# Pontcysyllte Aqueduct

The **Pontcysyllte Aqueduct** (Welsh pronunciation: [[ˌpɔntkəˈsəɬtɛ]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/Welsh), full name in [Welsh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_language): ***Traphont Ddŵr Pontcysyllte***) is a [navigable aqueduct](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navigable_aqueduct) that carries the [Llangollen Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Llangollen_Canal" \o "Llangollen Canal) across the [River Dee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Dee,_Wales) in north east [Wales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wales). The 18-arched stone and [cast iron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cast_iron) structure, which took ten years to design and build, was completed in 1805. It is now the oldest and longest navigable aqueduct on [Great Britain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Britain)and the highest in the world.

The aqueduct was to be a key part of the central section of the proposed [Ellesmere Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellesmere_Canal), an industrial waterway that would create a commercial link between the [River Severn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Severn) at [Shrewsbury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrewsbury) and the [Port of Liverpool](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_of_Liverpool) on the [River Mersey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Mersey). However, only parts of the canal route were completed because the expected revenues required to complete the entire project were never generated. Most major work ceased after the completion of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct in 1805. Although a cheaper construction course was surveyed further to the east, the westerly high-ground route across the Vale of Llangollen was preferred because it would have taken the canal through the mineral-rich coalfields of [North East Wales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_East_Wales).

The structure is a [Grade I listed building](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grade_I_listed_buildings_in_Wrexham_County_Borough) and a [World Heritage Site](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Site).

## Etymology

The name *Pontcysyllte* in the [Welsh language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_language) means "Cysyllte Bridge".It is derived from the township of Cysyllte. The completed aqueduct linked the villages of [Froncysyllte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Froncysyllte" \o "Froncysyllte), at the southern end of the bridge in the Cysyllte township of [Llangollen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Llangollen" \o "Llangollen) parish (from where it takes its name), and [Trevor (*Trefor* in Welsh)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trevor,_Wrexham), at the northern end of the bridge in the Trefor Isaf township, also of Llangollen parish.

The aqueduct was originally known as *Pont y Cysyllte* ("Bridge of Cysyllte"). Other translations such as "Bridge of the Junction" or "The Bridge that links" are a modern [false etymology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False_etymology), derived from the name's apparent similarity to the word *cysylltiadau* (plural of *cyswllt*) which means connections or links.

## History

The aqueduct was built by [Thomas Telford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Telford) and [William Jessop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Jessop) near the 18th-century road crossing, [Pont Cysylltau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pont_Cysylltau). After the westerly high-ground route was approved, the original plan was to create a series of locks down both sides of the valley to an embankment that would carry the [Ellesmere Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellesmere_Canal) over the River Dee. However, after Telford was hired the plan was changed to an aqueduct that would create an uninterrupted waterway straight across the valley. Despite considerable public scepticism, Telford was confident his construction method would work because he had previously built a cast-iron trough aqueduct – the [Longdon-on-Tern Aqueduct](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longdon-on-Tern_Aqueduct" \o "Longdon-on-Tern Aqueduct) on the [Shrewsbury Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrewsbury_Canal).