

The Grand Union Canal was called the Grand Junction Canal until 1929. Look out for the name 'Grand Junction Canal' on old bridges and signs.

Can you find the clues to this canals' industrial past?

Black Country coal could be delivered cheaply to London, making it affordable to poor families. Farmers could send their grain and livestock to the big cities, making farming a profitable business and reducing the fear of famine for city dwellers.

When the Grand Junction Canal was built, between 1793 and the early 1800s, it opened up the new industrial towns of the Midlands and London's markets and ports. Products were being mass-produced for the first time in history and the canals provided the vital link between producers and customers.

The story of Tring Reservoirs is closely linked to the growth of Britain as an industrial nation.

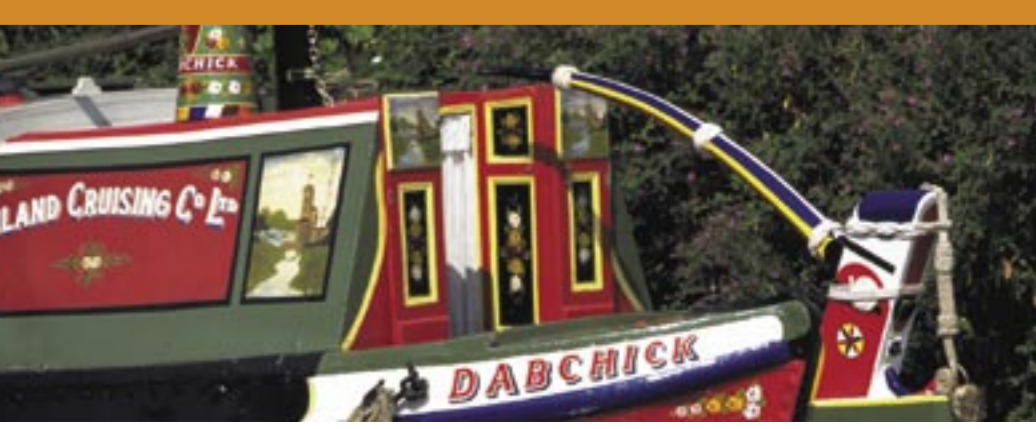
Water, water everywhere!

But not a drop for drinking... unless you're one of the reservoirs' wildlife visitors.

Tring Reservoirs have been storing water to top up the Grand Union Canal for the last 200 years. In fact it would only take around 30 locks full of water to be used, and not replaced, for the boats to be high and dry!

The reservoirs were constructed in the early 1800s, when boat traffic was at its peak. In those days the Grand Junction Canal, as it was then called, was bustling with narrowboats travelling between London and the Midlands, laden with coal, bricks and food. The lock keepers had a busy time seeing boats safely through the locks, preventing fights between rival boats and collecting tolls on their cargoes.

Arthur Oakley was the lock keeper at Marsworth between 1931 and 1958. His daughter, Gladys, remembers the hard winters when the canal could be frozen solid for two or three weeks at a time. For the boaters' children, this was an opportunity to catch up on their lessons at Marsworth School, but for their parents a frozen canal meant no work and no income.



Wilstone Reservoir is one of the most popular nesting sites for herons in Hertfordshire. On winter evenings thousands of lesser black-backed, common and black headed gulls spend the night here.

As one of the only large expanses of open water in the region, Tring Reservoirs are a magnet to wildlife and have been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest?

It's rare to find natural lakes on the chalky soils in this area, so these man-made reservoirs attract birds from miles around. Spring and autumn migratory birds also drop in to feed on the abundant insects, fish and plants. Bird hides have been provided around the reservoirs to help you spot the birds without them spotting you first!

Wildlife through the seasons – there's always something exciting to spot here, whatever the time of year.

<p>Spring</p> <p>House martins, swifts, swallows and sand martins swoop over the water to catch insects. They are joined by common terns which have returned to breed here and by arctic terns, on their migratory journey north.</p> <p>If you're lucky you may spot an osprey calling in for a snack or hear sedge warblers singing their claim to territory in the hedgerows.</p>	<p>Summer</p> <p>This is the best time to spot dragonflies and damselflies hovering around the edges of the canal or orange tip butterflies along the hedgerows.</p>	<p>Autumn</p> <p>Visiting wading birds, like greenshank, redshank, dunlin, common and green sandpipers sift the mud for a tasty snack. Flocks of swallows and swifts feed up for their journey south.</p>	<p>Winter</p> <p>Without a shovel, goldeneye, teal, goosander and gadwall return to the reservoirs from their breeding grounds to see out the winter.</p>
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As one of the top bird watching sites in the region, there's always a surprise in store for everyone at Tring Reservoirs!

How to get there:

Car parking is provided at Wilstone Reservoir and Startop's End Reservoir. Nearest railway station is at Tring – the reservoirs can be reached by walking along the canal towpath (2½ miles).

For details of events and recent bird sightings please contact:

Friends of Tring Reservoirs
Tel: 01296 424145 www.fotr.org.uk

For fisheries information and permits please contact:

Tring Park Estate
Tel: 01442 822379

Wendover Arm Trust
Tel: 01442 827702 www.wendoverarmtrust.org.uk

Aylesbury Canal Society
Tel: 01923 779401 or 07774 667127 www.aylesburycanal.org.uk

The Waterways Trust
Tel: 0845 0700 710 www.thewaterwaystrust.co.uk

Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust
Tel: 01727 858901 www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/herts

Follow the Waterways Code:

- Look after your waterways
- Consider others
- Take care

Waterways Code leaflets are available from British Waterways, Customer Services. Tel: 01923 226422

Devised and written by Carol Parr. Designed by Hotrod Creations and Brennan & Whalley Limited. Map and illustrations by Bill Dare.

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You can listen to the Reservoir Attendant talking about his work at the information point in Startop's End car park.

To calculate how many locks full of water to supply to the canal each day, the Reservoir Attendant has to estimate the number of boats likely to cross the summit. This is based on the time of year and readings from automatic counters in the locks. The weather must also be checked - on a sunny day as much as 25 mm (1 inch) of water can evaporate from the summit pond.

The reservoirs are connected to Tringford Pumping Station by a network of underground, brick-lined passageways. Water flows through these, by gravity, to deep wells beneath the station. When the pumps are switched on, water rises up the wells, into the Wendover Arm Canal and then flows to the summit.

Water is usually taken from Wilstone Reservoir first with Startop's End as a back up. Tringford Reservoir is rarely used to avoid sudden drops in water level, which would disturb the wildlife and trout fishery.

Managing the water supply takes a mix of mathematics and weather forecasting.

The highest point on the Grand Union Canal is here at Tring Summit.

For boats, crossing the 3 mile summit means going up one set of locks and down another. As water flows downhill between the locks, this means that each time a boat crosses the summit, water is lost down both sides.

A reliable supply was needed and storage reservoirs were the answer. Large earth embankments were constructed to trap water flowing from streams and springs.

It became obvious to the early engineers that the supply of water being channelled along the Wendover Arm Canal would never keep pace with demand. In fact, the Wendover Arm leaked so much that water sometimes flowed away from the summit and back towards Wendover!



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