

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Swedish lifeboat rowed home to Limehouse after 155 years

A 19th century lifeboat given to the King of Sweden by Queen Victoria's wine merchant has made a homecoming voyage, rowed across the Thames to Limehouse Basin site of the yard where she was built, where a commemorative plaque has been unveiled to mark the visit and the RNLI's 200th anniversary.

Lifbåt 416, a self-righting lifeboat built to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution's specification at Forrestt & Son was a gift to King Karl XV from James Gunston Chillingworth in 1868 – the year Benjamin Disraeli became British Prime Minister and Ulysses S Grant won the US presidential election. The pioneering self-righters built by Forrestt were tested by being dropped into the water on Limehouse Cut – London's oldest canal which opened in 1770.

After an illustrious career saving 80 lives on the treacherous waters around Skanör, southern Sweden, Lifbåt 416 answered her last call-out in 1939. She spent more than 45 years on display outside Falsterbo museum before her restoration to seaworthiness in 1992.

In recognition of the boat's origins, and to mark the bicentenary of the RNLI, the Skanör-Falsterbo Lifbåtsroddarelag club arranged for Lifbåt 416 to return to the UK by freight, participate in an anniversary event at the RNLI headquarters in Poole, Dorset.

She then returned home under oar power to Limehouse for the unveiling of a commemorative plaque in collaboration with the Canal & River Trust, the charity which cares for Limehouse Lock, Limehouse Cut and 2,000 miles of inland waterways in England and Wales.

**Skanör-Falsterbo Lifbåtsroddarelag chairman Johan Ullenby said:**

"This event has closed the circle for us. The boat was built in Limehouse in 1868, saved many lives in Sweden, and has now come back to her home waters after 155 years. The plaque marks the location of Forrestt & Son, where she was built, and is also a permanent record of her return to the Thames in 2024 - the 200th anniversary of the RNLI being founded."

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**Unveiling the plaque, Canal & River Trust chairman David Orr CBE said:**

“The return of Lifbåt 416, built here at Limehouse, is living heritage. In its heyday, Limehouse was the place that made the connection between the sea and the whole of the canal network.

“Normally, when we think of heritage we think about going to a museum to see some artifact that shows how we used to do things. But what events like this reinforce, is that when you look at canals, and the locks and the engineering that sustains them now, this is the heritage. It is the stuff that was built 250 years ago and is still in use.

“This is heritage not as history but as living present and future.”

**Canal & River Trust heritage specialist Phil Emery added:**

“This fantastic project draws attention to the fascinating maritime, industrial heritage of Limehouse. This whole area was filled with factories and workshops – shipbuilders, chandlers, sailmakers and latterly engine and pump manufacturers. And this whole industrial craft specialisation of the area is brought into sharp focus by the return of Lifbåt 416.

“Forrestt & Son was founded here in 1788, long before the Regent’s Canal arrived in 1820, and the self-righting lifeboats were the specialist product of the yard. Boats were literally dropped into the Limehouse Cut to test their watertightness and self-righting capabilities.

“We’ve carefully considered the location of the plaque and I’m delighted that visitors will be given this insight into the heritage of Limehouse in a prominent position for all to enjoy.”

**-ENDS-**

**For further media requests please contact:**

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**Notes to Editors**

The unveiling ceremony took place on 21st May, however our team then removed the plaque until it could be securely fixed in position. This permanent installation has now been completed.

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day. [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)