

- 2001** - Salltaire becomes a World Heritage Site.
- 2002** - Ribble Link opens.
- 2005** - 100th Anniversary of the Boatmen's Mission, New Lane, Burscough - the last surviving Boatmen's Mission still used as a place of worship.
- 2008** - Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society commences looking after Kennet.
- 2009** - Liverpool Link, joining the canal to Albert Dock in Liverpool, opened.
- 2011** - Canal and River Trust formed.
- 2012** - British Waterways responsibilities for England and Wales' waterways transferred to the Canal & River Trust
- 2016** - 200th Anniversary of the canal's opening throughout, with Kennet re-enacting the opening voyage.
- 2019** - Bicentenary to celebrate the completion of the Lancaster Canal included original southern section (now part of Leeds & Liverpool Canal)