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Devides 21.0°C


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Fun in the sun to remember Queen's visit to Caen Hill locks



Crowds gather at canal side to celebrate 25th anniversary of Queen's visit



Joanne Moore / Wednesday 12 August 2015 / News

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PEOPLE had fun in the sun on the Kennet and Avon Canal in Devides to mark the 25th anniversary of the Queen opening the restored Caen Hill flight of locks.

Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire Sarah Troughton descended the flight of locks on Friday in a canal boat before stopping at Lock 43 known as the Queen Elizabeth II lock where the original ceremony took place on August 8, 1990.

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It was followed by a towpath-side celebration that included displays of lock keeping, boating, canoeing, cycling, pond dipping and wildlife trails.

Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal Trust, the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust, Sustrans and the Kennet and Avon Trade Association all helped to organise the day that attracted people of all ages to the canal side.

Russell Fletcher, vice chair of the trade association, who also runs Foxhangers Canal

Holidays, from Rowde near Devides, said he was just 14 when he got up early with his sister Shelley to walk the Caen Flight to witness the opening.

Mr Fletcher said: "When I look back on the opening of the K&A, I see that it was the start of a new life for us and for hundreds of local people who have begun canal-related businesses as a result of the K&A becoming properly navigable.

"The canal supports a huge range of thriving businesses, from boat builders and repairers, marinas, miscellaneous makers and artisans, to the many pubs and eateries that line its 87-mile route.

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"Without what happened that day, I think I would probably be a farmer, the Caen Hill marina would still be a field and the whole way of life for hundreds, if not thousands of people along K&A would be completely different."

In the 1990s the canal was boosted again by £25 million from the Heritage Lottery which helped complete the waterway re-opening. It now attracts around 11 million tourists a year.

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