

Pontcysyllte Aqueduct – ‘*The bridge that joins*’

Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site is one of the Canal & River Trust's foremost heritage assets. It is the product of a single engineering project built during the height of Britain's Industrial Revolution over a thirteen-year period between 1795 and 1808, by two of Britain's most influential figures in the development of civil engineering, Thomas Telford and William Jessop.

Using innovative techniques to cross two major river valleys, the Ellesmere Canal brought water-borne transport from the English lowlands into the rugged and challenging terrain of the Welsh uplands. Its construction was vital in opening up coalfields in North Wales to economic exploitation and providing a means of transporting raw materials such as coal and slate to market.

The soaring aqueducts on this 11-mile stretch of canal, together with other features such as cuttings, embankments and tunnels, were later to influence the characteristics of highly engineered transport routes, both nationally and internationally.

Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is the monumental centrepiece. Its name in Welsh, taken from the older bridge below it, means ‘*the bridge that joins*’, particularly apt as it strides at a height of 126 feet/38.4 metres across the River Dee on its 19 cast iron spans, connecting the communities on both sides of the valley. It is recognised internationally as a masterpiece of waterways engineering and a pioneering example of iron construction in a dramatic landscape setting.

Chirk Aqueduct, also of great importance, crosses the River Ceiriog, the border between England and Wales.

The site has remained in continuous use for over 250 years; in early years for the movement of raw materials and later to carry pleasure boats and transfer water from the River Dee to a drinking water reservoir in Cheshire. It receives over 200,000 visitors every year.

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