

The history of Blithfield reservoir

Blithfield Reservoir is a man-made reservoir. It holds more than 18,200,000 litres of water and is 14.48 metres deep at its deepest. It is approximately 4km in length and 0.8 km at its widest, covering an area of around 320 hectares.

The reservoir was built on land, some of which was purchased from Lord Bagot. The land of six farms was to be submerged, and local farming activities were controlled to minimise the risk of pollution. Only two properties, a mill and a lodge were below the water level. The lodge was demolished to make way for the causeway that crosses the reservoir, but some of the mill remains below the water. The reservoir took 500 men more than six years to complete and was officially opened by the Queen Mother on 27th October 1953.

In 1988 the site was classed as a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) because of the over-wintering wildfowl on the reservoir. Now well established, the reservoir also offers opportunities to undertake recreational activities, such as sailing, fishing and bird watching.

The reservoir was made in a shallow valley, through which the River Blithe ran. A dam was constructed to block the river so that the valley could be flooded. The dam is almost 850m long and the area was so large that it took nine months to flood the valley.

If there is too much water in the reservoir the excess water falls into an overflow and flows along the bottom of the overflow until it enters the Stilling Pool.

The Stilling Pool is made of concrete because the force of the water would erode (wear away) the banks of the river, and the concrete stilling pool helps to prevent this. The water then flows into the concrete “tailbay” channel, which joins the River Blithe.

Water is taken out of the reservoir using the outlet mains (large pipes) that run underneath the overflow. The pipes then go underground all the way to Seedy Mill, near Lichfield, where the water from Blithfield is cleaned and turned into clean, wholesome drinking water. Today, it provides 300 million litres of water each day to more than half a million houses and businesses in parts of the Black Country, East and South Staffordshire and South Derbyshire.

