


## Why were canals built?

## Chapter 1


Canals were built as a way of transporting goods around the country.

Before canals were built, moving goods around was difficult as there were no engines. Items such as coal and food had to be moved by horse and cart. This was slow and one horse could not pull much weight across the bumpy ground. The uneven roads also provided other problems.

 **What do you think might have happened when they tried to move fragile pottery?**

Rivers provided some areas with water transport, but the rivers weren't always located where they were needed because they are natural features of the landscape. Not all rivers could take boats as some were too shallow, fast flowing or their depth varied too much. In some cases rivers were already being used by millers or other industries to turn water wheels and they had ancient rights over the water.

The manmade canal system provided a smooth route for goods around the country. Canals could not be built to go everywhere. They were built to join up key areas of production (coal mines, mills, quarries) with large towns or ports.

 **Why do you think they would want to take goods to the ports?**



Horses didn't lose their jobs when traffic moved to the canals as carts and carriages were still needed. They also pulled the boats along. They could pull much heavier weights on the water than they could on land.

## Changing waterways

## Chapter 6

As other faster methods of transporting goods came along, the canals and waterways were used less.

Although canal companies tried to compete with railways and roads by lowering tolls, they did not manage to keep cargoes on waterways. Waterways began to have a different purpose. People enjoyed working on the waterways and many of the original boaters began to work for new companies operating pleasure craft. Boating for pleasure became increasingly popular. Canoeing, towpath walking and cycling have also become popular pastimes, and canals and rivers provide a great place to do this.

Towpaths are great places to spend time, as they are not often used now by horses pulling boats. People can enjoy fishing, cycling, walking and wildlife spotting. The inland waterways are part of our country's heritage but they have a great part to play in our modern world as well. Who knows – we might even use them for carrying cargoes again as the roads become busier and fuel becomes more and more expensive.



“Canals are a great place to try out canoeing as they are close to home, safe and with lots to see – you can even creep up on a moorhen!”

Edward Moss, British Canoe Union Coach