

Information Sheet 3H: Water supply

Meldon Reservoir and Dam (SX 562916)

Meldon was the last of eight reservoirs to be built within the current boundaries of Dartmoor National Park. In 1970 its construction was begun by the North Devon Water Board (now part of South West Water) after many years of debate and controversy over the choice of site.



Meldon Dam from the south-east (Photo: Kevin Page 2005)

Aggregates from Meldon Quarry were used in the concrete for its construction and part of the railway, including the viaduct, were converted for use by road vehicles to transport the building material. The dam is 200m long and 55.2m high at its highest point and was constructed using 270,000 tons of concrete.



Meldon Reservoir from the Dam (Photo: Kevin Page 2005)

It holds 300 million litres (nearly 80 million gallons) of water over a surface area of 21.3 hectares (52.3 acres) with a normal water level of 275.4 m above sea level - representing a maximum depth of around 42m in the reservoir. The catchment area is 1660 ha (4102 acres) and the average annual rainfall in the area is estimated at 1850mm. Meldon Dam was opened on 22 September 1974 by Mr Peter Mills, the local MP.

An island towards the south of the reservoir has been planted with trees and developed as a nature reserve. The workings associated with two nineteenth century mines - Forest Mine situated about halfway along the reservoir, and Homerton at its southern end – are submerged under its waters.

Meldon Reservoir and Dam have become popular visitor sites in their own right as well as providing convenient parking and a good starting point for walks to some of the spectacular higher parts of north Dartmoor.

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