



Getting to the Welsh Harp Reservoir:

By bus: 32, 83, 112, 182, 245, 297, 302

By train: Hendon (Thameslink)

By underground: Neasden & Wembley Park (then bus)

The walk from all bus stops & stations is 10-20 minutes.

Our trail starts from the Welsh Harp car park.

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www.brent-heritage.co.uk

Your feedback will help us develop more free local history activities.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT LOCAL HISTORY

www.brent.gov.uk/archives



SELF GUIDED HISTORY TRAIL

 **Solve clues**

 **Discover local history**

Suitable for all ages



THE WELSH HARP'S HISTORIC TIMELINE

What was at The Welsh Harp a long time ago?

Underneath the Welsh Harp's waters are the former fields of hidden hay-making farms. A long time ago two small rivers ran through the farmland: the Silk Stream & the Dollis Brook. These small rivers met here, joining to form the River Brent, a bigger river that flows all the way to the River Thames. In the 1800s, engineers turned the spot where the rivers came together into the Brent Reservoir. Here's how the reservoir came to be & how it became known as the Welsh Harp...

Can you find the missing words in the timeline? There are clues are on the next page.



The Grand Union was in Paddington 6 miles (10km) away from here

THE NEW CANAL WAS CALLED THE REGENTS CANAL. IT WAS NAMED AFTER THE PRINCE REGENT (KING GEORGE III'S SON)

113 barges were wrecked too



MISSING CLUE 2

FOR 40 YEARS WARNER'S WELSH HARP OFFERED INDOOR & OUTDOOR FUN WITH ACTIVITIES RANGING FROM HORSE RIDING, FISHING & _____ TO GREYHOUND RACING, ICE-SKATING AND SKITTLES. THE BUILDING WAS RE-BUILT TO INCLUDE A HOTEL, MUSIC HALL, RESTAURANT & A MUSEUM OF CURIOSITIES - FILLED WITH FISHES & WILD BEASTS!

During the Industrial Revolution canals were built to transport goods around the country. The _____ Union Canal opened in 1801.

MISSING CLUE 5

The feeder from the River Brent wasn't enough when another _____ opened in Little Venice in 1820. This is when plans to make a reservoir began.

MISSING CLUE 1

In January 1841 the newly built dam cracked & burst. A wave of water rushed down river to Brentford. 3 people died in the disaster.

1800

1810

Water from the River Brent was used to keep the new canal topped up. A lot of water was needed for factories & homes in the city.

MISSING CLUE 3

IN A HOT AIR BALLOON FROM THE WELSH HARP WAS POPULAR FROM THE 1880S. COMPETITORS FILLED BALLOONS WITH GAS FROM A NEARBY GAS WORKS & OFTEN CRASHED IN THE WATER.

The man in charge of building the reservoir was called _____



1830s

Builders began to make a large dam. By 1837 over 68 acres of farmland were under water. This was the first Brent Reservoir.

1840s

The dam was fixed & the reservoir grew to cover 400 acres of land. Nearby roads needed bridges to help cross the water.

1850s

1860s

The Old Welsh Harp Tavern on Edgware Road was revamped by local William Warner. The reservoir became a country 'resort' for city folk.

1870s

Warner's Bank Holidays fairs made the Welsh Harp famous. Well known music hall acts and _____ performed to enormous crowds.

Did you know in 1871 a brown bear escaped from the zoo at the inn? *



MISSING CLUE 4

IN 1873 A NEW STATION OPENED ON THE MIDLAND LINE TO BRING IN THE BANK HOLIDAY CROWDS.

William Warner, the pub proprietor, died in 1889. The pub was demolished for road-building in 1971. It never regained its peak Victorian popularity.

1880s

In 1914 'amphibious tanks' were tested at the Welsh Harp (to be in the First World War).

1900s



The 'Sunbathing Riots' in 1931 were protests against nude sunbathing at the Sun Ray Club on Cool Oak Lane.

1930s

In 1930 the North Circular Rd was completed.



1920s

Water was drained from land to the east for house building. By the end of the century, the reservoir was less than half the size it had been in the 1850s.



Suburbs grew up in West Hendon & Dollis Hill & the reservoir became popular for fun water sports: boat archery didn't catch on!

1940s

Bombers targeted nearby factories in World War II. A bomb hit the reservoir. The hole soon made a perfect circular pond for tadpoles & frogs.



Bomb crater ponds have created homes for frogs all over the UK

1950s

The reservoir came under public ownership and was declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

1960s

The reservoir was recognised as a special place for nature lovers in a busy built-up area. It continues to be a special place today.

The reservoir last froze over in 1963



Instructions For The Trail

- Start at the Welsh Harp open space car park **A**
- To find the car park, turn right at the end of Birchen Grove, before the gates.
- Head to the information panels at the left side of the car park.
- Follow the path away from the panels.
- Pass a pair of wooden benches on the left. Look out across the reservoir.
- Continue passing a sign of 12 prohibited activities on the right.
- Pass 7 more benches. Stop & read any memorials.
- At the Welsh Harp Info Board turn right at the information board towards the water.
- Turn right again to find the Bomb Crater Pond **B**
- Return to the path, and continue to the right. Walk for ten minutes to Cool Oak Lane.
- Pass the Phoenix Outdoor Centre **C**
- Stop at the Bird Hide or the Picnic Area **D** then return along the path.
- At the Welsh Harp Info Board (by the Bomb Crater Pond **B**) turn right.
- Follow the path through the woods, pass a big fallen tree on your right.
- Turning left at the junction of paths.
- Pass the car park on your left looking for Reservoir Cottage on your left
- The Lodge is on your right. Walk through the gates **E**
- On your left are Birchen Grove Allotments.
- At the 10mph sign (no.2) you will see the chapel.
- Continue to Birchen Grove Garden Centre.
- Or end your trail here.



For more more local history trails, walks & talks see www.brent-heritage.co.uk

MORE STORIES, SOME FRIVOLITY & TRAIL CLUES

FIND THE WORDS TO FILL IN THE HISTORY BLANKS

In the car park **A** head to the far gate closest to the reservoir - it is covered with signs. Look for:

Clue 1

A yellow sign for the _____ & River Trust

Clue 2

A white sign for the Welsh Harp _____ Club

On the path from the info boards towards **B** look for:

Clue 3

The 10th prohibited activity on the protection order sign.

Clue 4

Look for the memorial plaque on the 8th bench. What four letter musical group is hidden in the second word on the second line?

Clue 5

At the info board **B** look for the Brent 'coat of arms' at the top. Take out the 'O' from the name of creature on the right & re-arrange to make this five letter word starting with G.

Take a mindful moment

On the walk to **D** (and back) look around carefully. Try to collect: Something Beautiful, Something Soft, Something Spiky, Something That Rustles, & Something That Is Made By A Human.

Clue 6

In the middle of the roundabout at **E** what four letter word starting with L do you think describes the new cemetery design?



How big is the reservoir?

THE WONDERFUL WOMEN OF THE WELSH HARP

You couldn't find it's equal.
If you walked for miles
about. There's no mistake
about it - it's the JOLLIEST
PLACE THAT'S OUT!



AMAZING ANNIE SINGS ABOUT THE WELSH HARP

Annie Adams was one of the most famous Victorian music hall singers. She toured the UK & America and loved performing at the Welsh Harp Music Hall.

In the 1870s the Welsh Harp's owner turned one of her most popular songs "The Merriest Girl That's Out" into a song celebrating the wonders of the Welsh Harp: "The Jolliest Place That's Out".

The crowds would sing along in a rousing chorus.

MISS EMMIE DE VOY MAKES A SPLASH

Emmie de Voy liked to surprise Victorian fair-goers by parachuting out of hot air balloons.

She was famous for performing this dangerous stunt up and down the country.

At a Bank Holiday fair in 1890 she jumped from a balloon at the Welsh Harp - and landed in the reservoir by accident.



IMPORTANT MATTERS: VOTES FOR WOMEN

Muriel Matters, a devoted suffragette, took to the skies in an airship in February 1909. It left the Welsh Harp and dropped leaflets to tell people about the votes for women campaign. She got a lot of publicity with this stunt - but her hopes of reaching the opening of the Houses of Parliament at Westminster were dashed when the airship went off course and landed in a tree in Surrey.



A GRAVE MATTER: THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING CEMETERY

By 1956 a chapel, a supervisor's lodge and tall iron gates were installed on the west side of the reservoir. The ground was consecrated in a ceremony by the Bishop of Willesden and a new type of cemetery layout was designed. It was to be a _____ Cemetery - with gravestones flat and level with the grass. But to this day no burial has ever taken place. Today the land is used for a big garden centre and allotments & the chapel is used for activities by WHEEC (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre)

MISSING
CLUE 6

It holds 3 million
baths full of water!

It's as big as 60
football pitches!

It's twice the size of
Brent Cross shopping
centre!



Find out more about activities at the Welsh Harp at:
www.welshharpies.co.uk
www.brentres.wordpress.com