



CANAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE

ROGER BUTLER

The Arts Society Fylde

Lowther Pavilion Theatre

7 June 2023 at 2.00pm

The artificial waterways that we generally call “canals” have a long and glorious history - early links in Egypt between the Nile and the Red Sea are mentioned by 5th century BC Greek historian Herodotus, for example. Their contribution to trade and commerce are, of course, immense - as we saw from the problems with the closure of the Suez Canal in March 2021. Our own industrial revolution depended on canals for access to raw materials and the delivery of finished goods, with the “Golden Age” of canals being from about 1770 to 1830 and the arrival of the railways as a serious competitor.

At its height, the canal network covered about 4000 miles; Roger Butler is making his first visit to the Arts Society Fylde and promises to provide us with a colourful introduction to the secret world of today’s 2000-mile network. We will look with him at all aspects of the exceptional artistic, architectural and engineering vernacular. Features range from sweeping aqueducts to tiny bollards; from colourful historic narrowboats to 'Roses and Castles' artwork; from grand World Heritage Sites to quirky listed buildings. He refers to an architectural historian who called our canals a 'poor man's art gallery': the comparison reflects the unique beauty, historical significance and cultural richness associated with our canals.

ROGER BUTLER

Roger Butler is a landscape architect and an experienced writer, photographer and lecturer. He has a particular interest in the unique history, architecture and traditions of our canal network and worked on some of the UK’s major canal restoration projects. He has also acted as a consultant to bodies such as Waterways Ireland, Natural England and the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

He regularly contributes to waterway and heritage magazines and writes and provides images for a range of countryside and outdoor titles. Roger is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, a Licentiate of the Royal Photographic Society and a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute.

Roger lives near Stratford upon Avon and lectures to groups such as the National Trust, RSPB, U3A, history societies, etc. across the Midlands and further afield.

FURTHER READING

Narrow Boat, L.T.C. Rolt, 1944 (seen as the book which helped save many waterways from dereliction – it’s never been out of print)

Wonders – Anthony Burton and Derek Pratt (introduction to the built heritage of the waterways)

Canals of Britain by Stuart Fisher (large format paperback full of quirky facts, local history, etc)

Canals by Nigel Crowe (a detailed English Heritage book, now only available second hand)

Water Ways by Jasper Winn (recent travelogue – 1,000 miles along Britain’s canals)

Tales from the Tillerman by Steve Haywood (recent, humorous travelogue)



Image: Leeds and Liverpool Canal (Springs Branch, from 1773) at Skipton

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