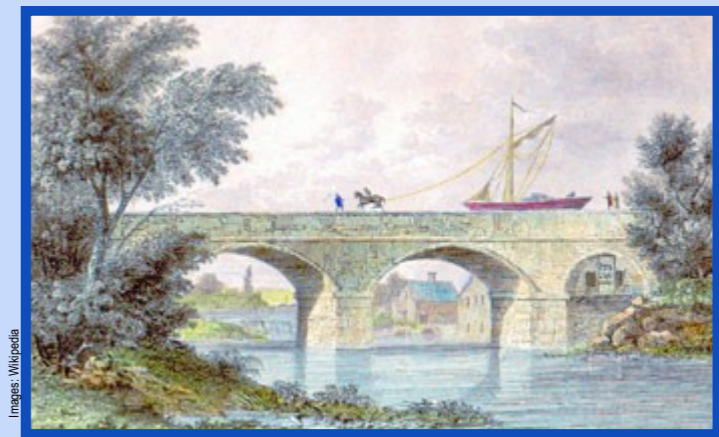


# Tourist Attraction

Worsley has a long history as a tourist attraction. When James Brindley's stone aqueduct at Barton-on-Irwell opened in July 1761, incorporating the official opening of the Bridgewater Canal, it was considered a wonder. No journey in the area was complete without a visit to marvel at the incredible sight of barges sailing over a river. One writer said that it "will be the most extraordinary thing in the kingdom, if not in Europe. The boats in some places are to go underground, and in other places over a navigable river, without communicating with its waters ..."

Even more of an attraction was John Gilbert's underground canal, hundreds coming to marvel at the Duke's 'sough'. Leading scientists and engineers of the day came to examine ingenious solutions to technical problems, while others came for the sheer thrill of a journey into the unknown. Its fame spread throughout Europe and people flocked to see it. The Duke became the first landowner to open his house and grounds to paying visitors - some 200 years before Longleat and Woburn opened their doors to 'gongoozlers' as those who came to stare and wonder at the aqueduct were called.



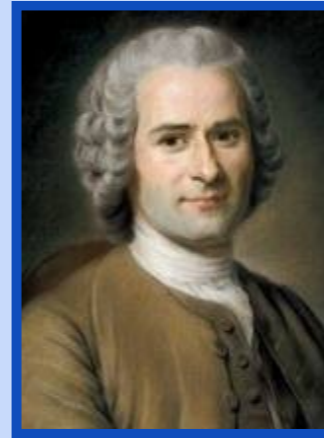
Barton Aqueduct



King Christian VII of Denmark



Archduke Nicholas of Russia



Jean-Jacques Rousseau



Matthew Boulton



Josiah Wedgwood



The Brick Hall and Bridgewater Canal

Manufacturers, scientists and inventors came to see the ingenious engineering solutions to problems which were becoming increasingly common as the Industrial Revolution got under way in Britain.

Gabriel Jars, a French industrialist and founder of the famous Le Creusot factory, visited Worsley on his 'Voyages Metallurgiques' around Britain, when he came to learn how to make coke and how red lead was made.

Sir Joseph Banks, the botanist and President of the Royal Society, came to Worsley some years before his famous voyage round the world with Captain James Cook aboard the Endeavour. He spent time while at Worsley, plant hunting on Chat Moss.

Josiah Wedgwood's visits almost certainly explain why his creamware dinner service for Catherine the Great of Russia included two illustrations of the canal, one of Worsley Road bridge, shown below right, and one of the aqueduct. These drawings were once attributed to the Swiss philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who had fled to Britain because he had upset both sides in a religious argument. The drawings are more likely to be the work of Peter Paul Burdett.

Arthur Young, a shrewd observer and author of 'A six months' tour through the North of England', described the Duke as 'so bold and daring a genius. To see him engaged in undertakings that give employment and bread to thousands, that tend so greatly to the advancement of agriculture, manufactures and commerce, of an extensive neighbourhood . . . must command our admiration; his Grace has a mind superior to common prejudice . . . one of the truly great men, who have the soul to execute what they have the genius to plan.'

One of the first and most frequent visitors was Josiah Wedgwood, who must have seen the canal and aqueduct being built and who realized that he could make use of canal technology to transport his pottery and china goods away from the factory in Stoke without breakages being such a huge problem. Matthew Boulton, of the famous Boulton and Watt's Soho Engineering Works in Birmingham and a lifelong friend of John Gilbert, was also a frequent visitor.

Soon the Grand Tour was happening in reverse, with wealthy people from all over Europe heading north to see the canal, the underground navigation and the wonderful aqueduct. They included such distinguished visitors as King Christian VII of Denmark and Grand Duke Nicholas, later Czar Nicholas I of Russia, assorted Austrian Archdukes and various Russian Princesses and Duchesses. Many members of the British aristocracy also joined the tourist trail to the Worsley area.



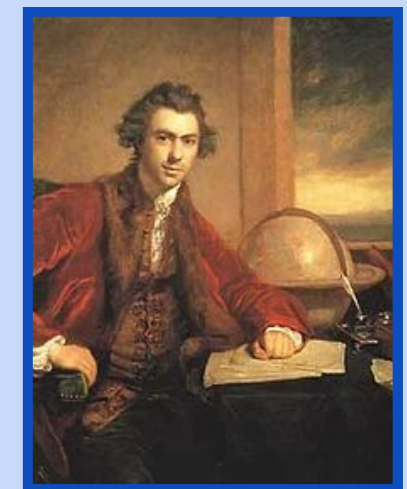
Arthur Young's drawing of the Delph quarry at Worsley with the sough entrance

In 1777, Samuel Curwen, an American refugee and Judge in Admiralty, visited the underground levels and wrote a vivid description of his journey by boat into the sough, followed by a walk through the subterranean gloom of the mines before emerging to daylight some five miles from his starting point.

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Samuel Curwen, Judge in Admiralty and American refugee



Sir Joseph Banks



'Rousseau' sketch