

## Information Sheet 3A: Introduction to the Industrial Archaeology of the Meldon area

The wide variety of past industrial activity at Meldon is, perhaps, unequalled anywhere else within the Dartmoor National Park. This is largely due to a uniquely varied geology which outcrops in a relatively small area, presenting opportunities for a wide range of economical activities, some more successful than others.

The principal archaeological remains in the area are a number of buildings associated with the various industrial processes including disused quarries and spoil heaps, mining remains, traces of tramways and complex water management systems. The area has remained largely undisturbed since its abandonment and much has now been reclaimed by nature.

Whilst the intricacies of each stage of working and development of the area may never be fully recoverable due to the nature of the extractive processes involved, there is still sufficient map, photographic, documentary and field evidence to reveal the extent of the workings.

The most dramatic features of this industrial landscape are two impressive monuments, their dates of construction separated by nearly 100 years:

To the north is Meldon Viaduct built in 1874 to carry the London and South Western Railway line over the steep sided valley of the West Okement, spanning a distance of 165m and at a height of some 46m. To the west is Meldon Dam, built in 1972 and the last dam to be constructed on Dartmoor, which blocks the West Okement valley to the south-west creating Meldon reservoir. The dam has a span of 201 metres and is 45 metres high.

Nevertheless, many smaller features are also present, some less than a few metres across, but all revealing insights into the complex industrial history of the Meldon area. Information sheets **3B-3H** provide more details about each of the activities they represent together with information on individual sites. A simplified plan from the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in England (RCHME) survey of the Meldon area is also included and indicates different elements and phases of this intricate industrial landscape.



General view of the Meldon industrial landscape from Meldon viaduct. Key features include: 1.Meldon Quarry, 2.Meldon/Red-a-ven Mine, 3.Southern aplite quarry, 4.Northern aplite quarry, 5.Aplite quarry buildings, 6.General location of the eastern lime kiln (Photo: Kevin Page 2005)

## Please protect the Future of our Past and remember:

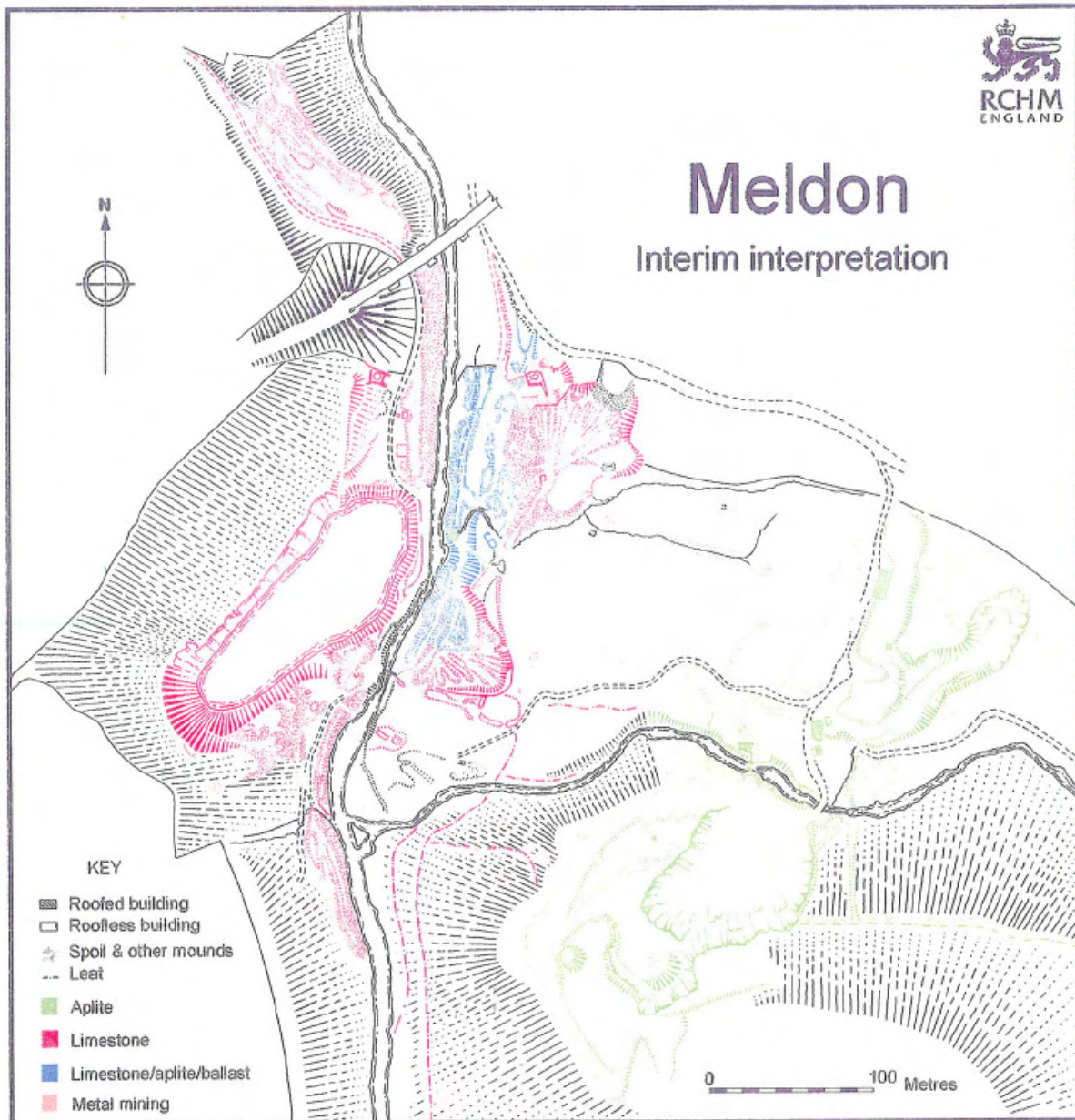
- Dartmoor has one of the most important archaeological landscapes in Britain.
- Each individual feature – literally every lump and bump - may contain a vital clue to the past
- Many archaeological sites are protected by law. You may be breaking the law if you disturb them
- Never disturb an archaeological site or ruined structure by moving stones around
- Never dig in or around an archaeological site.
- Do not camp or light fires in or around archaeological sites
- Do not use archaeological sites to store equipment or as a hiding place or as a camping or bivouac site
- Mineshafts, old mine workings and quarries are potentially dangerous
- A pile of stones is not just a pile of stones. A moment of carelessness can destroy hundreds of years of history!

## Bibliography and further reading

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Authors: J. Marchand & R.E. Page 2006





Simplified interpretation of the RCHME earthwork survey of the Meldon Pool – Meldon Aplite Quarries area, showing the main surviving features (© Crown copyright. NMR)