Lower Gorton Reservoir

Gorton, Greater Manchester, UK

associated engineer
Nicholas Brown
James Simpson

date 1823 - 1825, 1842 - 1843
UK era Georgian | category Dam/Reservoir | reference SJ894960
ICE reference number HEW 2013

Lower Gorton Reservoir is one of the first impounding reservoirs built for public water supply, and the only one with a canal running along the top of its dam. However, it was the canal that was constructed first — the Ashton Canal, now filled in.

The Stockport Branch of the Ashton Canal, which was built circa 1800 and filled in the 1960s, was carried through the valley of the Gore Brook on a 9.1m high earth embankment.

In the early 1820s, the Manchester & Salford Waterworks Company began work on lining the upstream face of the embankment with puddle clay to create the Lower Gorton Reservoir, one of a pair designed expressly for communal supply. Together they enclosed around a million cubic metres of water with a total surface area of 22.86 hectares.

For Lower Gorton, a combined outlet shaft and overflow system was designed. Associated works included a 4.8km cast iron pipe main, 457mm in diameter, leading to the company's service reservoirs and settling ponds at Beswick.

James Simpson later became engineer to the company and overhauled the whole system at Lower Gorton. In 1842-3, he added a new overflow shaft and tunnel, and a draw-off tower. In 1876-9, John Frederic Bateman built a large brick culvert to divert the polluted Gore Brook around the east side of both reservoirs so they could be used for imported water. Both were last used for water supply in 1950 and are now in a public park.

The upstream face of the dam is now protected by stone pitching. The dam also has a modern concrete spillway beside and on the north side of the draw-off tower. The spillway has concrete walls either side, leading down to pass under a masonry bridge carrying a former railway line between Fairfield and Old Trafford. There is a masonry-lined storm water bypass channel on the north side of the spillway.

Engineer (1876-79 works): John Frederic Bateman

Research: PD

refereence sources CEH North, BDCE1