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The **River Trent and the Caldon Canal** are fundamentally connected through a historic, engineered water-supply network where the headwaters of the Trent directly act as a vital feeder system.

The Caldon Canal was explicitly designed by the Trent and Mersey Canal Company not just for freight, but as a critical path to gather water and channel it downstream to supply the busy Trent & Mersey Canal summit level at Etruria.

The River Trent Feeder System

The River Trent begins life as an upland stream on Biddulph Moor. Just 3 kilometres from its source, the young river flows directly into **Knypersley Reservoir**.

- **The Reservoir:** Engineered by Thomas Telford and completed in 1827.
- **The Feed:** Water from Knypersley is discharged into a dedicated feeder channel.
- **The Connection:** This feeder follows the former Norton Green private canal branch to join the main canal line above Engine Lock, keeping the water levels stable for passing narrowboats.

Other Essential Canal Feeders

While the infant River Trent handles a key section of the supply, the canal relies on two other core reservoir feeds to remain navigable:

- **Rudyard Lake:** The canal's primary water source, built in 1797. It is topped up via a feeding weir from the River Dane and feeds the canal via the Leek Branch.
- **Stanley Reservoir:** A smaller backup supply located on the south side of the canal that feeds into the system below the Stockton Brook locks near Endon basin.
- **River Churnet:** Directly runs alongside the canal for much of its route, supplying water to the lower sections.

Modern Infrastructure Partnership

Because this interconnected feeder network is so vital to North Staffordshire's infrastructure, the Canal & River Trust and Severn Trent Water operate under a joint resilience agreement. Under this system, water from Knypersley Reservoir is strategically routed into the Caldon Canal, while Severn Trent utilizes water out of Rudyard Lake to boost the domestic drinking supply at nearby Tittesworth Reservoir. In return, the water utility company funds major structural upgrades to the historic canal feeder channels and reservoir dams.