

# Discover Littleton pumping station



## Littleton pumping station takes water out of the River Thames at Laleham and delivers it straight to the Queen Mary reservoir.

As one of the largest raw water reservoirs in the UK, the Queen Mary covers an area of 707 acres – that’s almost as big as the nearby parks at Hampton Court Palace!

The construction of Littleton and the Queen Mary began in 1923, so they’ve been supplying water for nearly 100 years.



Above from top: Littleton pumping station’s group of European sanitary engineers, 1952;  
Aerial view of Queen Mary reservoir

## A step back in time

Littleton pumping station still has its original Victorian character, including features such as raised lanterns and mahogany lining on the pitched roof as well as Doric columns supporting the central portico.

The building is made up of lots of different spaces, the largest being the engine hall with the boiler house behind it. Both of these are built from red brick with sandstone bands and dressings.

Inside the engine hall, you can still see the original pumps as well as the raised office where the chief engineer would keep an eye on them. The walls are finished with a white brick glaze and original green glazed tiles.



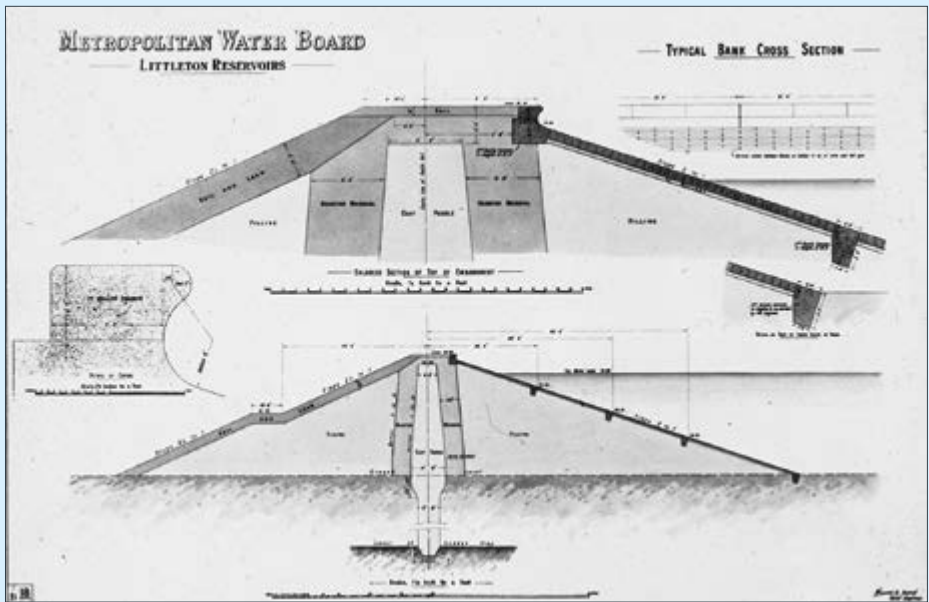
# World-class water storage

Designed by the Metropolitan Water Board's chief engineer Henry Stilgoe, the Queen Mary reservoir measures nearly 4.5 miles around and 38 feet deep. At the time, it was the biggest reservoir in the world, with over 2,000 workers employed to build it. Once complete, it was opened by King George V in 1925 and named after his wife, the Queen Consort Mary of Teck.

In 1943, the reservoir was used to test World War II submarines nicknamed 'Sleeping Beauty'. In 2010, Prince Philip visited to unveil a modern replica of the submarines, which are now on display at a museum in North Yorkshire.

The reservoir and the land to the west are designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, covering around 360 hectares and providing a haven for wildlife.

Metropolitan Water Board's designs for the Queen Mary reservoir



## Did you know?

The Metropolitan Water Board was a public body founded in 1903 to manage the nine private water companies in London.





Queen Mary reservoir, 1915

## Full steam ahead

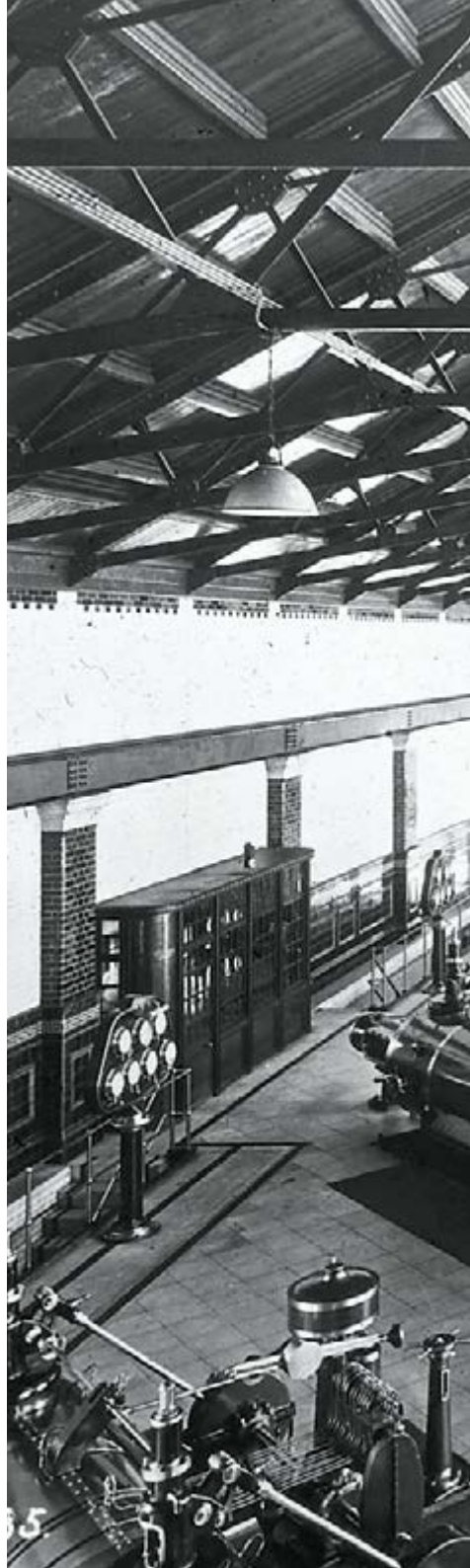
In 1924, Worthington-Simpson of Newark-on-Trent installed four steam-powered engines to drive the water pumps. These engines were state-of-the-art and highly efficient, and they ran seamlessly for nearly 50 years.

The steam engines were officially decommissioned in 1972. Only one is still in place – the rest have been replaced with electric motors, driving the original pumps that are still used today.

Two Ashworth & Parker steam engines originally powered all the station's other functions, including its lights. You can still see one in the main hall, although it's no longer in use.



Littleton pumping station  
near view of engine, 1925





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