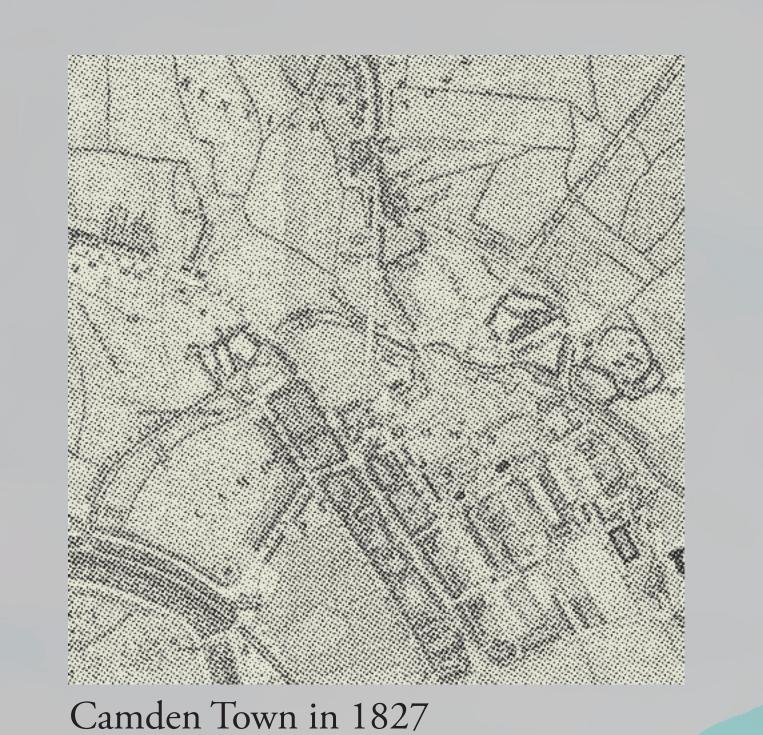
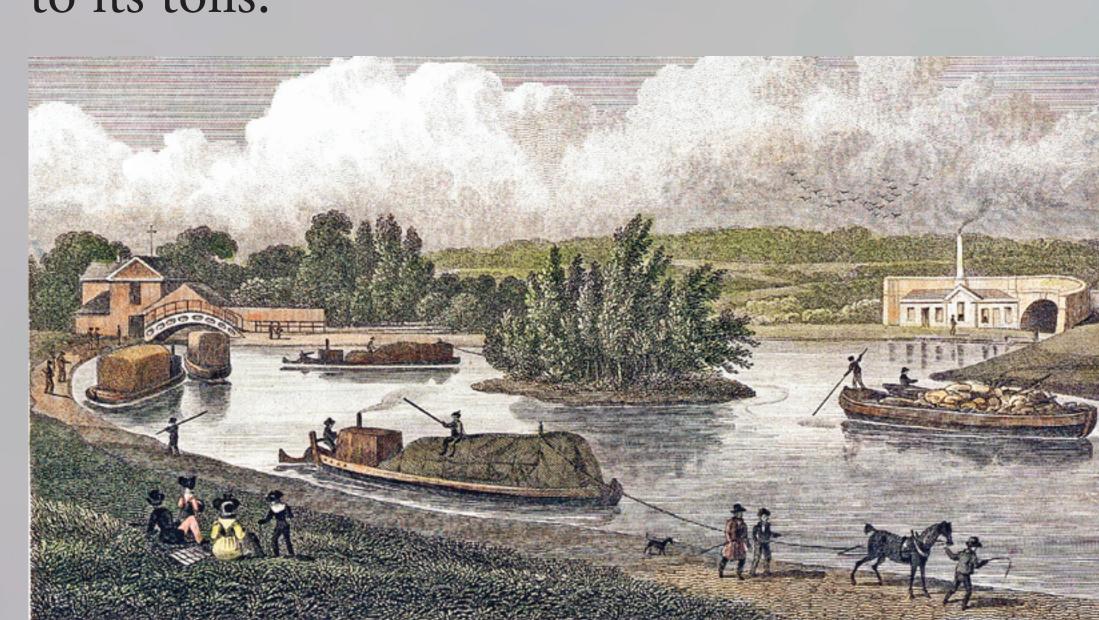
# The Early Years

When the canal was first built, most of the surrounding area was rural, but over the years, thanks to the canal and the railways London grew beyond the boundaries of the canal. Nowadays Central London encloses the canal instead of the other way round.



How the canal was used.

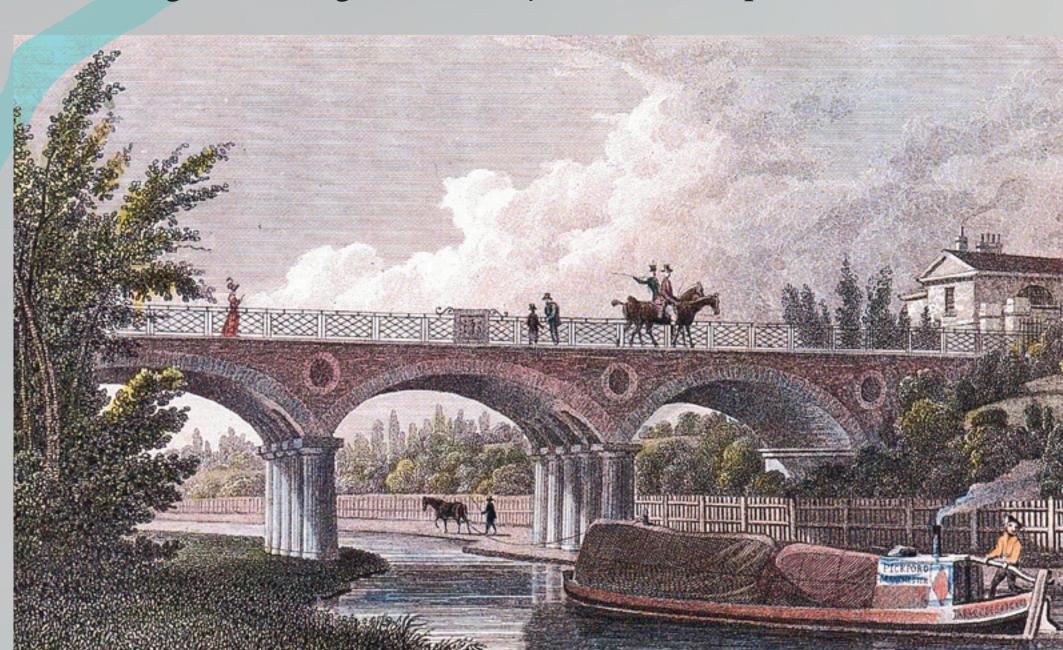
In the early days barges were pulled by horses along all stretches of the canal apart from the Maida Hill and Islington tunnels. In the tunnels, the barges were "legged" through using human muscle power. But this caused bottlenecks and in 1826 a steam chain tug was introduced at Islington Tunnel. In 1847 towing became the responsibility of the Regent's Canal Company, which provided its own horses and added a charge for this service to its tolls.



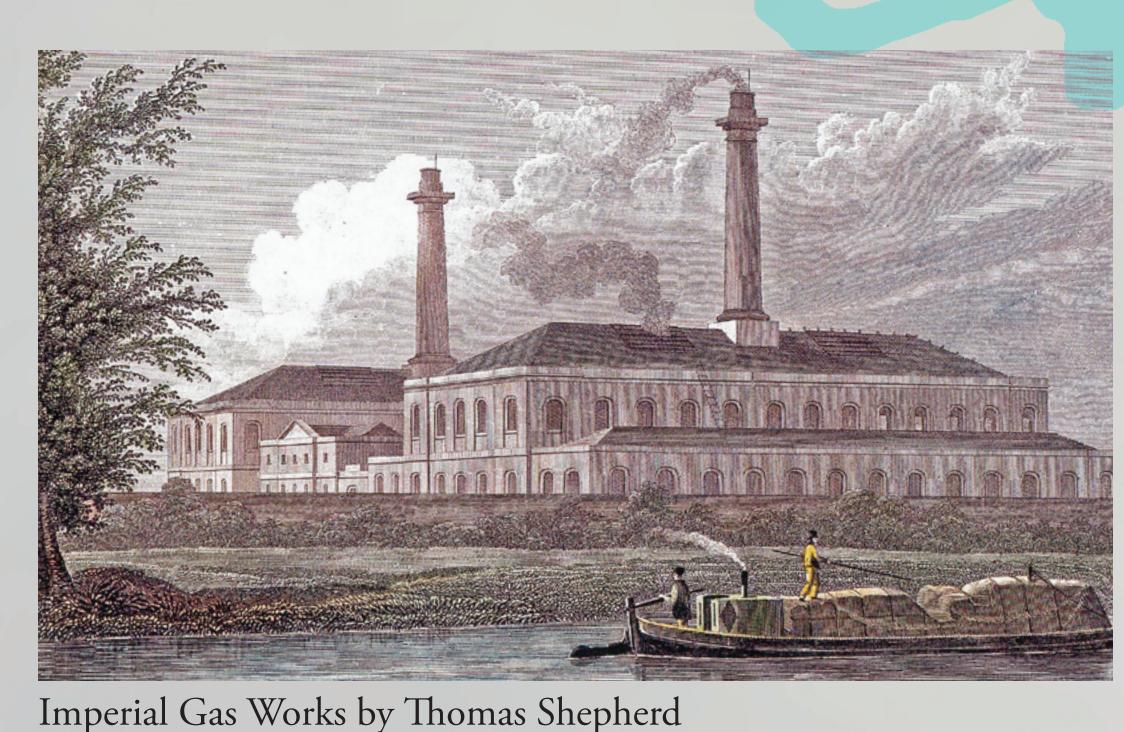
Junction of the Regent's Canal at Paddington by Thomas Shepherd



Park Village East, Regent's Park by Thomas Shepherd

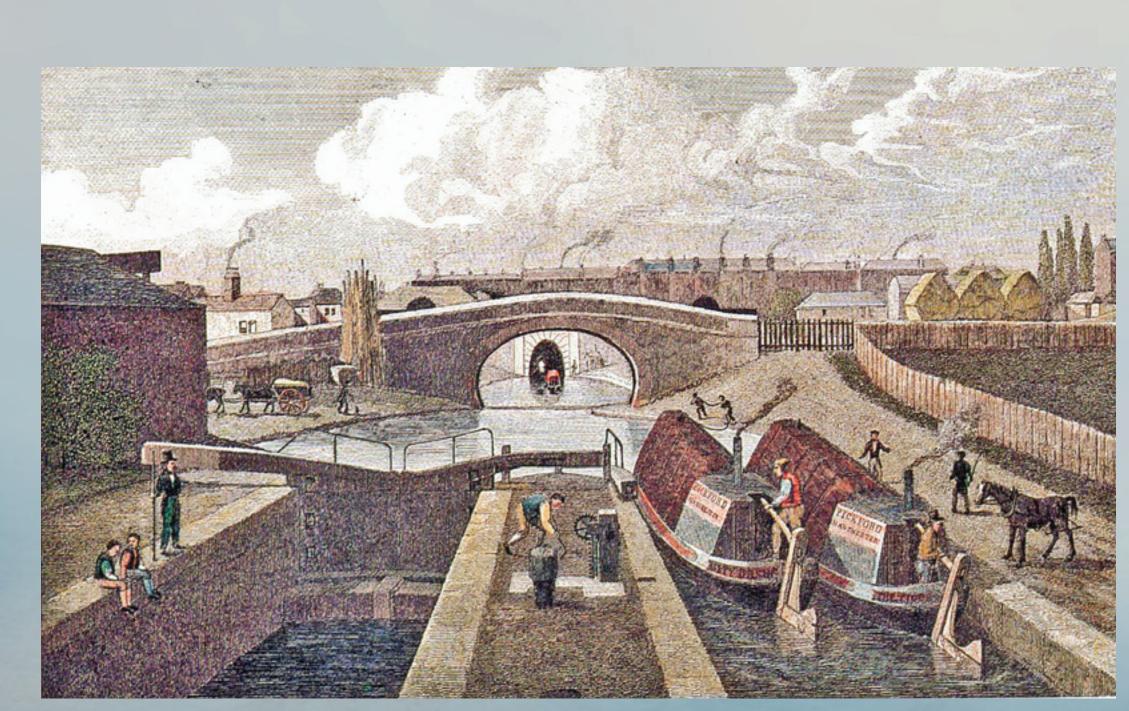


Macclesfield Bridge, Regent's Park by Thomas Shepherd



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The Imperial Gas Works at St Pancras was constructed in the early 1820s and was then the world's largest. The company built another at Haggerston. Both had their own canal basins to deliver coal right into the works.



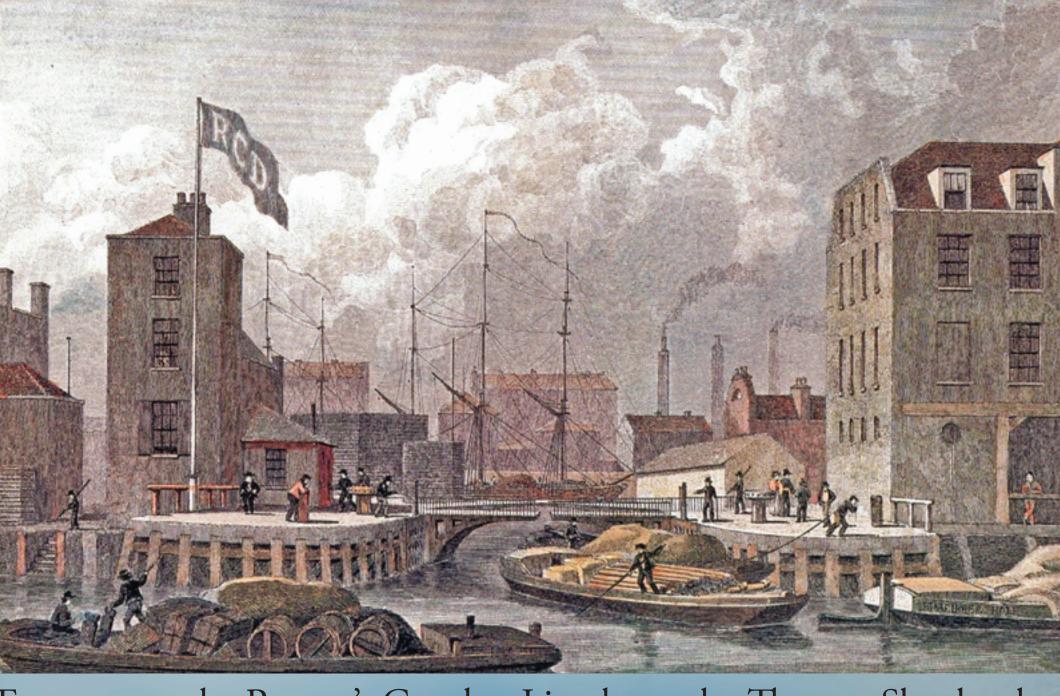
City Road Locks by Thomas Shepherd

## Special Features of the Regent's Canal

The Regent's Canal was one of the latest canals to be constructed and it was built to a higher standard than most of its predecessors.

The canal drops 86 feet in its descent from Little Venice to Limehouse Basin. This is achieved via twelve locks and there is an additional ship lock at Limehouse Basin that gives access to the tidal River Thames. The locks were built in pairs so that one boat could ascend while another descended. This saved time and also water, since as one lock emptied, half its water could be used to fill the other lock. Saving water was important because it took 56,000 gallons to fill a lock. Sluices called paddles controlled the water flow and were operated by hand. The lock gates were swung open with balance beams, which on the Regent's Canal were of heavy cast iron rather than the usual timber.

Water supply was always a great concern to the canal company and it had to rely on several sources. Limited amounts of water were obtained from the Grand Junction Canal and some was pumped back from the River Thames at Limehouse. A reservoir was also built on the River Brent at Hendon in 1835 and enlarged in the 1850s with a large earthen dam.



Entrance to the Regent's Canal at Limehouse by Thomas Shepherd

#### Basins and Wharfs

Once the canal was open for business a number of basins and wharfs were built.

#### For example:

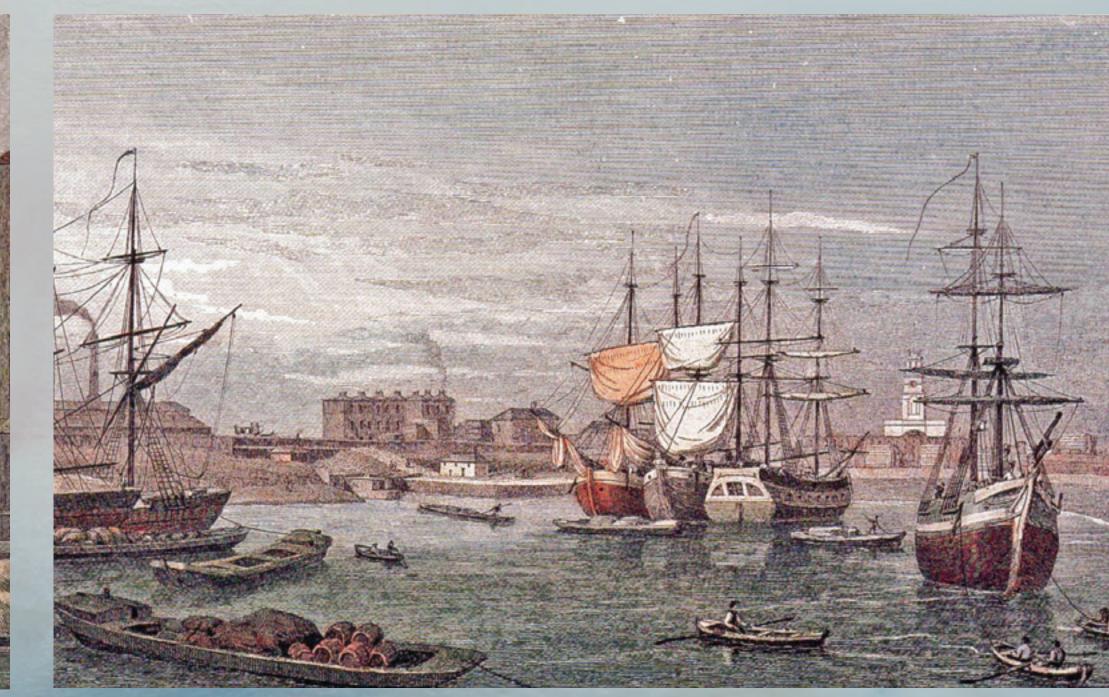
- Horsfall Basin, now Battlebridge Basin
- City Road Basin, now City Road Basin
- Regent's Dock, now Limehouse Basin

### A promising start

In terms of traffic, the Regent's Canal seemed to be a success, carrying nearly 195,000 tons of goods in its first year rising to 625,000 a year tons by 1834. But it had been expensive to build and the canal company experienced problems repaying its Government loan. It achieved this in 1829 by selling new shares at a 75% discount.



City Basin by Thomas Shepherd



Limehouse Dock by Thomas Sheph