

TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF RUISLIP RESERVOIR

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This paper traces the history of Ruislip Reservoir and feeder, and the part played by the Grand Junction Canal Company and the Grand Junction Waterworks Company in the planning and construction of them. It illustrates the difficulties and tensions that arose between the two companies because the Canal was used for dual purposes, to provide a navigable waterway into London and to supply drinking water to Paddington.

Two hundred years ago, on the 27 June 1811 John Rennie, prominent civil engineer, wrote 'A Reservoir of about sixty acres in extent is now constructing in the Vale of Ruislip. The bank is almost completed and the Culvert and Pipe for the discharge of the water is building.'ⁱ In December 1811 he was able to report that the reservoir had been completed, was nearly full of water and showed no signs of leakage, despite the extensive bed of sand found near its head. Six months later all was watertight and water was passing over the waste weir.ⁱⁱ

The reservoir had been a long time in the planning and the story begins with the Grand Junction Canal Company.

Navigation and provision of drinking water

Navigable canals for transporting raw materials and manufactured goods from their places of production to sea ports and other distribution centres rapidly spread across the British Isles in the second half of the 18th century. The thoughts of entrepreneurs naturally turned to connecting the developing system with London, the greatest entrepot of all. The Grand Junction Canal Company was incorporated in 1793 to construct a new waterway to link the Oxford Canal at Braunston to the Thames at Brentford.

Earlier concerns had focused on canals, such as the New River in 1613, that would bring drinking water into central London and not on navigation. Several 17th and 18th century plans had foundered for financial reasons and by the end of the 18th century, businessmen realised that any canal that was to succeed would have to be navigable as 'however beneficial the work might be for the public in procuring a better and more regular supply of water for domestic use and safety in cases of fire, the returns of profit would not for many years be answerable to the expense.'ⁱⁱⁱ

Grand Junction Canal Company

In 1792 James Barnes (1739-1819), Civil Engineer (and a Banbury brewer), was commissioned by the Marquis of Buckingham to make a preliminary survey of a probable route for a canal. As a result a committee was established to apply for an Act of Parliament for the Company of Proprietors of the Grand Junction Canal. The Act received the Royal Assent in April 1793. It granted powers to raise £500,000 in £100 shares and a further £100,000 if necessary and 'to make and maintain the Grand Junction Canal with divers collateral cuts and incidental works and supply the canal and collateral cuts with water from ... brooks, springs...reservoirs'. William Praed, a banker and MP for St Ives, Cornwall, was Chairman, and Philip Fox, a banker from Buckingham, became Treasurer. The offices were in Fludger Street (off Whitehall, parallel to Downing Street) and Winchester Row (off the Edgware Road) and later in Surrey Street near to Mr Praed's banking premises in Fleet Street.^{iv}

Work began at both ends of the new canal and the Brentford - Uxbridge section was opened in November 1794, although not entirely finished. The canal was replenished with water drawn from the Rivers Colne and Brent.

There had initially been opposition to the canal from the inhabitants of Uxbridge, a town that owed its prosperity to the many mills^v in the vicinity, which depended upon a good head of water on the river, and also from the Duke of Northumberland and the millers themselves, many of whom were his tenants. To safeguard the millers' interests, the amount of water that could be taken and the quantity that had to be returned to the rivers was regulated by the Act of Parliament, hence the need for reservoirs and feeders.

At a general meeting of proprietors held at The White Horse Inn, Uxbridge in June 1794 it was decided that Mr Barnes, should survey land on Ruislip common that Mr Jessop (William Jessop), the Chief Engineer to the Company, had proposed for a reservoir and 'such other situations as may appear eligible for other reservoirs'.^{vi} Aldenham Reservoir, fed by the Colne, was created between 1795-7, but the suitable land at Ruislip had not been forgotten and Mr Gream, a surveyor drew up plans for a reservoir there as well.

The next reference to a possible reservoir at Ruislip occurred in 1802. The Paddington Arm of the canal, providing a more direct route into central London, had opened in 1801 and the following year there was a proposal for a 'London Canal' that would connect the Paddington Arm with the docks at Limehouse. John Rennie, advising on methods of supplying such a canal with water suggested that one way would be to obtain water from the Grand Junction Canal which could be done, 'partly by diverting part of the water which is now used for locking down from the Paddington level to the River Thames at Brentford, and partly by constructing Reservoirs at Rislip and other situations near to or adjoining the Rivers Brent, Colne and Bulbourne, which Reservoirs can be filled with the flood or surplus waters of the said Rivers under the authority of the Grand Junction Act passed in the year 1793'.^{vii} He calculated that the Aldenham Reservoir, which was being extended, would be able to supply 81,076 cu ft per day and one at Ruislip double that quantity, together providing two-thirds of

the water required. One or two 'additional Reservoirs for which there are excellent situations on the River Brent and near the Village of Rislip' would make up the rest.

The Grand Junction Canal Company's Committee of Proprietors noted in November 1802 that there had been 'a longer period of dry weather in the southern part of the kingdom than has been recollected for many years', leading to 'a scantiness of water'^{viii} and was therefore anxious to start work at Ruislip on its own account. They ordered that negotiations for buying the land should begin.

Acquiring the land for Ruislip Reservoir

At this point the reservoir was expected to provide water for the canal and not specifically for the waterworks that were to be built at Paddington.

Discussions were then taking place for obtaining an Act of Parliament for enclosing Ruislip's common lands and Mr Trumper of Harefield, one of the Enclosure Commissioners, was known to the Company as he had already been acting as a trustee for the purchase money of land for the line of the canal in Harefield^{ix}, so he was approached on the matter. A difficulty arose when Mr Gream's plans, to the Committee's great displeasure, could not be found, although he insisted that he had delivered them to Mr Barker, the Secretary. They had been removed from the Company's Offices and orders were issued that in future receipts must be kept re the delivery and taking away of plans etc from the offices at Fludger Street or Winchester Row. Thomas Douglas, the contractor who had carried out repairs at Aldenham seems to have been asked to prepare new plans (no longer extant) and on the 12 June 1804 the General Committee 'Resolved that the solicitors be directed to make application to the Commissioners for inclosing Riselep Common to allot a sufficient quantity of land... to make a reservoir at the spot surveyed by Thomas Douglas ...and Mr Barker do attend the Commissioners to point out the situation required.'^x

To create the reservoir, the engineers intended to dam the stream that ran across Ruislip Common, passed under Bury Street at Cannonsbridge and joined the River Pinn near Clack Lane. The hamlet of Park Hearne, then consisting of seven cottages and their enclosures stood on the bank of the stream at the southern end of the common. The Company needed to buy common land from the Enclosure Commissioners, part of Park Wood from King's College, Cambridge, and some of the cottages that belonged to various owners.

The Enclosure Commissioners were selling some of the common land to cover the costs of their large undertaking. New Enclosure 40 (39 acres 2 roods), the land between Poor's Field and Park Hearne, and the stream and New Enclosure 50, (16 acres 1 rood 4 poles) on the north side of Reservoir Road, were sold to the Canal Company (see Map Fig. 2). The Company had intended to accept the Commissioners' valuation, but Mr Hogg who attended a meeting with the Commissioners' solicitors on the 15 December 1804 representing the Company, was concerned to find the suggested valuation of £70 per acre 'above £20 per more than the same was valued at by Mr Barker and himself'^{xi}. A period of bargaining ensued with the Company deciding to call out commissioners as permitted under the Company's own Act of Parliament to ascertain the true value of the land for such a purpose. In February 1805 the Enclosure Commissioners offered the land at £55 per acre. The Company would only give 50 guineas (£52 10s) per acre. A meeting of the proprietors of land in the parish of Ruislip at a meeting convened by the Enclosure Commissioners 'unanimously determined not to accept of a less sum than £55 per acre'. The Company capitulated and acceded to these terms.^{xii}

The next step was to acquire Old Enclosure 490b (35 acres 3 roods), the northern part of Park Wood where it came down to the stream. The Park had been leased by King's College to the Hawtreys of Eastcote House since the mid-17th century and latterly to Mrs Elizabeth Rogers, great-granddaughter of Ralph Hawtrey (1626-1725).

She had died in 1803 and the trustees of her will, the Rev George Deane and Charles James of New Inn had instigated the Ruislip Enclosures. Mr Hogg went off to meet them in April 1805 and discovered that their valuation of £65 per acre was £40 more per acre than it had been valued at by Mr Barker and himself. It was proposed to leave the valuation to surveyors named by the parties and in case of disagreement to accept the decision of an umpire. Mr Hogg would act for the Company and would meet 'some indifferent person' and the surveyors on behalf of the owners of the woodland and the finding of any two of them should be final and binding on the parties.^{xiii} Two years elapsed before a satisfactory agreement was reached, but in February 1807 the Company paid £1068 for 35 acres 3roods of Park Wood. (The Front Cover aerial photograph clearly shows the purchase) Ten acres were valued at £45 per acre and the rest at £24 per acre, the difference presumably being the amount of timber growing in the different sections of the wood. The lessees (Deane and James) were allowed £77 5s of the total in compensation for loss of underwood.

Finally and more controversially the Park Hearne cottages were obtained. Initially Henry Golder, who lived in his own cottage, refused to treat with the Company on any terms. Other owners simply hedged until better prices were offered. Both Henry Golder and Robert Lively who owned two of the cottages, sold out to John Dean in the summer of 1807 and in August the Company was able to complete the purchases. They paid £210 to the Rev William Blencowe for a cottage and one and a half acres, £100 to Daniel Hill for a cottage and 21 perches, and £250 to John Dean for three cottages and five and a half acres. The Company Minutes of 10 August 1807 state that these prices 'were collectively more moderate than purchases formerly made for the reservoir in that parish.'^{xiv}

The Grand Junction Canal Company was in possession of all the land required for the reservoir in 1807, but there were many calls on the Company's funds and it was to be another three years before work began, and

by then it was with a view to supplying potable water for the Paddington waterworks, not just keeping a sufficient level of water in the canal for navigation purposes.

An Act of Parliament in May 1798, principally to settle the disputes with the Bishop, included powers for the Grand Junction Canal Company to supply water from the canal to the inhabitants of Paddington.

The Grand Junction Waterworks Company and the Building of the Reservoir

There was a proliferation of water works companies in London at the time and there were a number of approaches from them to the Grand Junction Canal Company over its water rights. In January 1808 The West Middlesex Water Works Company proposed the purchase or lease of all the Company's rights to supply water to Paddington for 50 years with the option of a renewal for 30 years, on payment of a fine. Negotiations continued until March and were then terminated.^{xv} A successful approach came from within the Canal Company itself.

Mr Samuel Hill, who was one of the Proprietors of the Grand Junction Canal Company, obtained an agreement to take over the Paddington water supply in 1810. 'The Grand Junction Canal Company shall grant to Samuel Hill *et al* to do all acts to make such reservoirs and lay mains and pipes and other works and to use such Waterworks and Aqueducts of the said Company as shall be necessary to enable the grantees Samuel Hill *et al* to supply with water all or any of the Parishes and streets which the said Company of Proprietors of the Grand Junction Canal are . . . authorised to supply and that it shall be lawful for the grantees to apply to Parliament to . . . form a company for carrying on the waterworks'. The application led to the formation of the Grand Junction Waterworks Company.

Under the terms of the agreement the Canal Company was to supply the new waterworks company with 57,000 tons of water per week and 'as much more as can be provided

without prejudice to the navigation of the Grand Junction Canal'. The lessors (the Grand Junction Canal Company) were to provide the land while the lessees (Samuel Hill *et al*) were to be at the expense of making and maintaining the reservoirs and pipes, mains, machinery and waterworks, all of which were to be delivered back to the lessors at the expiry of the 50 year lease.^{xvi} The Canal Company remained owners.

The division of responsibilities between the two companies and a lack of clarity as to where the boundaries lay, was to lead to friction and delays and calls upon legal opinion that sometimes gave conflicting advice in the years ahead.

The Canal Company took its obligation to provide an adequate amount of water to the waterworks group seriously from the outset and ordered Mr Provis (Henry Provis 1760-1830), who had supervised the works on the Paddington Arm, to report on the fitness and capacity of the new reservoir for this purpose in September 1810. He reported that 'the reservoir when fill'd with water will cover a surface of 72 acres, the depth of which at the head will be 20 feet and will contain a supply for 5986 houses at the rate of 80 gallons of water per day for one year'. He suggested that by purchasing more land the capacity could be increased above half.^{xvii} No action was taken to buy more land.

Mr Hill set the work going under John Rennie's supervision, while the Bill was still pending, enabling the engineer to write his confident report about the advanced state of the reservoir in June 1811.^{xviii} At some point the Park Hearne cottages were dismantled. Ruislip Parish Rate books show that some of them were still occupied in June, but not at the end of the year, and there is an unsubstantiated story that the military had to be called out from Windsor to evict the residents.

The Grand Junction Waterworks Company was not incorporated until June 1811 because of objections from the Duke of Northumberland and millers on the River Colne, fearing the withdrawal of large quantities of water from the river.

This was an old dispute, which had been dealt with in the clauses of the 1793 Act, but new clauses were now inserted into the waterworks bill to appease the millers.^{xix}

Hugh McIntosh and George Mundy were the contractors for the reservoir. George Mundy & Co had been doing the brickwork at Paddington, where he had been using bricks made at Alperton, and tendered for the execution of the brickwork at Ruislip, 'for the same sum as allowed us at Paddington with the additional price of bricks only as supplied in the above Neighbourhood, namely 8 shillings per thousand, making the Rod of Brickwork £18 16s or will leave the valuation of the work when finished to Mr Rennie. There will be about 22 Rods.'^{xx} (22 rods equals 121 yards) Presumably the bricks were for the dam. Messrs McIntosh & Mundy were directed on the 22 July 1811 to proceed with the work at Ruislip 'with all possible dispatch'.^{xxi} The face of the bank of the reservoir was completed with faggots and the foot of the bank had been fenced with posts and rails and quicked (planted with hawthorn) by February 1812.^{xxii}

Although Mr Rennie was the consultant engineer, the day to day supervision of the works at Ruislip was conducted by Mr William Anderson, a Scotsman, who had been working with John Rennie since 1800. He was appointed engineer to the Grand Junction Waterworks Company and was effectively the resident engineer. He proved an energetic promoter and guardian of the Waterworks Company's interests. The engineers were responsible for reservoirs at Paddington where filtering of the water could take place and for the waterworks there as well as at Ruislip. The well-being of the Waterworks Company depended upon selling water to customers and many of Mr Anderson's reports and letters deal with his concern over the purity and quantity of water reaching the Paddington Arm of the canal, as householders soon transferred their custom to rival concerns if these were unsatisfactory. He also had to deal with any local complaints that arose, as when cows that were grazing on the Canal Company's 16 acres on the north side of Reservoir Road,

broke out because of poor fencing and damaged a neighbouring allotment in July 1812.^{xxiii}

No sooner was the reservoir constructed and completed at the Waterworks Company's expense, than the Canal Company started selling off surplus land – the 16 acres across the road and also small pieces of waste ground around the reservoir itself, depriving the Waterworks Company of the means of repairing their bank or raising the head of water. Legal opinion was that 'unless the surplus of the land round the reservoir is essentially necessary to the Waterworks Company for the purpose of keeping such Reservoir in repair or for a road or roads thereto, that they have no right whatever to the same', but some small quantity of land should be left around the reservoir for a fence to be erected to protect it. Should a need to enlarge the reservoir occur, the Canal Company would be obliged to provide the land.

Another bone of contention was the fishery (fishing rights) on the reservoir. The Canal Company, exploiting its asset, leased the fishery to Sir George Lee, who was intending to buy the 16 acres at the same time. When the members of the Waterworks Company realised what was happening, they claimed the right to the fishery and without more ado, gave Sir George notice to 'desist from further exercising such privilege'^{xxiv}. In consequence, Sir George refused to complete his purchase of the land. The Canal Company referred the matter and retained the fishery. In 1818, it was offered to Mr Deane of Eastcote House for £25 per annum.^{xxv}

Ruislip Feeder

The immediate need was for the Canal Company to provide a feeder to convey water from Ruislip to the canal, but its money and attention were probably elsewhere, as a feeder through Kingsbury and Willesden connected with the River Brent was being constructed^{xxvi}, and in 1812 the Act of Parliament authorising the construction of the Regent's Canal between Paddington and the docks was passed.

John Rennie reported in June 1812.^{xxvii} 'The reservoir at Ruislip has been completed and proves to be perfectly watertight. The water now passing over the waste weir. I was in hopes that the feeder from thence to the Grand Junction Canal would likewise have been completed, but in this I am disappointed nor is it yet begun – the delay is due to the Grand Junction Canal Company not having got possession of the Ground over which it is to be made over some disputes with His Grace the Duke of Northumberland.' His Grace objected to the feeder making use of natural watercourses which supplied the River Colne.

William Anderson recommended that the feeder should be put in hand immediately, but in January 1813 he was complaining that the work was no further forward. 'I fear much the want of water in the summer months if not done by that time' he wrote.^{xxviii} The more successful that the Waterworks Company was in gaining customers in the West End, the greater the quantity of water required from the canal. Mr Provis of the Canal Company made a survey and plan in February 1813, for which he hoped to receive remuneration, but got short shrift.^{xxix} As he had been appointed Superintendent Engineer in charge of all the Canal Company's estates from Paddington to Uxbridge and Bullsbridge to Brentford in 1802, at a salary of £200 per annum, and as the feeder was strictly within his district, there would be no increase for him.^{xxx} Perhaps some further remuneration might be appropriate when the feeder was complete.^{xxxi} The feeder was to take a circuitous route of eight miles to enter the canal near Hayes Bridge, because of the necessity of avoiding natural streams and watercourses and difficulties with landowners. The entry point to the canal was 12 miles from Paddington. Once the Ruislip water entered the canal it would inevitably mingle with the general waters and would not exclusively quench the thirst of the waterworks customers, but simply help raise the water level.

The Canal Company only began to seriously consider the plans for the feeder in the autumn of 1815, after near disaster had

struck the Waterworks Company because of low water in the canal the previous year. In August 1814 the Colne millers had agreed to allow the Canal Company to draw water from the river provided that the Canal Company would return an equal amount from Ruislip Reservoir. Mr Povis had placed a gauge in the Ruislip Brook (the River Pinn) near Allen's Bridge at Cowley and Mr Anderson was asked to let out water from the reservoir as soon as possible.^{xxxii} Presumably the water ran through the Cannon Brook into the Pinn, where it could be diverted to the Colne at Cowley. In September 1814 Mr Harvey of the Canal Company realised that Baker, at Cowley Lock was not returning Colne water to the canal and requested Mr Anderson to stop the reservoir if he could not prevail upon Baker, who was probably an extra lock keeper paid by the millers, to ensure that the Canal Company gave a fair return.^{xxxiii} The water was still running from Ruislip Reservoir in December 1814 and William Anderson roughly calculated that 21,000 tons per week had gone into the Colne. The millers had not said how much had been returned to the canal, but the level had risen by three inches, which pleased Mr Harvey who hoped that there would never be any necessity to let in Brent water, which was notoriously foul, and could lead to the ruination of both companies.^{xxxiv}

Maybe because of the lowness of the canal, impure water was being distributed to waterworks customers. In mid-September 1814, Mr Anderson tested the water from different areas; Davies Street, Brook Street, Grosvenor Street and Berkeley Square at different periods of time after the steam-driven pumping engine had stopped running. The quality was 'bad' after five minutes, 'somewhat better in appearance but not much' after twenty minutes and still much discoloured after an hour and a quarter. Later in the evening, the water from Berkeley Square to Piccadilly, Charles Street and Chesterfield Street, was all 'pretty foul'.^{xxxv} Naturally customers left in droves and the Company strove to ensure a pure water supply to entice them back.

Free watering of the streets to lay the dust where a sufficient number of houses were supplied had been offered as an inducement in the first place.

The restoration of the Colne supply must have helped, because John Rennie, who tended to be optimistic, stated that by June 1815 the Waterworks Company was 'providing a service of water purer than that furnished to the Metropolis by any other Company' and that 'nothing to this day (he was writing his report in December 1815) has occurred in the slightest degree to disturb the purity of their source of supply'. 'The confidence of the public has been in part restored - the Company is recovering its character for a supply of excellent water, as no houses have been lost on account of the quality and we can again reckon among our tenants many who had discontinued their custom in consequence of the accidental and temporary disaster of foul water.'^{xxxvi} There was still no feeder, but the land was being purchased by the Canal Company.

Rennie's bland report diplomatically ignores the tensions and disagreements in the background. The directors of the Waterworks Company were aggrieved at the lack of progress with the feeder and were forming the view that the money they had expended on the reservoir at Ruislip had been unwarranted and that such an allocation of funds was possibly not permitted by their own Act of incorporation. At a Special Court of Directors held on the 21 November 1815, they expressed the opinion that they ought to abandon the reservoir that had been made by them 'completely in error', and should consider measures they should adopt and how to obtain a reimbursement from the Canal Company.^{xxxvii} However, Mr Samuel Hill one of the Committee of Management prior to the passing of Act had undertaken to build the reservoir, and so the discussions continued and the matter was smoothed over.

Work commenced on the feeder at the beginning of February 1816 and water ran through it for the first time on the 4 June, according to James Ewer, a local farmer.

Unfortunately, the feeder was not destined to be a success. There had been heavy rains at the beginning of October 1816 and William Anderson sent two men from the Engine House at Paddington up the canal in a boat 'to examine if the Brent feeder or any other foul water had found its way into the canal.' It had, but from the Ruislip feeder, not the Brent. The Waterworks Company had been assured that in the constructing of the feeder, all drainage water would be kept out, particularly the Yeading stream, but the bank had not been raised high enough in some places. Mr Anderson took a sample of water to the Canal Company offices, arriving when a committee was sitting. He told the men present that the bad construction of the feeder made it possible for any ordinary flood of the Crane, which connected with the Yeading, to flood into the feeder and thereby contaminate the canal and that the consequences would be ruinous to the Waterworks Company. The men round the table solemnly agreed that the Crane water was equally as bad as the Brent water - it smelt bad, it tasted bad. Mr Anderson reported that 'All the Committee seemed very sorry that the mischief had occurred, and appeared at a loss to know whose duty it was to have prevented it.'^{xxxviii}

Mr Anderson himself stopped the sluices between the feeder and canal on the 9 October, but found them open again on the 14 October, when he stayed all day with two men and oversaw a temporary repair of the bank over which the foul water had flowed. He went again to the Canal Company's offices, where he explained that the Waterworks Company wanted indemnity for what had passed, and immediate repair and prevention. He proposed that the sluices should be put in the care of a person appointed by both companies. A heated exchange took place, but eventually Mr Simpson of the Canal Company changed his language and asked Mr Provis to do the necessary work. Mr Anderson accompanied Mr Provis up the feeder, where orders were given to raise the bank and to lower the waste weir at the sluices.

They went along the canal and calculated that the foul water would reach the Alperton valley, the best place to discharge it, by Tuesday. On that day they opened the sluices at Alperton at nine o'clock in the morning and by four o'clock the canal had sunk $\frac{3}{4}$ inch and the water was left running for another three hours.^{xxxix} The water was clear for the time being.

The cock at Ruislip Reservoir was reported as out of repair on the 24 October 1816 and the Canal Company wanted to empty the reservoir and let all the water into the canal to enable their workmen to attend to it. Mr Anderson examined the water himself and found it unfit to be turned into the canal because of recent rains. '...It appeared to me at this advanced state of the year there would be no probability of emptying it this season' and informed the Canal Company's foreman on the spot, who stopped the flow 'until he received from his Company their order how he should act.' Mr Anderson also suggested a way of fixing a new cock without emptying the reservoir, by placing it in the culvert. Mr Anderson suggested extending the feeder so that the water by-passed the Paddington Arm and entered the Brentford Lockage, where it would be a source of supply for navigation and could not injure the Waterworks Company.

A report on the state of the reservoir and feeder in March 1817 said that the reservoir was full although no rain of consequence had fallen for a month, but it was discoloured with a yellow stain, making it unfit for any water company. Innumerable small runs of water were draining into the feeder along its whole course. '...Being cut through the sides of the hills and the land laying in so particular a manner, every furrow in almost every field drains into it. The report concluded that 'the Reservoir and feeder can never be used with safety as a supply for a waterworks and is a principle reason for this Company to encourage the adoption of the plan for conveying this water to a part of the canal where it cannot injure this Company.'^{xl}

Mr Trumper was immediately employed in getting the necessary land, so that work could begin. The sales went smoothly and the extra two miles of feeder was soon accomplished. Water was let into the new feeder for the first time on the 5 August 1817 and entered the canal at Southall.

The Canal Company had already expended £10,000 upon the feeder and hoped that the Waterworks Company would pay a moiety towards the costs of the extension. This was agreed. Should the Waterworks Company ever start taking its supply from the River Thames (it did in 1826), then the money would be returned. Mr Rennie was able to report in December 1817 that the plan had been successfully carried into effect.^{xli}

The feeder can still be followed (allowing for a certain amount of breaking through brambles) from the reservoir to the A40 (see Fig. 1) as described by Denise Shackell in the 1986 edition of this Journal and can be traced beyond that through Ten Acre Wood. The footbridges mainly bear a 1930 date, suggesting that the Grand Union Company undertook maintenance work shortly after its formation in 1929 (see also Figs. 3 and 4).

Ruislip's beautiful lake

Ruislip gained a beautiful lake surrounded by Park and Copse Woods and open heathland (see Front Cover) that has attracted birdlife and people, whether naturalists, artists, walkers or pleasure seekers ever since.

Fishing and shooting rights were let to the Deanes of Eastcote House in the 19th century and they employed gamekeepers. Some of the labourers who lived at Ruislip Common worked for the Canal Company.

George Barker was considered to be 'a fit person' to look after the new feeder and the drains on the canal, and was to be paid £1 1s per week in 1817. The 1851 census shows him as a 73-year-old, living in a cottage at Ruislip Common, still working as a Reservoir Keeper, and his 19-year-old grandson who was living with him, was described as a piano tuner!

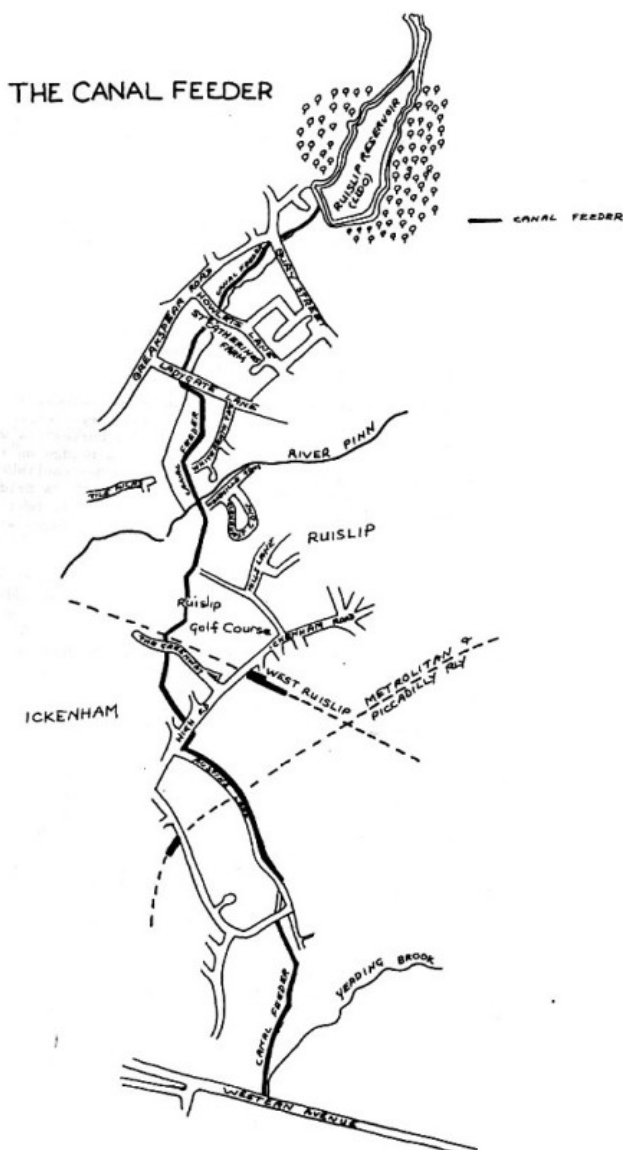


Fig.1

Denise Shackell

The reservoirs belonging to the Grand Junction Canal Company became places of resort in Victorian times. In 1886, while Northwood Station was being built, David Carnegie of Eastbury advertised 25 plots of land for sale by auction, 'with panoramic views over Ruislip Reservoir'. The opening of Northwood Station in August 1887 brought day-trippers seeking a day in the country, who had only to refresh themselves at one of Northwood's hostleries before taking a short ramble down Hills Lane and over the Common to the reservoir. Cyclists came and from 1904 onwards some ramblers arrived from Ruislip Station. There are photographs

of Edwardian ladies relaxing while their swains propel them across the water. Boys from Harrow School watched birds, and according to naturalist and anthropologist Thomas Harrison (founder of Mass Observation), who was one of their number, went bird nesting, then an acceptable hobby! Although there were no special facilities, people came to skate and swim in season. With cars becoming more common in the late Twenties, the trustees of the Ruislip Cottagers' Allotments Charity, then owners of Poor's Field (the Common), allowed cars to park there at prices varying from 6d to 1 shilling per car.^{xliii} (see also Figs. 5 and 6)

Later ownership

The Grand Junction Waterworks Company continued to use the canal as a source of supply until 1826 when it changed to the Thames at Chelsea. The Company was incorporated in the Metropolitan Water Board in 1904.

The Regent's Canal opened in 1820 and took over Ruislip Reservoir in 1827, and is thereafter shown as the occupier of the reservoir and feeder in Ruislip Parish Rate Books, with the Grand Junction Canal Company as owner. The Regent's Canal Company bought the Grand Junction Canal Company in 1927 and both became part of the Grand Union Canal Company in 1929. The Grand Union Company developed the reservoir as a Lido. After Nationalisation in 1948 the reservoir and feeder were governed by the British Transport Commission from whom the reservoir was purchased by the Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council in 1951. The Reservoir/Lido passed into the hands of the Borough of Hillingdon in 1964.

All was to change in the 1930s. The Grand Union Canal Company decided to exploit its asset by converting the southern end of the reservoir into a Lido. The grand opening of the 'Moderne' style Lido buildings took place in 1936 and opened a new chapter in the reservoir's long history.



Fig. 2

The Enclosure Map of 1806 showing the common land sold to the Grand Junction Canal Company by the Enclosure Commissioners, the portion of Park Wood bought from King's College and the cottages at Park Hearne.

Some of the occupiers did not leave until work on the reservoir actually began.



Fig. 3
Outlet works to the Feeder from the Lido at the present time.
The curved brick walling is possibly part of the original works



Fig. 4
The walls of the Feeder aqueduct are in the foreground, looking south over the River Pinn.
Just behind is the parapet of the adjacent footpath bridge (dated 1930)



Fig. 5
The commencement of leisure activities in the early part of 20th century



Fig. 6
The Reservoir from Poors Field in the early part of the 20th century

References

- ⁱ Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE): Rennie's Report Book 6
- ⁱⁱ Ibid Report Book 7
- ⁱⁱⁱ London Metropolitan Archives (LMA): Accession 2558 GJ7/3
- ^{iv} Alan Faulkener: *The Grand Junction Canal* 1972, p19
- ^v There were three mills in the town and ten more within four miles, according to Redford & Riches, *History of Uxbridge* (1818)
- ^{vi} The National Archives (TNA): RAIL 830 39, General assembly of Proprietors and General Committee Minutes
- ^{vii} ICE: John Rennie's Report Book 2, p 310, Letter to Sir Christopher Baynes Bt, Chairman of Committee of Proprietors of the proposed London Canal
- ^{viii} TNA: RAIL 830/41, 2 Nov 1802
- ^{ix} Ibid 830/39, 27 July 1795
- ^x Ibid 830/41, 12 June 1804
- ^{xi} Ibid 830/41, 21 Jan 1805
- ^{xii} Ibid 830/41, 15 Feb 1805 and 19 March 1805
- ^{xiii} Ibid 830/41, 9 April 1805
- ^{xiv} Ibid 830/42, 10 Aug 1807
- ^{xv} Ibid 830/42, 12 & 21 Jan 1808
- ^{xvi} Ibid 830/42, 24 May 1810
- ^{xvii} TNA: RAIL 830/42, 9 Oct 1810
- ^{xviii} ICE: Rennie's Report Book 5, 5 June 1817
- ^{xix} TNA: RAIL 830/42, 9 April 1811
- ^{xx} LMA: Acc 2558 GJ1/1/1, 29 June 1811
- ^{xxi} LMA: Ibid 22 July
- ^{xxii} LMA: Acc 2558 GJ/ 01/0647, 113
- ^{xxiii} Ibid/191
- ^{xxiv} TNA: RAIL 830/43, 9 Feb 1813
- ^{xxv} Ibid 9 April 1818
- ^{xxvi} Wembley History Society: *The Welsh Harp Reservoir 1835 to 1985* (1985), based on articles by Geoff Hewlett & Terence Lomas in the Society's Journal
- ^{xxvii} ICE: Rennie's Report Book 7, 3 June 1812
- ^{xxviii} LMA: Acc 2558 GJ 01/0647, 276
- ^{xxix} TNA: RAIL 830/43, 9 Feb 1813
- ^{xxx} Ibid 8 April 1813
- ^{xxxi} Ibid 13 May 1813
- ^{xxxii} LMA: Acc2558 GJ1/1/28 Letter Wm Anderson to Committee of Works 25 Aug 1814
- ^{xxxiii} LMA: Acc 2558 GJ1/1/28 Letter Charles Harvey to Wm Anderson 8 Sept 1814
- ^{xxxiv} Ibid
- ^{xxxv} Ibid
- ^{xxxvi} Ibid GJ1/1/29
- ^{xxxvii} Ibid GJ1/2/2
- ^{xxxviii} LMA: Acc 2558 GJ 01/0647, Letter from Wm Anderson to Mr Robson, 10 Oct 1816
- ^{xxxix} Ibid 14 Oct 1816
- ^{xl} Ibid 4 March 1817, Report from Merris Blagrove & Robson
- ^{xli} Ibid Rennie's Report 5 June 1817
- ^{xlii} RNELHS Journal 1994: Eileen M. Bowl, *Ruislip Cottagers' Allotments Charity*