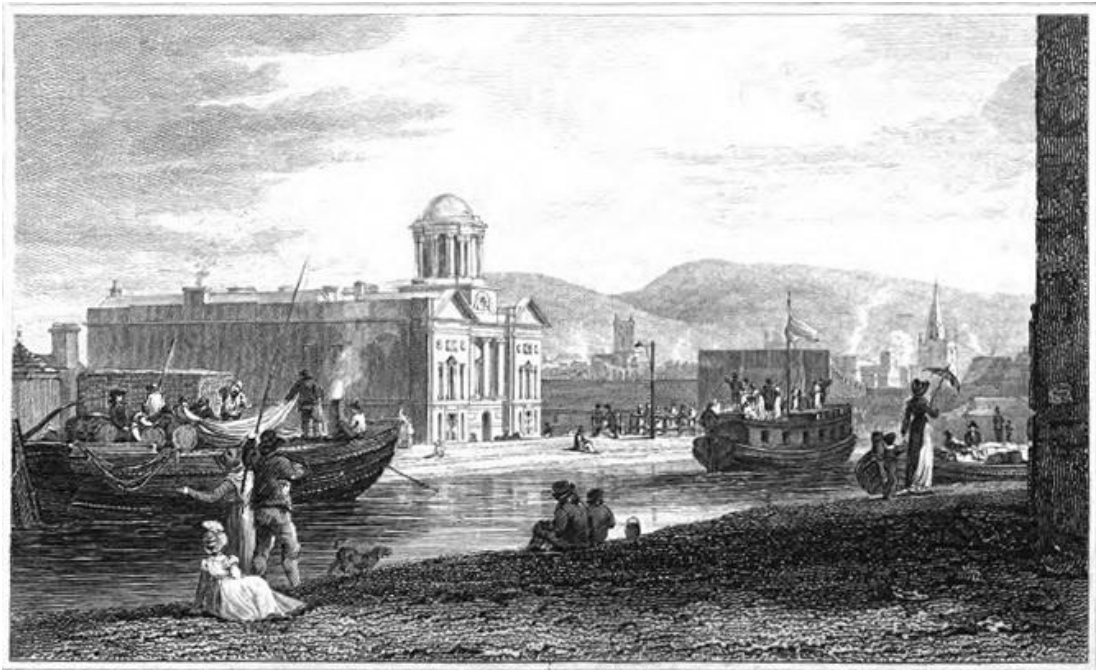


## 1.5 Historical Background

In 1810 the Basin at Blessington Street was constructed to act as a reservoir to facilitate storage and distribution of water to the city from the Royal Canal.



*Drawn by Geo. Petrie, for the Picture of Dublin.*

**THE KING'S INNS AND ROYAL CANAL HARBOUR**

The walls of the Basin are built from Calp limestone and the bed is lined with blue marl clay to retain water. The Gothic style gate lodge, which still remains, was built in 1811 as a residence for the basin-keeper.

The water in the Basin came from Lough Owel, North of Mullingar, County Westmeath, via the Royal Canal. Water from the canal was carried two miles from the inlet at the eighth lock, at Reilly's Bridge in Finglas, through iron pipe work and into the Basin. The water percolated through a gravel and stone filter before being pumped into the city's water supply.

From the 1860s until the 1970s, the water from the Basin was used almost exclusively to supply the Jameson Whiskey distillery at Bow Street and the Power's Whiskey distillery in John's Lane. The water was used for various parts of the process including malting, a process by which the barley is allowed to sprout for a few days before drying, to increase the amount of alcohol produced during the brewing process. The Basin was refurbished in 1993-94 when extensive planting of trees and shrubs, construction of railings and seating bays, and restoration of stone walls took place. As part of the renewal a local sculptor, named Austin McQuinn was commissioned to collaborate with children from St Mary's National School to produce the bronze sculptures that are incorporated into the northern boundary wall.