

VALEHOUSE DAM



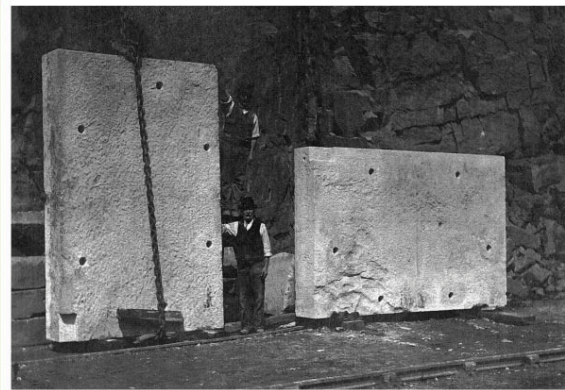
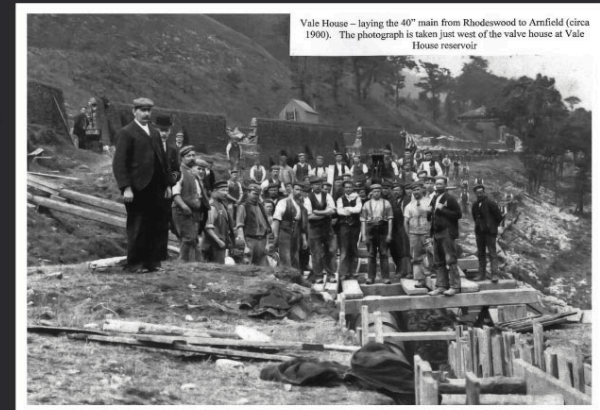
VALE OF TEARS AVOIDED FOR MILL OWNERS



Repair work following flood damage

You are standing adjacent to a dam holding back up to 1.6 million tonnes of water in the Valehouse Reservoir. Together with the Bottoms Reservoir below you, the water in these manmade lakes supplies “compensation water” into the River Etherow flowing west from the Pennine watershed and towards Greater Manchester. When the Longdendale Valley was dammed in the mid-19th Century, the owners of existing cotton mills down-river would have been starved of water critical to their businesses, and demanded that the Manchester Corporation “compensate” them for this loss. Whilst filling the River Etherow with around 46 thousand tonnes of water every day, reservoirs higher up the valley provide the water supply to our towns and cities.

Valehouse Reservoir is over 12 metres deep when full, and took exactly 4 years to construct, being completed in July 1869. It has an earthen construction with an inner clay core making it impermeable to water. Here bottom right you can see workers engaged in the practice of treading down the clay (“puddling”) into the inner core of the dam.



Dressed stones awaiting collection

Such hard and dangerous work led to many labour disputes during the scheme - in the Spring of 1868 workers engaged on Valehouse and Bottoms reservoirs downed tools, having decided they had worked long enough for too little pay. With added pressure from the Glossop Branch of the Mason's Society, the Manchester Corporation Waterworks Committee was persuaded to increase each man's weekly wages to one pound and 13 shillings, in return for starting 20 minutes earlier each day except Mondays.

Local millstone grit for the dam and surrounding overflows was quarried at Tintwistle across the water and brought to site using a miniature railway. The photograph on the left shows two large “dressed” stones awaiting collection by railway from the quarries.

The Longdendale reservoirs and their catchment area are managed by United Utilities for the public supply of water to North West England.



'Puddling'

Images courtesy of United Utilities Water Plc.

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