

George Watson Buck

A boat for the community

Welcome aboard!



This 46-foot-long narrow boat has been given to the community of Llanymynech, Pant and Carreghofa.

She was renamed 'George Watson Buck' after one of the Montgomery Canal's early engineers.

This well-equipped 12-seater narrow boat is being managed as a trip boat by the Llanymynech Wharf Visitor Centre operating along the restored stretch of the canal.

Regular boat trips take place on Sundays and Bank Holidays from Easter to the end of September from 1.30pm - 4.30 pm.

The 'George Watson Buck' can also be booked at other times by arrangement.

Contact 01691 828165 for details.

The man who lent his name to the boat

George Watson Buck was born at Stoke Holy Cross, near Norwich in 1789 and was educated at the Quaker School, Ackworth, Yorkshire. His first job was working for a wholesaler at Tower Hill, London, but he soon obtained a position at the Old Ford Pumping Station being constructed for the East London Water

Works designed by Ralph Walker. He later worked under Walker, on the Farlington water supply scheme near Portsmouth.

In 1819 he was appointed engineer of the Eastern branch of the Montgomery Canal, 22 years after it had opened from Carreghofa to Garthmyl. This section had been constructed by John and Thomas Dadsford but the quality of the work was poor. Buck rebuilt the Brithdir aqueduct using a cast-iron trough. He also introduced cast-iron lock gates and was responsible for the various overbridges which use cast-iron 'fish-bellied' beams.

In 1823 work started on the distorted masonry of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct using wrought-iron tie rods and cast-iron facing plates, together with cast-iron beams on the actual arch face. Although the work looks make-shift it has enabled the aqueduct to survive to the present day. Buck also introduced cast-iron railings on the aqueducts and a distinctive new form of paddle gear for the lock sluices in 1831.

In 1832 Watson Buck was made engineer for the Western Branch of the canal from Garthmyl to Newtown, which had been built by Josiah Jessop in 1815-19. Already in 1821, he had designed the waterwheel to pump water from the Severn to Newtown top pound.

Watson Buck left canal employment in 1833 to become one of Robert Stephenson's team building the London & Birmingham Railway and was therefore one of the surprisingly few engineers who transferred from canals to rail. In 1838 he became solely responsible for building the railway from Manchester to Crewe, his best-known structures being the Dane and Stockport viaducts.

He was an innovative engineer, a pioneer in the use of iron in canal engineering and produced what became the standard text book on skew bridges. Ill health forced his retirement in the mid-1840s. He moved to the Isle of Man, becoming increasingly engrossed in the Scriptures. Francis Conder, in Personal Recollections of English Engineers wrote 'his shrewd grey eye, half inquisitive, half deficient, twinkled with apparent love of fun'.

Thanks to Pete Brown for providing this information



Where did she come from?



The 'George Watson Buck' is the first non-maintenance boat to be on the canal at Llanymynech for more than sixty years. We are often asked where she came from.

She was built in 1997/98 by staff and apprentices of JCB Ltd under the guidance of the famous boat builder, Simon Piper. They were a work's group calling themselves 'The Navigators'.

When finished the boat was loaned to the North Staffordshire Boat Committee for the Handicapped. During the next four years she did sterling service carrying around 8000 children with special needs on the Caldon Canal in the Churnet Valley.

In 2002 the committee was wound up and its assets passed to another charity, which, as it happened was already converting a larger narrow boat for use as a day boat for the disabled and so held their new acquisition in reserve. She was overhauled, and had her hull blacked and her superstructure repainted before being moored at Red Bull basin.

In 2005 she was donated to Llanymynech.

We are very grateful to the Beatrice charity for this gift and the Shropshire Union Canal Society for making the transfer possible.

She's a fine boat of which Llanymynech can be proud!