

The Holy Wells of Buckinghamshire



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Umbra Press



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The frontispiece shows (left) Steward's Well, Haddenham
and (right) Stump Well, Marsh Gibbon

The cover illustration shows Whittle Hole, Whitchurch

The Holy Wells of Buckinghamshire

Introduction

In England, the holy well maintains a shadowy existence. In the local cultures of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and even in Cornwall, reverence for wells lingered for many years after it dwindled in the larger country, and in those Celtic areas official religious traditions were often willing to incorporate the holy well and help it to survive. Not in England - in the English counties it was a rare well that lasted the course to enjoy the current modest resurgence which we see today at a few favoured sites.

Bucks is a good example - arguably, an extreme one. Possibly because Protestant forms of Christianity, which were deeply inimical to holy wells and all similar manifestations of 'popish superstition', took early hold in the county, the number of Christian holy wells which have come down unscathed to modern times is minute compared to areas around. However, the number of named or folkloric wells as a whole is still as high as anywhere - about one for every 4 ½ square miles. This suggests that the old holy wells are still there, but converted into secular ones; or simply forgotten, like the spring heads near churches such as Gawcott or Mursley.

But the oldest religious sites in Bucks do have holy wells, as you would expect - Buckingham, Aylesbury (or at least Berton just outside the town), the strange case of Wycombe, the spectacular one of Taplow, and even Wing with its un-named spring within sight of the church containing the alleged shrine of Elgiva of Mercia. Wycombe's spring appears to have had some significance as far back as the time of the Roman occupation of Britain, while Taplow reveals striking evidence of continuity between pagan and Christian times. In addition, there are very remarkable clusters of wells in four hilltop parishes - Brill, Long Crendon, Whitchurch, and Great Brickhill. Brill, at the centre of Bernwood Forest, marks the remains of an ancient estate whose outlines may date back to the Iron Age, and if this could be established as a pattern in the other places, a picture of a group of very ancient holy wells indeed would emerge.

In general, then, the Bucks wells are intriguing in many ways, but not often exciting. Examples of Christian wells, pagan wells, spa wells, healing and haunted wells can all be found, but most are simply rather everyday springs with names derived from their one-time owners or the surrounding topography. In the past, perhaps, Sir John Schome's Well at North Marston and the Holy Well of Wycombe have overshadowed the others, but the first now appears very modest and the second has gone completely. Taplow is a more significant site still, but there is little to see today. Instead, the most impressive holy well in the county is now the newly-restored St Osyth's Well at Berton, a model, perhaps, for the resurgence of its lonely and lost cousins, which patiently await rediscovery in woods, at the corners of fields and by the sides of lanes.

Visiting the wells

It will be clear from the descriptions below that many wells in Bucks are dilapidated and featureless springs, often overgrown, difficult to get to, and not especially rewarding to visit. The best, however, are often in reasonably accessible sites, by roads or footpaths, and in



fact this is possibly why they have survived in reasonable condition. If you do have to cross private land to reach a well, always ask permission. The landowners I have met are invariably interested and helpful. Sometimes it is not practical to find out which of several farms owns this or that field. In such cases, always shut gates, never leave litter, keep to the edges of fields and avoid livestock. The countryside is the factory floor for the people who work there, and should be respected.

*The Ascensiontide blessing of Whittle Hole,
Whitchurch, May 1999*

List of Wells

ADDINGTON

Attwell Hole appears in records of 1517, but its site is unknown.

(Source: *Browne Willis 1755: 115*)

ADSTOCK

One of the open fields of the village, recorded in 1607, was West or **Newel** Field'. There is a spring west of the village, running from a tangle of hedges towards the power line, but it does not lie on any paths and the source is inaccessible (SP 728307).

(Source: *Browne Willis 1755, 126; CBS IR/11.R*)

AKELEY CUM STOCKHOLT

Chapel Lane runs east from the main road through the village; after it takes a sharp left turn there is an opening into a field on the right. Just visible beyond a hedge which stops halfway up the field is a small pond which is probably the **Chadwell** recorded in 1794 (SP 716382). Like other wells of this name, Chadwell probably derives from *ceald*, 'cold', rather than the Anglo-Saxon St Chad who was remembered all across the Midlands, though a dedication after the saint isn't impossible.

(Source: *CBS IR/72a.R*)

ASHENDON

From the church, take the lane north and turn down a footpath beside an old pump. This leads via a stile into a field, across a small valley and another two stiles. Here, turn right along the hedge and **Snayles Well** can be found after about 100 yards (SP 708148). It appears on a 1624 map and is now a small, clear spring with a concrete kerb.

(Source: *CBS BAS Maps 13*)

ASTON CLINTON

Wellonhead Spring (SP 887116) is inaccessible in a steep valley below the lodge of Green Park, now an environmental conference centre, just north of the bridge over the

Wendover Canal. It was Wenwell in 1816, and Wendwell later, and its waters were at one time pumped to the Manor House. Further along the foot of the hill, **Sandwell** (SP 884112), also recorded in 1816, seems to have been swallowed up in the canal workings.
(Source: CBS IR/511BQ; Sheahan 1862,86; Whitaker 1921,48)



The Egyptian Well, from Aedes Hartwellianae

AYLESBURY

On the lane off the A418 to Hartwell village, and at the bottom of a slight dip, can be found the grandiose **Egyptian Well** on the left and, opposite it, the **Hartwell** (SP 794126). The village was called Herdewell in 1086, and there is indeed a story that it was named after Julius Caesar, out on campaign in newly-conquered Britain, saw a hart drinking at the spring. The original spring pours into a stone trough on the east of the lane, while the Egyptian Well is a spectacular shelter in the style of an Egyptian temple gateway, covering a small basin of stagnant water. This was built in the 1840s by the eccentric owner of Hartwell, Dr Lee, a campaigner for teetotalism:

*Stay traveller! Round thy horse's neck the bridle fling
And taste the water of the Hartwell Spring;
Then say which offers thee the better cheer -
The Hartwell water or the Aylesbury beer!*

Aylesbury beer would emphatically win over the disagreeable sludge that is Hartwell water today, if not at the time. The hieroglyphs on the well were supposed to represent 'VICTORIA', together with a Greek inscription on the pediment which by the 1890s 'was believed by the common people to be an adjuration to some saint'. By that time, too, a Mr Smethurst was cured of rheumatism after bathing at the well and the water soon got a reputation for curing sore eyes.

(Source: Mawer & Stenton 1925, 102; Smyth 1851, 41, 156; Hope 1893, 5; Fowler 1898, 219)

BEACONSFIELD

Narrowells is a field shown on the 1846 Tithe Map, its site now marked by a shallow pit north of Wilton Park Farm off Minerva Way (SU 950904). A few years ago it was a pond, but now seems to be dry. On the corner of Candlemas Lane and Station Road can be found **Candlemas Pond** (SU 943906), now private but visible for passers-by to enjoy. The name first appears in 1846, like Narrowells, and could refer to a lost agricultural custom associated with the surrounding land that took place around Candlemas in early February.

(Source: CBS TA 35)

BLLEDLOW

Continue eastwards from Holy Trinity Church, then take the path into Lord Carrington's Lyde Gardens. Follow the path down, and sooner or later you will find the collonaded pool known as **The Lyde** (SP 778022). In few places can the relationship between springhead and church be as dramatic as here, where the church sits on top of the gully directly above the pool. Lord Carrington has laid out the gardens with walks and bridges and it makes a most pleasant visit. The name could derive from the Anglo-Saxon *hlude*, 'loud'. The Lyde is clearly at the heart of Bledlow; right on its extreme periphery is **Wainhill Spring** (SP 768015). This has no recorded history, but sits on the parish, and the county, boundary. At Lower Wainhill follow the footpath left from the lane after the rail line, and after a stile in a hedge turn left off it. Follow the field edge downhill and the well is in a steep-sided hollow, above a small copse. The water flows from a stone surround into a pumping shed.

BLETCHLEY

The name **Swetewell** occurs in 1372, and cannot now be traced.
(Source: Bennitt c.1932, 19)

BOARSTALL

Close to Boarstall House is a moated site. The moat ditch once contained a **well** hidden by an inscribed stone: this became the hiding-place for the church bells when, at the height of the Civil War in 1645, Parliament ordered them to be melted down for cannon-metal (SP 626141). Sir John Aubrey later arranged for the well to be excavated and the bells recovered, but the attempt had to be abandoned when a labourer broke his leg in the well. This ostensibly historical legend reflects a traditional folkloric theme, that of precious objects lost in wells which defy attempts to pry them out; and this, in turn, may be a dim memory of treasures being offered to wells for religious reasons. The moat is now flooded and overgrown, but gives rise to a stream.

Right on the county boundary, and one of the ancient bound-marks of Bernwood Forest, is **South Well** (SP 609128). Its name was first recorded in the later 1290s. A footpath runs east from the road north of Norton-cum-Studley along a bank in the centre of the field, through a hedge and left along a stream to where a built-up pipe can be seen beyond the stream after about 100 yards. This could be the well; there is no other obvious point, although the name could equally refer to the stream itself.

(Source: Sheahan 1862, 337; Lipscomb 1831-47, i 52)

BOW BRICKHILL

At the hamlet of **Drakewell** can be found the eponymous well (SP 910343). It now lies beneath a concrete cover in the attractive grounds of Drakewell House. Formerly used as the water supply for the house, the current owners attempted to reopen it only to find it had been dumped full of rubbish. Drakewell House dates to the early 1900s, but other cottages in the hamlet are older.

Uphill from Drakewell was, in 1862, 'a fine **spring** of pure water which has never been known to fail', on a peak of 683 feet elevation. This is probably the same as the 'old pump' on the hilltop which local tradition still remembers, but as the area is now completely disrupted with a golf course, reservoirs and the premises of a construction company the site of the well is lost. Even less locatable is the **haunted pond** 'in the woods'; when this pond was 'all of a murk' it was the signal for a ghost referred to as 'The Ole Feller' to

appear, and walk about the woods wearing antique clothes and carrying his head beneath an arm. He was sometimes accompanied by 'chariots' which galloped through the woods 'filled wi funny ole people'. The only pond visible today, at SP 909348, lies well outside the haunted woods.

(Source: *Whitaker 1921, 113; Sheahan 1862; Morrell 1934, 47-8; local information*)

BRILL

The most important of Brill's holy wells is on the edge of the parish. Take the road up **Muswell Hill** and then the footpath north. Cross the fence into a steep gully on the right, where **Werbung's Well** will be found in a clump of trees near the head of the gully (SP 644154). It is a small spring emerging from a ceramic pipe. Unimpressive though it is, this is an interesting well. It is FC Gurney who uses the name 'Werbung's Well', but Sheahan only mentions St Werburga's *Cell* here, so it is possible that the name is an error. If genuine, the name is more likely that of a local saint than St Werburga of Chester, who had no connection with this area. Muswell means 'mossy spring'. The first sign of the Christianisation of this site comes in 1151 when a chapel of St Cross 'de Musewelle' was licensed, which had a resident hermit 50 years later; however, Muswell may have gained some religious significance earlier than that. The well sits right on the county boundary.

Chinkwell, first noted in 1852, is another remarkable site. The name relates to a spring which used to issue 'from the breasts of a female statue' until it was piped to a brick tank in 1857 to supply Dorton with water. Without more information, it is not possible to decide whether this peculiar arrangement reflects some antique folkloric significance or just a manifestation of a landowner's whimsy. Either way, tank, statue and pipes are long vanished, and the well may either be a spring beside a stream on the north side of Chinkwell Wood (SP 665146), or the wet patches further up the slope which give rise to the stream and are stained red with iron. The derivation of the name is not certain, but it is

perhaps significant that one of Britain's most famous chalybeate, iron-bearing springs, Chalice Well at Glastonbury, was originally called the Chilkwell or Chinkwell. Sheahan records a '**spring** of excellent water' in Well Close, south of the church, still extant in 1862 but now lost (SP 656137).

South of the village are a further three wells. Take the road south to Chilton and follow a footpath on the right to Leatherslade Farm; continue about $\frac{1}{3}$ of a mile and turn left over a stile onto a second path. In the valley on the right is **Chad Well** (SP 657122), which first appears in 1852. It is now enclosed in a concrete pumping shed.

Return over the stile and turn back. After about 300 yards turn left over a small rise. Here is the **Palm Well** (SP 655128), beneath an inspection cover. Again, this was named on the Tithe Map of 1852. **Ludd's Well** - or Lidd's Well in 1590 - is all but impossible to reach, requiring

climbing over several fences and going up and down several hills, then doing it all again to get back (SP 655135). It is a weak spring seeping from under bushes, on the side of the valley northwest of a rather nicer enclosed spring which feeds the cattle troughs. It seems to have been named after the mythical King Ludd because of nearby Ludgershall, once believed to be the site of his headquarters. This identification dates back at least to the late 17th-century antiquarian White Kennet.



(Sources: Gurney 1920, 167; Sheahan 1862, 343, 344, 380; Jenkins 1962, 65; Clay 1914, 206-7; CBS TA 63; Bateson 1966)

BUCKINGHAM

Rumwald was the supposed 8th-century child saint who, moments after his birth, demanded to be baptised and expired three days later after preaching a learned sermon on the Holy Trinity. Despite what might be thought this somewhat incredible legend, his cult spread all over the country, and there were St Rumwald's Wells at all the places where his body had rested at various times - Astrop and King's Sutton in Northants, and Buckingham. The Buckingham well first appears on John Speed's map of the town in 1610, but there is great uncertainty about the site and there may have been multiple wells. Speed locates it at the top of Well Street, covered over when the Congregational School was built; another well was close to the Cross Keys Inn, and was covered over in 1830. However, the most important site was a third well conduited to Castle House by William and Mary Lamb in 1623, an arrangement the Borough authorities licensed in 1667; this is the place mentioned by Bucks antiquarian Browne Willis, who ignores the wells in the town centre.

St Rumwald's Well (SP 694337) can be found by following the old railway line east from the Tingewick road, up a flight of steps and over a gate. There is a substantial though dry



stone well-house, restored in 2002 by a conservation group with the support of the Town Council. A square depression below it could well have been a bathing pool, and the run-off line is equally clear, as are the marks of the old strip lynchets which stop close to the well, meaning that it would

have been in common ground, under the ownership of the whole community, when the fields were farmed in strips before being enclosed in the 1700s. The spring would have risen facing east.

The minister of the Independent Chapel from 1700, John Iremonger, was responsible for discovering the mineral properties of a spring half a mile along the London road from the town, but **Iremonger's Well** now seems to be lost.

(Source: Sheahan 1862, 236; Hagerty 1988; Roundell 1857, 3; Harrison 1909, 57-8; Browne Willis 1755,52; Elliott 1975, 139)

BUCKLAND

Close to Dancer's End in this straggling, narrow parish is a pond by the roadside as it makes a sharp turn and opposite the entrance to the nature reserve (SP 903097). This is **Hobb's Pit**, or Ebb's Pit as it called today. It is recorded as long ago as the 1590s, and the name presumably refers to a lost folk-story involving the nature spirits of the countryside named 'Hob' or 'Robin' among other titles. The same source also records **Stampon Well**, which is now lost.

(Source: CBS D/BMT136.R)

BURNHAM

Britwell in Slough (not in the old parish of Burnham) derives from 'bright well' - the name first appears in 1344 - notwithstanding the speculations locally that it refers to the Irish St Brigid. The well was supposed to be in Green Lane (SU 936828) but nothing remains today. Just to the south, **Lammas Pond** (SU 941822) is also dry, though it still appears on maps. Its name could refer to some forgotten agricultural custom that took place at Lammastide.

(Sources: Mawer & Stenton 1925, 217; Fitch 1988, 59-60)

CALVERTON

This well belongs more to Stony Stratford than the parish in which, strictly, it lies. **Gorrick's Spring** (SP 788383) is one of the county's best old wells, reached by a flight of stone steps down from a layby on the road north of Calverton village. The name has not been explained, but a story relates that the water was used by a witch's pupil to give a blind gypsy tinker back his sight. There is also a rhyme, as follows:

*When Gorrick's Spring flows fast and clear
Stoop down and drink, for health is here
If Gorrick's Spring should e'er run dry
Beware, for pestilence is nigh*



However, given the other claims of the book in which this ditty appears, it may not be entirely reliable. Mr Barley further writes: 'the monks of old ...deemed the delicious waters of this wayside spring as sacred, possessing healing properties for all humans. Daily the Holy Friar would hie to the mossy bank and reach the water with his ancient pitcher, and bear it homeward to his suffering flock! It is most unlikely - or at least there is no reason to believe - that any friar, holy or otherwise, was daily hieing to this well,

and this account must be taken as a bit of antiquarian romance. Today the water emerges from a (somewhat indistinct) lion's head beneath a stone arch under the steps, and pours into a stone tank repaired with concrete slabs. The wall forms a rough and somewhat uncomfortable seat.

At Middle Weald there was a chalybeate spring named the **Bloody Balk**, already 'filled in and all but forgotten' by 1862, and possibly linked with the story of the murder of the Squire's widow, Grace Benet, at the Manor House in the 1690s.

(Source: Barley 1928, 47-51; Carvill & Fuller 1994, 7; Sheahan 1862, 504)

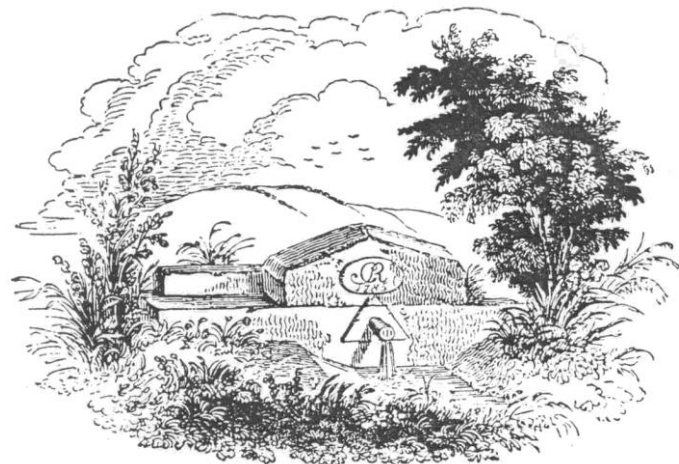
CHALFONT ST PETER

At the centre of Chalfont was the spring whose name is commemorated in that of the village (TL 000910). It dates back at least to 949, and probably means **Caedel's Spring** or some similar name. The 'font' element comes from an older word still, the Romano-British *funtan*; in some places it occurs in connection with Roman sites, and although no such site is apparent here, no other meaning is very obvious. **Stampwell** is another of the county's 'wells by tree-stumps', and first appears in 1766, a full 500 years after 'la Stampe' itself crops up; it has also vanished.

It is also in this parish that we first come across the name **Hog Trough** in the form of a wood southeast of the village (TL 007904). The term seems only to occur in South Bucks, and presumably has some connection to wells or springs. In some cases we find springs still extant; in others any actual water-source has been lost. Considering, however, that all these names apply to steep valley sites, they could refer to the topography more generally than meaning single springs.

Ashwells Farm lies south of Gorelands Lane (TL 001934); in 1842 it had a pond, though it is not certain that the name refers to any water feature at all.

(Source: *Mawer & Stenton 1925, 218-19, 221; CBS TA 82*).



CHALVEY

There are different and contradictory accounts of **Queen Anne's Well** here. It has been speculated that wells named after Queen Anne – sometimes said to be Anne Boleyn, sometimes the 18th-century Queen – in fact conceal former holy wells dedicated to St Anne, the Virgin Mary's mother. Here, however, the spring kept up its royal connections when

George III's wife Queen Charlotte had the water brought to Windsor Castle and the King had the spring built up. It was reputed to be good for the eyes, and in the 1830s a Dr Heberden stated its curative properties were as powerful as those of the Malvern springs (where there was also a St Anne's Well). Old pictures show the inscribed stone with its spout and trough supposed to have been erected by George III, but by the 1950s the well was no more than 'a pond at the west end of the village' and another twenty years saw even its location pass out of memory. By then locals placed it at Brookside, or in the cressbeds south of Cippenham Lane.

(Sources: *Whitaker 1921, 64; Walters 1953-60, 48; Fraser 1973, 37-8*)

CHARTRIDGE

Chess Spring (SP 930031) was the source of the River Chess. Now dry, it is represented by a house name.

CHEARSLEY

Come west up Church Lane from the church and within a hundred yards you will find **Stock Well** on the left (SP 718103), a large, neat stone bath on the verge with clear water running in a channel from the spring higher up the road. It lies at the end of a footpath from Notley Abbey. The name of Richard 'atte Welle' (1332) may refer to this site, and in 1538

'Cherdeley Well' was mentioned in a gift of the parsonage to Christ Church, Oxford. It was railed off and a pump fitted on it in the 1920s, and has recently been restored.

North of the village are two wells named on a 1763 map. North of the Cuddington road is a derelict barn at the end of a long ditch. At the edge of the field beyond is an extensive marshy patch which is all that remains of **Tunnwell** (SP 718111). Also, take the Upper Winchendon road and then the footpath on the left about 350 yards after the right-hand bend. This leads down the hill - don't take the path that forks to the right - and over a stile into a field. Under the righthand hedge, in a dip, you will find a stone well almost hidden under the fence. This is **Marrowell**, right on the parish boundary, whose name in fact means 'boundary spring' (SP 714119).

Brackwell Farm, to the north, is in the right place for a spring, but has none now.

(Source: Hooton 1994, 20, 26, 28; CBS Ma 296R)

CHENIES

Sheahan mentions a 'pure spring' here and there was also a **Holy Well** at the end of Holloway, formerly Holywell, Lane. Both these are perhaps identical with the pump on the village green (TL 017983) with its pyramidal tiled roof, restored for the Jubilee in 1977. The parish also had a **Maydenwell** at a site called St Mary Crofts, which is long since lost. There may have been a connection with the chantry of St Mary in the parish church.

(Source: Sheahan 1862; Ray 1983, 32)



CHESHAM

Chesham's wells are all lost. In 1716 'the spring called **Anders Well**' could be found near Waterside (SP 966006); it was last recorded in 1886. In the town centre, the triangle formed by 37-47 Church Street once housed the '**Bide Well** or Holy Well' where parishioners coming from far-flung parts of the parish ...would wash and refresh themselves before entering the church' (SP 955014). The name is mentioned in 1720; in 1785 we hear of 'the river called Bidwell', and it last appears in 1799. Finally the hamlet of **Blackwell**, based around a lost spring (SU 981997), is recorded from 1225 onwards.

(Sources: Chess Valley Arch. & Hist. Soc., 1987, i 2, iii 23, 1 3, ii 9, ii 13; Piggin 1993, 4; Mawer & Stenton 1925, 224)

CHETWODE

The church of St Martin here is only the eastern portion of a larger structure belonging to a small Austin Priory that was dissolved in 1480 and handed over to the parish. In the very late 1600s the antiquarian clergyman Browne Willis visited the village and sketched the church and the remains of the Priory which could still be seen at that time; a reproduction of his notes - now held in the Bodleian Library in Oxford - is on display in the church. On this sketch can clearly be seen a well immediately to the north of the nave within the churchyard, along with a cross which has also now vanished. This presumably **Holy Well** would have been close to the existing churchyard wall near the flat tombstones a few yards from the path (SP 640298).

(Source: Gibbs 1891: 58)

CHICHELEY

There are interesting wells in this parish's long tally of vanished sites. **Frewell** close to Chicheley Hall (SP 908459) first appears in 1316 as 'Freyewell'; it may have been a pagan well, its name derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *freht*, 'augury', like a number of others round the country. In 1725 Sir John Chester built a folly over it and piped its waters to the Hall. It apparently now flows into a pool within a hedge beside a derelict barn just off the footpath skirting the north side of the wood around the Hall, a much-diminished spring.

Fimblewell (SP 916470) by Thickthorn has fared even worse, and now cannot be found at all. It could derive from a Celtic name - from *fynpol*, 'boundary pond' - or, more interestingly, from the Old Norse *fymbul*, 'mysterious'.

Badgers Well (SP 902448), mentioned in 1558, now seems to be capped by a concrete drum beside the path running north of Hill Farm. All the other wells - **Salt Well** of c.1330 (SP 910448), and 1557's **Mares Pott** close to it; the 14th-century **Catewell** and the **Calver Pit** north of the main road (SP 909464) - are lost.

(Source: *Baines 1997*)

CHILTON

All the wells in this parish are now lost. **Swannels** (SP 691113), or 'swan wells', and **Wombwell** Farm (SP 699100) both appear on a map about about 1850, although the presence of a well at the latter is not certain - the name was 'Wommel's' then. North of the village, and beside the road, is a modern house called **Chilwell** (SP 683119), an unexplained name with no surviving well.

(Source: *CBS D/BMT/551.R*)

CHOLESBURY

The **Holy Well** here is another significant site of which very little is still known. The well, according to Lipscomb 'a copious spring or reservoir, called the Holy-well; by some, the Bury, or Bery-pond', is now a small tree-lined pool just east of the church within the rings of the hillfort that gives Cholesbury its name (SP 930072). It has a reputation of never having failed. It is also said that there was an Anglo-Saxon church here and that early converts were baptised in its waters, though a 1930s excavation and a geophysical survey have revealed no activity before the medieval period. The hillfort itself is Iron Age.

(Source: *Lipscomb 1831-47*, iii 314; *Mee c.1935*, 63; www.cholesbury.com)

COLD BRAYFIELD

In 1921 **Mother Redcap's Spring** was to be found $\frac{3}{4}$ miles north-north-east of the church at SP 935534. Like 'Hob' (see Buckland), 'Mother Redcap' is a fairy name, and occurs at another well in Northamptonshire.

(Source: *Whitaker 1921*, 43)

CUBLINGTON

Barnwell along the Stewkley road (SP 842232) no longer survives, but **Rockwell** (SP 848227) just about clings to existence. Follow the footpath through Rockwell House grounds and after some 400 yards or so it reaches the end of the first field to the east, crossing a wet ditch via a small bridge. The water appears to seep in from the vicinity of a brick structure half buried in the further bank a few yards on the left. Both these well-names are shown on a map of about 1770.

(Source: *CBS D/BMT/57R*)

CUDDINGTON

Dadbrook Spring is a notable healing well which first appears in Lipscomb's *History* and was then 'formerly of some celebrity ...remarkably clear and pleasant to taste'. This was still extant in 1921. In 1985, journalist and paranormal investigator Alan Cleaver and his associates in the 'Strange' group rediscovered the 'stone reservoir near the highway' mentioned by Sheahan, cleaned it up and dedicated it to St Helen because she is linked with roads and the date was close to her feast day. Days after Mr Cleaver reported this in his newspaper column the well was apparently desecrated by occultists, who left behind candles and two sheepskins on poles. In 1999 we could find neither the 'stone reservoir' or the 'brick thing' mentioned by locals, but by a second visit in 2001 the hedge had been cut back and the curbing exposed, showing how easy it is for wells to disappear. It is on the western side of the road about 100 yards south of Dadbrook Stream. The story is told that the village doctor used to give the water to his patients, a tale also related elsewhere. Holwell Farm is recorded in 1819, and, after an incarnation as Springhill, a holistic healing centre and retreat which closed a few years ago, is now called Cherry Tree Farm (organic produce is still sold from Pond View Cottage next door). The eponymous **Holwell** is probably the pond in the grounds of the cottage (SP 757116), though the owners of Holwell have also discovered and restored a well of excellent water which is housed in a new conservatory.

(Sources: *Lipscomb 1831-47*, ii 202; *Sheahan 1862*, 110; *Whitaker 1921*, 45; *Source O.S. iii 17*, iv 19; *CBS Ma R 56 R*).

DENHAM

Little Well Moor occurs here in the 13th century. If there was a 'Big Well Moor' we might conclude that the well itself bore no actual name, but, as there is not, it is reasonable to assume there was a genuine 'Little Well'.

(Source: *Lathbury 1904*, 477)

DORNEY

There are wells recorded in the vicinity of Burnham Abbey, whose ruins are now incorporated in a modern religious foundation, with some suggestion of sanctity. The source seems to be towards the rear of the Abbey grounds, where there are water inspection covers outside the back gate, and a small pond just inside (SU 931884).

DORTON

Before the 'discovery' of the **Alum Well** here (SP 672138), it was already noted for its peculiar taste and staining of the grass around it. Nonetheless, 'little was heard of its medicinal effects, unless from its occasional use in cutaneous diseases and the custom of washing mangy dogs in the water'. Improvements in the roads brought more visitors; Mr Knight of Brill took it upon himself to publicise the spring and its remarkably strong chalybeate properties in two pamphlets printed in 1833 and 1843. In an effort to promote the well, the owner of Dorton House, CS Ricketts, constructed a grandiose Grecian pump-room complete with billiard-room, reading-room and two bathrooms, and the woodlands were laid out with flower-bordered paths and gardens, glades and a lake. For a time the new spa was much frequented, but signs of decline were already apparent in the 1830s and by 1862 it was 'little sought after', though it was still thought 'good for cattle' in the 1930s. The grand buildings of the spa were demolished, and all that remains today is the circular brick well-house with a rickety wooden door; at the time of our visit even the roof

was reduced to a plastic sheet after the theft of its lead. It lies in the undergrowth of Spa Wood, reached along a path off the road to Spa Farm; permission to visit should be sought from the estate keeper at the cottage behind Chilton Farm.

The hill south of the spa was called **Threadwell** in 1849 (SP 678128), and from the Spa Farm road you can see a brick well-house on the hilltop which covers a six-foot wide well. It is not open to access.

(Source: Lipscomb 1831-47, i 246; Sheahan 1862 276-7; Denbigh 1981, 143-7; Colmer; local information)

DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP

Take the road to Puttenham and turn right at the crossroads towards Marsworth. After about 200 yards an almost overgrown stone culvert can be found on the right hand side. This is **Stockwell** (SP 897131), shown on a map of the Manor dating from 1736.

(Source: CBS Ma/651/R)

DRAYTON PARSLOW

As lately as 1991, **Berrywell** here (SP 843283) was 'still bubbling amongst the nettles', but we failed to find it only ten years later. It was used for the public water supply in the 1920s.

(Source: Smith-Cresswell 1991, 21)

DUNTON

A footpath runs south towards Creslow. As you pass Hartwell Hill Farm, turn left round the side of a small wood and, over a couple of fences will be found a pond, which is presumably the **Hartwell** that gives the farm its name (SP 815227).

A number of old maps, including one from 1653, show **Stand Well** Pond (SP 824242). Follow the footpath south of the road almost opposite the church, and after a couple of hundred yards the path passes the pond at the bottom of the house garden. It can be reached over a stile and a small bridge. The pond has built-up stone banks and it is conceivable that the name derives from 'steened', or stone-lined. Whitchurch church is easily visible from the site.

(Source: CBS D/MH/28:1, Ma/292/1T)

EAST CLAYDON

Since the 1840s, **Botyl Well** (SP 732245) has been thought to derive its name from St Botolph, but it is exceedingly unlikely that the 7th-century East Anglian bishop has any relevance here. Take the path to Bernwood Farm and turn right into a field; beyond a gate in the far corner of the field, which seems to sit permanently in inches of water, you will find a few scattered remains of kerbing which seem to be all that survives of the well.

Rather like 'St Botolph's Well', the real meaning of **Muxwell** is unknown, but it is now supposed to derive from 'Monk's Well'. It is a brick well in front of Muxwell farmhouse (photo above, SP 719240).

(Source: Lipscomb 1831-47, i 157; Sheahan 1862, 357; VCH iv (1927), 28)



EDLESBOROUGH

Within sight of the church is the spot where legend tells it was originally built, a pond in an overgrown and inaccessible spinney reached through a gate on the right of the road to Leighton Buzzard, and opposite a cottage (SP 968193). This is **Bibshall Spring**. The story of a moving church normally implies that the place where it is eventually constructed is a former pagan sanctuary, although in this case both the well and the knoll which is now topped with the church would bear interpretation as a heathen site.

The 1841 name Aston **Chiswell** refers to a spring which can be reached by following the footpath past Butler's Manor, then turning left along a hedge and proceeding a hundred yards beyond the overhead power lines. It is now a ceramic pipe pouring water into a ditch (SP 959188).

(Source: *Anon c. 1960-70*, 3; *Smith 1904*, 159; *CBS TA 151*)

ELLESBOROUGH

A large pool in the grounds of The Springs is the site of the **Holewelle** of about 1190 (SP 836071). The name probably means 'well in the hollow' rather than 'holy well', but it could have been the well in which Missenden Abbey received common rights in 1200. The village is associated with St Edburga, Abbess of Bicester and possibly Aylesbury too, and it is reasonable to guess at some link between this large spring and the hilltop church which towers above it, as some writers have suggested. The water came in handy when the church tower caught fire in 1828.

Also in this parish are **Brockwell** (SP 838049) and **Wellwick** (SP 853078), both clearly spring sites but where all traces have now vanished.

(Source: *Jenkins 1962*, 49, 47; *Sheahan 1862*, 673; *Fowler 1899*, 218; *Gibbs 1885*, 97)

FARNHAM ROYAL

Locals still remember the **Dipping Well** along the Slough Road (SU 961851). It lay beside a stream on the land of West Dippingwell, and was used for the public water supply into the 1920s. When the current owner bought the house in 1956, he offered to keep the well in repair if it was confirmed as his, but the Council claimed it and then covered it in. **Aaron Well**, whose location is lost, appeared in 1831.

(Sources: *Bucks Wls 1993*, 50; *local info.*; *Carr-Gomme 1901*)

FAWLEY

Shown on the 1841 Tithe Map, **Pinewell** was probably a pond at the corner of three fields, now lost (SU 755859). It is just conceivable, if unprovable, that the name may indicate a wishing custom using pins, depending how it was in fact pronounced. A house in the village called **Benhams Well** does have a well which is still extant (SU 758867).

(Source: *CBS Fawley Tithe Award*)

FENNY STRATFORD

Archers Wells was a name given in 1718 to six fields to the northeast of Whaddon House, containing ponds.

FRIETH

Perrins Spring could be the small wood west of the house of the same name, although it is locally thought to have been a water-spring (SU 797906).

(Source: *Frieth Village Soc. 1981*, 14)

GAYHURST



Bath House lies off the road to Ravenstone down an unmade track. This lovely Strawberry Hill-Gothick folly house sits over the eponymous **Bath** (SP 848471), a stone spring-fed tank with an undeserved local reputation as a Roman site, but apparently some healing abilities in former times. Beyond the house, to the left of a barn and just through the gate into the wood is one of the best wells in the county, the **Eye Bath** (SP 849469). This mild chalybeate spring, once resorted to for the relief of eye complaints, flows from beneath a drum-shaped monument topped by a carved urn, the whole surrounded with an iron rail, and shadowed by trees. The structure looks 18th-century, although the present owners have discovered an inscription dating part of it to the 1600s. By the side of the main road and clearly indicated by railings is a beautiful stone **well** (SP 852465), reached by a flight of stone steps, with clear water rising in a tub-shaped enclosure. It has no name, and may be only a continuation of a stream

rather than a true well, but is worth seeing.

(Source: local information; Whitaker 1921, 43; Ratcliff 1900, 142)

GREAT BRICKHILL

This hilltop village is remarkably well-provided with wells. The 1772 Enclosure Award ensured unhindered access to a number of named springs which 'for time immemorial have been used by all and every or any of the inhabitants', and described the footpaths which were to lead to the wells and keep them public while the landscape around them was enclosed. **Shipmans Well** (SP 901312), named after the contemporary landowner Charles Shipman, is now an overgrown spring in a field beside the road north from the church, difficult to reach, and either an iron-bearing chalybeate spring or simply stained red by rusting agricultural debris. **Dripwell** (SP 901309) seems to be the square, capped structure behind the stables which are all that remains of the old Manor House, and currently private. **Chartwell** (SP 901305) lies behind Chartwell Moor House on Lower Way. It is not clear whether **Bailey's Well** (SP 907298) is represented by the water emerging at the bottom of the lane running southeast from the village crossroads, now a sewage works outfall, or by the trickle on the other side of the lane. Finally, **The Breaches Well** (SP 911310) is probably the small covered structure in a field immediately north of Green End Farm. A more interesting site is also shown on the 1772 map.

On the right of the road to Little Brickhill can be found premises shared by a stables and a plastics moulding firm. Through these, downhill to the stream and up the other side is a fenced-off spinney containing a boggy pool fed by seeping springs. This is **Lady Hole** (SP 912317), a name which could indicate a now-forgotten ghost; it is located on the parish boundary where folklorists have noticed that ghosts often accumulate. It could even disguise some sort of former reverence for the Virgin Mary.

Another site which definitely did have a sacred significance was the **Maiden's Well**, close to which a chapel dedicated to St Mary and St John the Baptist was licensed in 1519. The 'Maiden' name is another which can be shown to relate to the Virgin Mary in the late Middle Ages at a range of folkloric sites, and the fact that a chapel was built near it so close to the

Reformation shows how important and strong the well-cult was. Last of all, the name **Broomwell** End appears in 1861, and this also appears to have disappeared.

(Source: Warth 1988, 7, 9; VCH iv (1927), 298; CBS IR/28(ii)/R)

GREAT HORWOOD

According to Mr Harris, 'the mineral springs on the southern slope near **Wigwell** possessed medicinal properties that were never appreciated'. These would have been close to SP 769309, as shown on the 1842 Enclosure Map.

(Source: Harris 1907, 18; CBS IR/39.R)

GREAT LINFORD

There were no fewer than five named wells shown on a 1641 map of this parish, now a suburb of Milton Keynes; two survive. **Line Well** (SP 852424) is only yards east of the church, and is now a tiny kerbed tank feeding a pool with cloudy water. **Full Well** (SP 856421), whose name could mean 'dirty spring', is probably under the inspection cover in the slope immediately south of the village cricket pavilion. The lost wells are **Tong Well** (SP 857422), now drowned beneath Tongwell Lake; **Short Well** (SP 855406); and **Lewell** (SP 853404), which probably means 'well with a shelter'.

(Source: CBS Ma261.2 T)

GREAT MISSENDEN

At the north end of the village, opposite the Black Horse pub, is **Mobwell** (SP 890020), a pool which is a source of the River Misbourne. About 15 years ago it had dried out and was reported in the national press as a dire example of the threat of over-extraction of water and climate change to British rivers; it has repeatedly filled and emptied in recent years. The name first appears in 1774. The ghost of the ferocious Captain Backhouse frequented the vicinity.

Like other Chiltern parishes, Great Missenden had a **Hog Trough** up a lane past Havenfields (SP 896027), mentioned in 1843, but it is now lost.

(Source: Lipscomb 1831-47, ii 294; CBS TA 274; Colmer)

HADDENHAM

A footpath runs south from the village square along a lane lined by cob walls, under a railway bridge, skirts a pond, and then after about 200 yards meets a hedge. Turn right off the path and follow the hedge. After 400 yards you will discover **Steward's Well** (SP 735075), a mildly chalybeate spring mentioned in 1862. It is now a fenced-off pool with a concrete run-off channel, and is one of the few Bucks wells shown on the Ordnance Survey. To the north, **Stockwell** is now lost. It lay along Stockwell lane and fed Wyre Pond, which was 'fenced off after worshippers at the Baptist Church fell in on dark evenings'. Finally, a journey east along the A418 to Aylesbury will bring the traveller to a railway bridge and, a couple of hundred yards beyond it, a path on the left leading to a cowshed with a small copse to one side. A few yards within the trees, the **Youlsum Spring** (SP 726094) dribbles from the moss. Its name derives from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'yellow', although the water shows no sign of colour today.

(Source: Sheahan 1862; Whitney 1990, 6; info. from Haddenham Museum)

HAMBLEDEN

Rockwell is a farm name in this parish. There were ponds at SU 795882 and 797881,

either of which could have been the well referred to, but these are both lost.

HANSLOPE

Harrowell, a spring beside a sharp left turn on the Hanslope road from Heversham, and beyond a horse paddock (SP 815444). The name occurs in 1779; it could just conceivably refer to a former pagan shrine, from the Anglo-Saxon *hearw*.

(Source: CBS D/WA/155.R)

HARDMEAD

At a crossroads a mile north of the village on the road to Newton Blossomville is **Gorewelle** (SP 941495). The house is modern but in the front garden is an old, beehive-shaped brick well set into the ground with a pump adjoining it. Only yards away is a sundial whose base looks distinctly like the stump of a wayside cross which may formerly have marked this site, on both the parish and the county boundary. I wonder whether the name means 'dirty spring' – however, the present owners state the house was renamed in the 1970s from its former title of 'Blotts Ground'.

HIGH WYCOMBE

The town's recorded **Holy Well** (SU 874925) is now lost. On the Rye, the ancient common field east of the town centre, was a Roman villa occupied between about AD 150 and 350: it was discovered as a result of workmen finding pieces of mosaic pavement in the 1720s. Beside the house rose a powerful spring which, in later years, marked the eastern boundary of the Borough, and was called Halliwell in 1346. It may have been this spring whose water was used by the 11th-century bishop St Walstan to cure a servant girl of a deformity on a visit to the town (he blessed the water with a coin touched by the Holy Lance which was said to have pierced the side of Christ!), and it may also have been the site of the superstitious reverences condemned by St Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, in the 1170s. The site appears as 'The Round Basin' on Victorian maps, and survived until 1954 when the municipal swimming pool was constructed over it. There are, however, other theories about the site of the well. Some speculate that it was at the east end of Holliwell Mead, off Bowden Lane, where powerful springs still bubble up visibly in the old mill pool; and another story suggests that it was beneath the old house known as the Priory on Castle Street, where a Roman well has indeed been found. A document of 1630 uses an alternative name, 'St John's Wells', to refer to the Rye site.

Other lost Wycombe wells include **Malmers Well** (SU 868934) or Mamucks Well, which have its name to a 'British fortification' seen by the antiquarian Browne Willis in about 1710, on the north side of the town. **Honey Wells** (SU 878938) appear on a map of about 1760 in the centre of the modern Totteridge, while **Bellfield Spring** was a favourite paddling-spot for children at the turn of the last century (SU 872936). One recorded well did not exist at all! A writer to the *Wycombe Star* in 1984 maintained that there had been a St Mary's Well in St Mary Street, 'a shrine to the Virgin Mary ...where pilgrims came to drink the waters which apparently had healing powers ...[The lane] Lily's Walk takes its name from the Lady with the Lily' (in fact it was named after one of Lord Carrington's daughters when the Carrington estate bought the land in the 1880s).

The significance of Wycombe's surviving wells is unclear. In the garden of Coningsby Court, a large 1920s house on Coningsby Road now divided into flats, is a small, dry **'Holy Well'** (SU 867940) with a stone arch set into the garden wall over a basin, gargoyle faces either side, and a bearded head in the centre, although only an angel set over the arch looks as though it might be particularly old (photo below). Potentially more genuine is the



almost-hidden **well** in All Saints churchyard just to the east of the chancel (SU 886931), which, although now sealed, has in the past received gifts of flowers at Ascensiontide.

High Wycombe's wells fit in with the more general clues in the landscape that the headwaters of the River Wye were of some sacred significance in the prehistoric past. There are traces of what may have been megalithic monuments in the mysterious stones set into the church's north wall and on the north side of the Guildhall, and peculiar legends associated with the siting of West Wycombe Church. Certainly the position

of the Holy Well itself next to the Roman villa mirrors a pattern found with other pagan springs that later become converted to Christianity. The name of St John's Wells suggests that at some time the spring became linked to the Hospital of St John along Easton Street, although there is no reason to believe this was for medicinal reasons, as we find at some other holy wells. St John's was a 'hospital' for travellers and charity cases rather than the sick as such: Wycombe's leper hospital, St Giles's, was nearly a mile away to the west.

Another site is well outside the town. **Hog Trough** appears on the 1849 Tithe Map. Following the very steep bridleway that toils uphill from Keep Hill Drive, turn left through and then out of the wood, and, as the field dips, a deep embanked pit appears which may be the site referred to (SU 877915).

(Source: Parker 1878; Ashford 1960; VCH iii 113; Dimock 1864, 364; Cleaver 1991, 40-41; High Wycombe Reference Library; local information; CBS TA 211(i))

HORTON

The 1799 Inclosure Map shows Billings Well, now lost (TQ 066784). (Source CBS IR/43.Q)



HUGHENDEN

In 1578 a dragon terrorised the area of Four Ashes before being killed by one of the masters of Brands House, where its skin used to be displayed. The dragon's **pool** is on the left of the road from Terriers just north of Brands House, and often dries out in hot weather (SU 875957). An old **well** beside St Michael's Church (photo to left, SU 864955) may once have been associated with the church, though the cottages close by are also very old and it was possibly only a domestic water supply. These houses now form National Trust tea-rooms, and, like almost all wells at tourist sites, the well is occasionally used as a wishing well.

The boundary marker of the three parishes of Hughenden, Great Missenden and Little Missenden, **Cockpit Hole**, is now a waterless and grim pit in the angle of Cockpit and Prestwood Roads in Great Kingshill (SU 881982). Surrounded on two sides with towering concrete walls and full of weeds, this former pond is shown on the 1844 Tithe Map.

(Source: Lipscomb 1831-47, iii 582, quoting *Gent's Mag.* viii (1758), 466; CBS TA 220)

IBSTONE

Beside the isolated St Nicholas's church is a covered brick **well** bored down into the chalk (SU 756923); the water is only about 15 feet down - a St Nicholas's Well, perhaps?

IVER

There is a question mark over Iver's well. It appears as **Holwell** in 1547, but in more modern forms as Hollywell. With only two instances it is not possible to decide finally whether this is a 'Holy Well' or a 'well in the hollow', but since it lay in the Vicarage lands we may perhaps incline to the former.

(Source: *Ward & Block* 1933,58, 103, 126)

IVINGHOE

The lost 16th-century Frog Well and Tynker Well both lay in Horton Manor.

(Source: *Lipscomb* 1831-47, iii 355)



Black Well

LANE END

At the eastern side of The Row, just below the main crossroads, is **Black Well** (SU 808949), a keyhole-shaped structure of brick restored by the Village Society in the 1980s. Despite its good state of preservation it has no recorded history, and is a



Stock Well

receptacle for rubbish. The keyhole shape is a well-known type for ancient wells and can also be seen in St Edith's Well at Kemsing, Kent. Continue along the road to Frieth and on the right you will pass **Stockwell** House. In its garden is a small square brick well (SU 804911). The name appears on the Tithe Map of 1841, but the house is considerably older. Finally, further along still can be found **Muswell** Farm, where the topography suggests a now-lost spring or 'mossy well', as the name implies (SU 801909). A final well in this parish is **Lady's Well**, a swallow-hole in Widdington or Widdenton Wood, no details of which are known (SU 819917). It does not survive.

(Source: *Colmer*).

LATHBURY

Snaiswell appears on the 1843 Tithe Map. This shows a pond at SP 847462, but there is a peculiar tumble of stones and rubble within the first field east of the junction of the B526 and the road to Haversham, which could also be the site.

(Source: *CBS TA 244*)

LECKHAMPSTEAD

The footpath opposite Wicken Farm on Wicken Lane leads down a slight incline and past a disused cattle trough in the form of a bath, along with stone fragments indicating some former structure. This could be the **Chadwell** recorded in 1839 (SP 733387).

(Source: *CBS TA 248*)

LEE COMMON

Jubilee Well is a modern structure of wood with a steep tiled roof, on Lee Common's main road opposite the recreation ground. It was built in 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's

Jubilee. The well itself is some 365 feet deep, and at the opening ceremony a young girl was lowered to its full depth.

(Source: *Birch 1986, 90*)

LINSLADE

As this **Holy Well** was so significant, it seems a particular shame that it has vanished. This chalybeate spring was one of those condemned in 1299 by Bishop Oliver Sutton of Lincoln. The pilgrimage to the well was already going in 1251 when an eight-day fair following Lady Day was granted to the parish, coinciding with the well-visiting season here. Various vicars of Linslade encouraged the pilgrimage, for the usual mixture of religious and pecuniary considerations, until Bishop Sutton denounced it as a 'pretence', summoned the Vicar to his Consistory Court, and ordered that the devotions be condemned in every church of the Archdeaconry of Buckingham for six successive Sundays. Despite his disapproval, it was still being regarded as 'fraught with medicinal properties' in the 1800s. Its whereabouts are unclear: Lipscomb located it north of the bridge to Grange Mill close to the canal, while other sources place it close to SP 901263. The parish is now in Bedfordshire.

(Source: *VCH iii (1925), 387; Hill 1954-9, vi 186; Lysons 1813; Lipscomb 1831-47, iii 403*)

LITTLE MARLOW

Well-hunters should not be deceived by the filled well in the garden of Abbot's Well house in Wendover Road, which is a fake: the real **Abbot's Well**, if there can be said to be one, is now a pond in the grounds of Waters Edge in Cressington Place, decorated with all the paraphernalia of suburban garden water features (SU 892877). The somewhat mysterious nunnery of the Blessed Virgin entitled 'de Fontibus de Merelawe' was founded sometime in the 13th century and was dissolved in 1534, and its remains pulled down in 1718. It clearly had some relationship with these springs although they are never explicitly described as 'holy'. The name Abbot's Well - first applied to the house in 1930 - is clearly a misapplication as the ecclesiastic concerned would have been an Abbess - that is, assuming it has any historical validity at all.

The ruinous little cottage of **Merton's Hole** lies in this parish (SU 863889), and at the time of writing is due for demolition. The name suggests a well, and indeed one is to be found just within the hedge of the garden, near the southwest corner.

(Source: *Gibbs 1891: 81; local info.*)

LITTLE MISSENDEN

The two wells in this parish were at Little Kingshill. Just along from the Baptist Chapel is **Ashwells Farm**, a building very much older than 1845, when the name first appears, though not perhaps as antique as the 10th century date it claims! There was a well here until it was filled in after a horse fell down it (SU 894988). Not quite as obliterated is one of the better Chiltern **Hog Troughs**, to be found down the path past the Chapel: fork left into the wood at the bottom, then left again as the path leaves the edge of the wood, moving further within it, and after about 50 yards you will find the steep-sided depression which appears to be the Trough, again first recorded in 1845. It used to hold water.

(Source: *CBS TA 275; local information*)

LONG CRENDON

Sheahan calls the **Lion Spring** (SP 697083) just 'a fine spring of excellent water', but this accurately describes neither its historic state nor, sadly, its current condition. It was a

medicinal spring which ran from a metal lion's head spout on the road to Thame, with a stone trough and attached drinking ladle. It survives by the roadside in a small wood, bereft of its lion and now dry - the water emerges further down in the hill. The structure is in poor condition.

To the rear of Clematis Cottage on the north side of the Thame road is **Berwell** (SP 695084), said to be 'the biggest well in the village'. It is now capped with an iron pump, has brick coping, is five or six feet across and extends down some fifty or sixty feet into the chalk - the bottom is almost invisible. A third well, **Bilwell**, was on the north side of The Square (SP 693086) and is lost, but **Cotwell** (SP 698090) survives, rising under a pump in front of the Chandos Arms at the west end of the village, and its water runs away westwards. Finally, **Redwell** is recorded as early as 1593, and is now a small pond to be seen on the right hand side of the road to Manor Farm (SP 703090). It is not visibly red, and the name could mean 'reedy' rather than referring to any mineral properties.

(Source: Sheahan 1862, 369; Donald (n.d.), 39; CBS Ma 12-7.7)

LONGWICK CUM ILMER

From Owlswick hamlet, where the village well used to stand beside St Peter's Chapel, come north and a right turn followed by a left takes you into **Stockwell** Lane. Bridleway Farm (inevitably, no longer a farm and not on a bridleway!) is on the right. With permission continue through the garden and follow the edge of the field beyond over a fence until the hedge bends sharply. The spring is here, within the ditch, though it seems hardly worth the effort of reaching it (SP 797065). This is another 'spring at the tree stump'. The topography at **Chadwell** Farm (SP 798051) also suggests a spring, now lost.

LOUGHTON

According to Sheahan, this parish contained 'a reputed **chalybeate well**', a phrase which could imply that it had a 'reputation' for healing, or simply for its mineral properties.

(Source: Sheahan 1862, 562)

LUDGERSHALL

'Near the site of a large building south of the village', says Lipscomb, was a **well** or pool where, in the 1700s, stone 'coffins' and tiles were found; it was supposed to be the repository of treasure. This could be the pond near the church and the moat of the old manor house (SP 660172).

(Source: Lipscomb 1831-47, i 311)

MAIDS MORETON

One well here is easy to find - **Duck Lake Spring** is probably the pump in the garden of the Buckingham Arms on Duck Lake Road (SP 703356). Another, **Willy Thorne Spring**, is now perhaps represented by the pond in the garden of Bycell Farm (SP 695366), while **Rodwell** (SP 708361) may survive in the inaccessible fields east of Maids Moreton House. The stream head, but no water, can be seen from the edge of the field immediately beyond the mown garden of the House, which has its own impressive pump beside the drive. However, **Sewell** Pitts - which possibly means 'seven springs' but which could refer to the river or be a personal name instead - is now entirely lost, and lay somewhere near the junction of the lane leading to the village and the main Buckingham road (SP 714347). All these sites were recorded in 1595.

(Source: CBS Ma 12-7.T)

MARSH GIBBON

Within sight of the parish church is **Stump Well** (SP 646234), first recorded in 1838; it was a mineral spring, but now even the map fails to show it, despite it being a stone-built well with a tiled canopy roof - albeit full of rubbish at the time of our visit. The well is reached by a footpath to the left of the road to Twyford where the houses end. In the right light, you can see where the strip lynchets of the old open fields stop before the well, leaving it in common ground, and also where a former hollow path runs to it from the old part of the village.

(Source: CBS D/12 B19; Sheahan 1862, 294; Whitaker 1921, 113; VCH iv (1927), 205)

MEDMENHAM

Hog Trough wood appears on the Tithe Map of 1842, but no water-feature of any sort is visible there today (SU 822846).

(Source: CBS TA 264)

MENTMORE

The area south of the road that leads west from the church appears as **Stockwells** on the 1852 Tithe Map, referring to a spring beside a tree stump. The only sign visible today is a dry ditch at the edge of the wood here, reached by a short path from the road (SP 900199).

(Source: CBS TA 265)

MONKS RISBOROUGH

'The spring called **Hawaise Well**' is a boundary mark referred to in the later 1200s, lying at the junction of two ancient tracks, Green Lane and Bishop's Path, Askett (SP 815048). Take the footpath north of the road opposite the church. This continues over a stream and stile into a horse paddock. On the left, close to the junction of the footpaths, is a pool entirely separate from the stream, which seems to represent Hawaise Well. Whitaker mentions 'springs near the church', which may have been '**Holy Wells**', but these do not seem to have survived. **Sollars Hole**, too, a 'public watering place' set aside when the parish was enclosed in 1839, appears to have perished, though a dry depression beside the bridleway at SP 829027 could represent the site.

(Source: Cureton 1988, 10; Whitaker 1921, 48; CBS IR 94 Q)



NASH

Sheahan records that **Bretch Well**, a never-failing chalybeate spring which maintained a constant year-round temperature, stood beside a stone cross at the 'village crossroads', a site which is not easily identifiable. Instead we find a plaque beneath a laurel tree on the garden of 22 High Street, beside a water inspection cover. The well was open and fenced in until 1967 (SP 782343). The **Holy Well** at Holywell Farm should have been of greater fame, but seems forgotten: it first appears in 1461. It is now a cone-shaped brick well in the paddock left of the path past the farm buildings, and opposite the stables, covered by a board lid (photo to left, SP 774343).

(Source: Sheahan 1862, 315; Mawer & Stenton 1925, 71).

NEWTON BLOSSOMVILLE

At approximately SP 924507 was **Whitewell**, first recorded in 1811 and now lost. (Source: CBS IR 79a)

NEWTON LONGVILLE

The second right turn along the road west of the church is Green Way; just before the railings dividing the road is a small open area under trees to the left, where a concreted inspection cover can be seen. This seems to all that remains of **St John's Well** (SP 847317). The well appears on a map of 1779, and is otherwise completely unknown. There were also two lost wells here, shown on the same map. **Marwell** or Marewell could derive from 'boundary spring' -the name cannot refer to the stream here, as this runs along the boundary of the parish (SP 850325). **Goslin Well** was along a path now running to some horse paddocks (SP 839314).

(Source: CBS BAS Maps 46)

NORTH CRAWLEY

This parish seems to have boasted many wells, most of which have long since vanished. The modern parish map, compiled from older records in 1996, shows areas called **Caldwell** (SP 924445) and **Hartwell** (SP 922457), where the topography suggests there may have been springs. **Brockwell** is now a featureless spring by the road south of Hurst End Farm and opposite a small wood (SP 926432); while **Brenchwell** along the Brook End Road can be detected by its foul sulphur smell, strong enough to be discernible from 100 yards along the ditch south of the road (SP 915441).

Crawley's most important well is also lost. The *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1849 mentioned 'a salubrious well in the churchyard dedicated to St Firmin'. Firmin is an otherwise-unknown saint: there are a couple of French saints of the name, but this Firmin was probably a local church-founder all details of whom are now lost, and associated with the minster church which existed at Crawley in Anglo-Saxon times. There was some long-standing reverence for this site, because in 1298 Oliver Sutton, the puritanical Bishop of Lincoln, ordered the Dean of Newport Pagnell to investigate alleged 'superstitious pilgrimages' to the church. **St Firmin's Well** (SP 928447) has, in any case, long since disappeared.

(Source: CBS PR/156/32/IR; *Gent's Mag.* 1849, i 168; *Hagety* 1985, 65-71)



NORTH MARSTON

Sir John Schorne, Rector of North Marston from 1290 to 1314, was never canonised, but was a famous miracle-worker who, as the legend goes, 'conjured the devil into a boot' - hence the many pubs called The Boot which indicated the routes to the village. After Schorne's death pilgrims flocked to his shrine at Marston, especially the gouty, ague-ridden, and those with toothache, with which

ailments he particularly concerned himself. His fame spread over the country, and in 1478 his relics were poached by St George's Chapel, Windsor. During a drought in the village he struck the ground with his staff causing the creation of a spring, **Schorne's Well**, probably the most famous holy well in Buckinghamshire. Apart from Schorne's legend itself, the early records of the well tell only of its decline. By 1778 it was already called by the very secular name of 'The Town Well'; physically, it was described as 'partly stone and partly brick, and covered with a shed of boards, and a flight of stone steps descends into the water'. In 1840 the curate of the village noted that its powers were a matter of tradition only, and that 'of late years its chemical properties are so minute that its flavour scarcely differs from ordinary spring water', but old people claimed that it had once been so strongly chalybeate that only cattle could drink it in any quantity. Ten years more, and the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported that 'it has long declined in reputation, and lost all its sanctity excepting the name, and is at present seldom resorted to, unless by the inhabitants of the immediate neighbourhood who make no scruple to use it for common domestic purposes'. It was first used for the public water supply in the fever year of 1835.

The current well-house (SP 777226) is a sloping-roofed stone structure with a dry pump beside it, and an account of its history on the wooden lid. It is well cared-for, but locked for reasons of safety. Alison Uttley claimed, on doubtful evidence, that it had been dressed with flowers in the past.

(Source: *Hope* 1893, 3-5; *Kelke* 1857, 70ff; *Sheahan* 1862, 404-5; *Gents Mag* 1820, ii 491; *Uttley* 1950, 265)

OLNEY

A bridleway runs west of the B5388 through Olney Park Farm and zigzags to a small wood; turn left behind the wood and then right in front of a second strip of trees. This leads downhill to a boggy, overgrown depression at the field's edge. This, astonishingly, is a **Holy Well** of at least 1000 years of age (SP 865536). It marked the parish boundary, appearing as 'halgan welle' on a charter of 979, the source of the 'halgan broce', and now sits on the County boundary as well. The other wells in this parish are also interesting. Christen or **Christian's Well** was at Home Field by the junction of the Warrington and Yardley roads, traditionally identified (at least from 1857) as the site of a former church or castle (SP 888519). There was also supposed to be an ancient elm tree there. At the north end of the village **Whirly Pit** was to be found (SP 888521), reputedly bottomless and always full of carp; there were two stories current about it. According to the first, the Devil's coach, drawn by headless horses, dived into the Pit and would emerge from Sway Gog meadow; the ground sways if you stand astride it (which of course you can't). Alternatively, a pair of eloping (and murderous) lovers drove the coach, drawn by headless horses in this version too, down Weston Road and into Sway Gog, bursting from Whirly Pit at midnight. The final **well** lay in the yard of the Two Brewers inn. The Devil haunted this hostelry until 13 priests carried out an exorcism. One asked if the Enemy would prefer to leave the house for 100 years or for the time it took a candle to burn down; he chose the latter period of banishment, whereupon the clergyman threw the candle into the well, which was then sealed over, securing the Fiend's permanent removal. These peculiar stories - if they were of any reliable antiquity when first written down - possibly hint at an important ancient site. Certainly nowhere else in Bucks are such stories attached to so many wells in one place.

(Sources: *Gelling* 1979, 177; *Storer* 1857, 191; *Ratcliff* 1900, 65; *Sheahan* 1862, 580; *Ratcliff & Brown* 1893, 65-6, 69-70)

PADBURY

The two lost wells in this parish - **Salters Well** (SP 729299) and **Edwardes Well** (SP 728309) - are both first attested to in 1591. Salters Well was still in existence in the late 1700s, but Edward's Well had disappeared; the name could possibly refer to St Edward, though there is no particular reason why it should.

(Sources: Reed 1979, 176; CBS Ma 12-7.T)

PENN

Once upon a time, 'Stamp or **Stump Well**, probably the chief water supply of the village and credited by Browne Willis with possessing the remedial properties of a chalybeate spring' must have been an impressive sight. Now its source is choked in brambles, and it flows feebly through an earthenware pipe and a pool of mud (SU 911931). Take the road down through Beacon Hill, and then follow the footpath on the left not far after the Baptist burial ground. The spring is on the left at the head of a gully after about 1/4 of a mile. If Browne Willis did record this well, the reference is lost in his papers in the Bodleian Library. The Manor of **Ashwell** (SP 900936) is first recorded in the name of Stephen de Hussewell in 1235. His name could in turn have derived from Ashwell in Hertfordshire, and certainly no obvious spring remains here today.

(Source: Jenkins 1935, 2; Mawer & Stenton 1925, 201, 221)

PITSTONE

Proceed east from the village, turn left along the B489, and after about 350 yards a footpath leads to a wood on the right. Over a stile and just off to the left is a tiny concrete shed over the **Cowhill Spring** (SP 947151), marking it as the property of a local cement company. In 1862 it supplied the moat of Pitstone Place.

(Source: Sheahan 1862, 725; Whitaker 1921, 48)

PRINCES RISBOROUGH

The important early town of Risborough grew up around a large **spring** at the foot of the Chiltern scarp where two ancient trackways, the Icknield Way and the road through the Saunderton Gap, crossed one another. This spring survives to the rear of the Old Coach House off Church Lane (SP 802036), and never fails - at least, not since the Tesco's store halted its drainage work which had stopped the flow completely. It rises close to the curtilage of the church, and it is almost inconceivable that it was not a holy well, though no name is recorded.

The Ridgeway leads east from the A4010 to the south of the town, and after about 1/4 of a mile another footpath branches off downhill to the right to **Pyrtille Spring** (SP 810024). This is an impressively large spring in a deep hollow, albeit featureless and scattered with concrete field debris, used by children as a play area but still maintaining a sense of being lost to the world. It is presumably the same as the 'Purtewell-Head' recorded in 1558.

(Source: Whitaker 1921, 48; Lipscomb 1831-47, ii 431)

QUANTON

The status of **Cross Pond** here (SP 746202) is unclear. It was on the village green beside a 14th-century cross and supplied by a public spring at SP 745204, set aside deliberately in the 1841 Enclosure Award. The pond could be seen as a sort of sacred site because of its proximity to the cross, as elsewhere, or this may have been simply a convenient place for the distribution of water.

(Sources: Harris c.1985, 55; CBS IR 73.R)

RADCLIVE

Wards Well, now lost (SP 682343), dates back at least to 1802.

(Source: CBS Ma R/5/8)

RADNAGE

Monk's Well was on the downs between Andridge and Colliers Lane. Cutthroats Cottage nearby commemorated a man who supposedly killed his wife and seven children during the agricultural depression of the 1820s and threw their bodies in the well. The well was filled in about 1970.

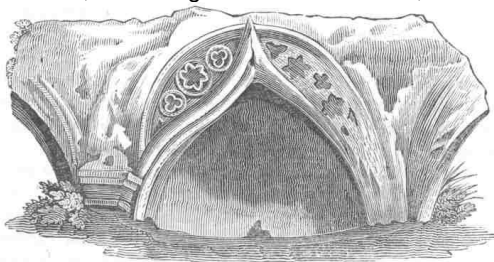
Roman Well (SU 785979) has been confused with Monk's Well, but is quite separate. The very impressive well-house is disused and almost invisible, though you can catch a glimpse if you hang off the bank above the road and below the Old Rectory. The name was coined by the Rector, Father BJ Corder, before World War Two, because of the well's fine brickwork which lined it to the bottom and which he likened to that of Roman wells. The site was reputedly haunted by the ghost of a monk.

Finally, the headwaters of the river Wye lie in the vicinity of Chorley and Chawley Manor farms, though it is disputable whether the site is in the parish of Radnage or that of West Wycombe. When the waters rise above Hatch Lane it is supposed to presage catastrophe for the village.

(Sources: VCH iii (1925), 90; Jackson 1977, 4, 11, 35, 92; Colmer)

RAVENSTONE

Lipscomb reported the **Holy Well** here, with its 'ancient wrought stone covering', but did not name it; according to Sheahan in 1862, that was done by 'another writer'. He did describe it



The well-head, as depicted by Lipscomb

as the 'last vestige' of the little 13th century Priory of Austin Canons in the village. That 'wrought stone' was an upturned niche from the Priory itself, over four feet long, set above a spring in the moated orchard below the church which was the site of the Priory fishponds. The well is now beneath a concrete cap on the land of Abbey House, and all memory of it has disappeared.

(Source: Lipscomb 1831-47, iv 314; Sheahan 1862, 591-2)

SHALSTONE

A field called **Seven Wells** Piece appears in 1850, between what are now Huntsmill and Hill Farms. The site seems to be a copse next to a stream (SP 642357), but it is so overgrown that it is currently impossible to discover whether there are springs remaining.

(Source: CBS TA 332)

SHENLEY

Fullwell, the 'dirty spring' to judge by its name, was in the angle of a small wood south of Crownhill (SP 814372), but no longer exists. **Brightwell** (SP 828366) can be found to the

west of the Castle site, on the left of the road from Shenley church towards Crownhill. It originally seems to have been sited at the northwest corner, but may now be represented by the source of the water in the moat, visible from the bridleway which runs beside the castle. Both these wells were recorded in the 1690s.

(Source: CBS BAS Maps 68)

SHERINGTON

At the corner of the second field south of the footpath opposite the end of Gun Lane, and in the valley bottom where the footpath bends, is a muddy but freely-flowing spring. This is **Dropwell** (SP 882475), first recorded in 1798. There were also two more named wells, now lost. **Skerdinges Well**, south-by-south-east from the village, appears as long ago as the early 1300s, while **Bredonwell** was first recorded in about 1580 - the name comes from the Anglo-Saxon *breden*, 'boarded'. Curiously the modern field names include no wells at all, showing how deceptively they can change over time.

(Source: CBS Ma/R/28; Chibnall 1968, map, 5, 290)

SLOUGH

Roxwell Close in Cippenham is a modern road which has no evidence of a spring; however, over the main road is the source of the Mill Stream (SU 945804), an agreeable spring emerging from two culvert arches in a patch of grass in front of the houses. It is not certain that the street name relates to this site, though.

SOULBURY

Follow the footpath west from the road to Wing, over a stream, through a gate, past a pheasant pen and over a stile, and **Manawell**, now pouring reasonably strongly from a yellow plastic pipe, can be found in the bank of the stream beside the path, about 200 yards east of Winscott, though it is pretty difficult to see (SP 875263). The name first appears in 1769.

Along the A4032 is a spectacular wayside **pump** which, though not by any stretch of the imagination a holy well, is worth seeing in its own right. It was erected by the owners of Liscomb House to mark the 1887 Jubilee, and was restored in the subsequent Jubilee years of 1935 and 1977. It even has an iron crown on top!

(Source: CBS BAS Maps 116/46)

STEWKLEY

The **eye wells** here - one at Windsor's Farm, the other near The Warren - were chalybeate springs used to bathe sore eyes, but both are lost, unless the latter one was the same as the site called **Salt Well** in 1811: that lay somewhere in the angle formed by the brook and the Kingsbridge road (SP 845239). Also shown on the 1811 Enclosure Map is **Stockwell** Furlong, the field between the brook and High Street North, which could also refer to the actual rise of the stream, somewhere in the ditches at the junction of the High Street and Stewkley Dean Road (SP 843270).

(Source: Warne c.1930, 17-18; CBS IR 110a. T)

STOKE HAMMOND

Chadwell Farm here was Chaddle Barn in 1826, another 'cold well' derived from Anglo-Saxon *ceald wiella*. The spring now rises beneath a brick wall and feeds a pond next to the farmhouse.

(Source: Mawer & Stenton 1925, 25)

STOWE

There were three named springs in Stowe, all of which appear on the 1851 Tithe Map; two have disappeared. **Hawkswell** lay in the fields southeast of Stowe House (SP 682369), while **Steans Well** was on the south side of the road from Stowe to Chackmore, though only the channel taking the stream from the Park is apparent now (SP 668362). The name possibly refers to the well being 'steened' or stone-lined. The survivor is the **Black Pit Pond** now to be found just east of the Stowe Equestrian Centre, formerly Blackpit Farm (SP 668400). 'Pit' is a word taken from the Latin *puteum* implying a well or spring, here as elsewhere.

(Source: CBS TA 367)

TAPLOW

Bapsey Pond here is possibly the most significant holy well in the whole county (SU 902821). It lies on the land of Taplow Court, now the UK headquarters of the Buddhist Nichiren Shoshu sect, and is only accessible, with permission, through its gardens. The large, although slightly overgrown pond, is a secluded spot with its own small boathouse. Originally the spring which fills the pond rose at the top of the hill beside the site of the former church of St Nicholas. This was demolished by the Lord of the Manor in 1828 and the spring diverted at the same time. The former churchyard, still open to the public, contains a huge barrow which presumably is 'Tappa's *hlaew*', giving the village its name. The mound was opened in 1883 and found to hold the richest Anglo-Saxon burial then discovered, still only surpassed by Sutton Hoo - the grave contained gold and garnet ornaments, armour and weapons. Legend maintains that the 7th-century Bishop of Dorchester, St Birinus, baptised the local pagan chieftain in the pool, and it was used for open-air baptisms by one of the saint's modern successors in 1942.



These stories were given some remarkable confirmation a few years ago when aerial photographs taken in a period of very dry weather revealed the outline of an apsed, basilica-type church in the soil of the churchyard. The building very possibly dated to the time of Birinus himself. Little may remain but a robbed-out barrow and a pond, but Taplow appears to have been one of the main centres of power, political and religious, in the 7th-century Thames Valley. Signs of Bronze and Iron Age structures have even been excavated in recent years.

Dipple Wood (SU 935881) lies in a detached portion of this parish. It appears as **Dipwell** in 1838, though there is no well apparent today. **Stockwell** (SU 904822) is a modern street name which may commemorate another 'spring by a tree-stump'; it also seems to have no well remaining. Finally, at Cliveden can be found **The Spring House**, 'a rustic building containing a Banqueting and Drawing-Room, in addition to suitable apartments for the residence of the

person entrusted with the care of The Spring, which is much celebrated', though what for is now forgotten. The existing Spring House is a mock-Tudor and mock-Gothic retreat on the banks of the Thames, one of the houses built by the Cliveden Estate in the 1840s and 1850s which are now leased out as summer accommodation. The Spring itself is much reduced from its former reputation, now being an ill-maintained, grubby stone-lined pond just south of the house (SU 909845). It is very much private. However it would take little to tidy up - there is a carved balustrade around the pool, stone urns and heads which would make for a very pleasant site. As it is, the nicest of Cliveden's various water-sites is the dropping-well in the War Memorial Garden constructed in the early 1900s and lying off the Yew Walk. A stone lion's head drips water into an Italianate well-head within an alcove in the garden wall, now clearly treated by visitors as a **wishing well** (photo above).
(Sources: Burgess 1883; Meaney 1964, 59; Fitch 1988, 62-7; At The Edge 1996 (no.1); CBS PR 203/28/2R; Lipscomb 1831-47, iii 297)

THORNBOROUGH

A map of 1613 shows **Wheaywell** (SP 744326). Proceed with permission through Priory Farm along a hard-core and earth track; the well rises beyond the hedge visible east of the path, but this could have been due to wet weather at the time of our visit which, over recent years, has pushed the sources of many springs higher than before.
(Source: CBS Ma R.14 T)

UPPER WINCHENDON

A footpath leads north from the church lane and turns beside the Waterhouse where what Sheahan called 'a fine spring of clear water' can be found leading from a tree within the garden - a possible **holy well**, to judge by its proximity to the church (SP 745145). Continuing along the path over a ridge and between an avenue of saplings aligned on Waddesdon Manor on the hilltop beyond brings you to an inspection cover between two water troughs and beside a stream (SP 742153). This is the **Merewelle**, the 'boundary spring' mentioned in a charter of 1004 - another named boundary mark, **Asshulfeswell**, is now lost.

Tenwell is a stream on the land of Eythorpe Park Farm (SP 752143). The main spring can be found by proceeding through the farm (disused when we visited) and turning right at the far barn to follow the field edge; where the barbed wire fence finishes, concrete culverts pour water into the stream.

Sheahan also mentions **The Fountain**, a spring covered with an arch in 'the Park Field', whose location is now lost.

(Source: Sheahan 1862, 441; Moreton 1929,63; Gelling 1979,183)

WADDESDON

Cranwell (SP 761152) is a spring in a spinney, consisting of a trough, pipe outlet and inspection tanks, and reached via a gate opposite the lodge cottage and round to the right. The name appears as Cremedewell in the 1100s. In a ditch immediately south of **Binwell** Farm is the eponymous spring - although the confusion of undergrowth makes it difficult to tell the spot exactly (SP 713190). Binwell is Binnols in about 1570, and Benwells in 1826, from the name 'Bynna' or the Anglo-Saxon *binnan*, 'between'.

(Source: Moreton 1929,58; Mawer & Stenton 1925, 108-9)

WEEDON

Stockwell was a pond at the main crossroads in the village centre in 1802 (SP 814181). Despite its prosaic name ('well at the tree stump'), the site is important because the village name indicates the presence of a pagan Anglo-Saxon shrine. The water does still rise, though now at the bottom of Stockwell Lane.

(Source: Farley 1997, 152)

WENDOVER

Wellhead Spring (SP 874073) lies in the northern angle of the crossroads southeast of the church. It is capped and sits in a small wooden enclosure. Further north, the pond beside the church is filled by a spring at its western end, marked by the concrete culvert below its bank (SP 870073). This is the **Which Well**, while the **Holy Well** (also called Holly Well) is now lost (SP 871088). All three were first recorded in 1620.

(Source: Whitaker 1921, 48; CBS Ma R 48)

WEST BIERTON

There has been much argument as to the site of what John Leland in the 1540s called 'the well of S. Osyth at Querendune bytwyxe Aeilesbyry and Querendune'. Quarrendon is certainly nowhere near West Berton. Victorian writers identified the well with a never-failing spring at Dunsham Farm, while another well 'associated with St Osyth' lay in the corner of a field between Dunsham and Watermead. Most authorities, though, settle for the obvious choice, an old well next to the church on a patch of grass, and it is this which is now thought to represent **St Osyth's Well** (SP 836152). According to Sheahan, it was 'a remarkable old well of the same date as the church, which was lately restored by the parish, and is a most valuable spring ... This well was formerly walled round, and had a drinking-trough for cattle. In ancient times it was called by the name of the Quarrendon saint; now the spring is known as Up Town Well'.

There are a number of saints called Osyth, including a martyr-abbess in Essex whose holy well rose where her head was struck off by Viking marauders, but Berton's Osyth is an abbess and church-founder of the 7th century related to the Mercian royal family of that time, a saint who had an altogether gentler time of things.

The well used to be a low brick structure capped with concrete and accompanied by a



St Osyth's Well before (left) and after (above)

pump close by. In 2000, however, the Parish Council restored it in grand fashion with the aid of the Heritage Lottery Fund. The cap was removed, the low drum-like well built up to a height of several feet, and a garden laid out complete with an information panel and seating. An archaeological watching brief was kept, but no very old remains were found. St Osyth's is now, physically, the most impressive holy well in the county.

(Source: Leland 1913, v 233; Gibbs 1885, 96; Fowler 1898, 217; Thurston 1994, 11-12; Sheahan 1862, 94)

WESTBURY

Hollywell Plantation lies north of the village along a stream (SP 622363). The name could refer to this stream rather than a spring, whether the name is really 'holy well' or in fact 'holy well' as we sometimes find, and certainly no well or spring seems to survive today. The stream itself originates in **Hogpit** Spinney alongside the path which skirts the southeastern side of the Turweston Airstrip (SP 620380). This is an interesting name again suggesting that the various 'Hog' placenames round the county are to be interpreted as water sites. Fulwell Road, in the village, does not commemorate a spring but runs towards Fulwell House, over the border in Oxfordshire.

WHADDON

About 1280 Missenden Abbey was given rights over 'the spring called **Egloweswelle**' by John Hammond. Given the name - from the Latin *ecclesia* or Celtic *eglwys* - we would expect the well to be close to Whaddon Church, and if we take the path south of the churchyard past the mound of the old post-mill and turn right beyond the fence, we arrive at a pump enclosed in a wooden fence at the bottom of the western slope of Church Hill (SP 804337), which is probably the spring concerned.

Following the bridleway north from Stock Lane and then left onto the Swans Way brings us to the field containing the earthwork remains of Whaddon Priory. A **spring** here gives rise to a stream; it may be unremarkable in any way, but equally could have had some sacred gloss applied to it (SP 816346).

(Source: Jenkins 1952, 16)

WHITCHURCH

Crabsgrove Spring, which was northwest of the village, is lost, but this hilltop village still has several surviving named springs. If you come down the main street towards Aylesbury, and take the footpath at the end of the lane second on the left after the church path, this leads - after a couple of stiles - to the **Holy Well** (SP 806208), in a spinney and culverted to a cattle trough via a pool. In the 1880s this 'held a wonderful power of incrustation', which it now seems to have lost. Its alternative name was Well-head or Head Well.

The other wells are all west of the main street. A footpath runs down to the prettiest, **Whittle Hole** (SP 801207), which was still 'blest', but 'not held so sacred' as the Holy Well. It is now a large stone trough full of beautifully clear water which pours through a culvert, gushes into a grotto beside the path, and empties into a stream. The name may derive from 'white well'. Turn left over the stream and follow the path at the edge of the field; this brings you to **The Park Spring** (SP 801206), a stone trough into which the water percolates from the garden above. This well, along with some of the others, was named in 1771 when Whitchurch's open fields were enclosed, and public access to them was legally preserved, as at Great Brickhill - hence the network of footpaths on this side of the hill.

The next well is **Fair Alice**. Follow the path back over the stream and turn left up the western side of the valley to the remains of the little castle of the 14th-century Bolebec

family. The water now gathers out of a patch of marshy ground in the former moat and becomes a stream (SP 800207). The name is still remembered locally, but the site may have shifted, because in 1889 it was described as springing from a group of rocks. According to legend, the water was drunk by Lady Alice de Bolebec who 'derived great benefit' from it.

In good romantic fashion the village historian, Mr Holloway, remarked that 'it was to these wells that at certain seasons of the year, the good people of the village, together with their Vicar, Monks and Friars, went to pay homage, respect and worship'. Whatever the truth of that, the waters of Whittle Hole are still blessed on the Sunday closest to Ascension Day each year as part of a procession around the village to give thanks to God for, and ask his blessing on, various aspects of the parish's life. Admirably, the Vicar is accustomed to stand in the water to deliver the blessing, and prayers and hymns are offered.

The final well is not really part of the above set. Follow the footpath opposite no.54 on the Oving Road, cross a paddock and a gate at the far side. Over a second gate and into a second paddock, turn right and follow the edge of the field around and downhill to another stile. Beyond this the ground falls away steeply to where a stream rises within a fenced enclosure beneath an oak tree (SP 789205). This is **Chadwell**, although the actual source may be higher into the wood. The name appears in about 1771, and probably derives in the usual way from *cealdwiella*, 'cold well'.

(Source: CBS IR 144b; Holloway 1889)

WING

Although there is no recorded holy well here, it's the sort of place that should have one: an old, important town, with a church containing the most substantial Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical remains in the county, a remarkable polygonal apse chapel covering a shrine-tomb in the crypt. The tomb was presumably the resting-place of an otherwise unknown local saint or church-founder; perhaps, some believe, the Mercian princess Elgiva. Sure enough, if the pilgrim follows the footpath west of the church and over the stile, then the field edge to the left, they will find a sluggish but kerbed **spring** under the hedge within sight of the church tower (SP 879225).

WOLVERTON

Close to Debb's Close, the site of Debb's Barn as shown on a map of 1742, was **Blue Pump** (SP 794406). The disagreeable ghosts seen here were a black dog, a man with a pig's head who ran to a spinney near Barratt's Farm, and old Josiah Debb himself, who drank from the Pump at midnight. That is, if we believe Mr Barley's account (see Calverton).

(Sources: Barley 1928, 52-6; Hyde 1945 f.p. 11)

WOOBURN

There is a dribbling spring beneath a tree beside the footpath leading north from Willow Close in the wood called **Hog Trough** (SU 802889), although the name could refer to the whole area.

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Alphabetical list of Buckinghamshire Wells

Aaron Well, Farnham Common	Chinkwell, Brill
Abbot's Well, Little Marlow	Chiswell, Edlesborough
Alum Spa, Dorton	Christian's Well, Olney
Archers Wells, Fenny Stratford	Cockpit Hole, Hughenden
Ashwell: Chalfont St Peter, Little	Cotwell, Long Crendon
Missenden, Penn	Cowhill Spring, Pitstone
Asshulfeswell, Upper Winchendon	Crabsgrove Spring, Whitchurch
Attwell, Addington	Cranwell, Waddesdon
Audens Well, Chesham	Cresswell, Little Missenden
Badgers Well, Chicheley	Cross Pond, Quainton
Baileys Well, Great Brickhill	Dadbrook Spring, Cuddington
Bapsey Pond, Taplow	Dipping Well, Farnham Common
Barnwell: Cublington, Marsh Gibbon	Dipwell, Taplow
Bellfield Spring, High Wycombe	dragon's pool, Hughenden
Berrywell, Drayton Parslow	Drakewell, Bow Brickhill
Berwell, Long Crendon	Dripwell, Great Brickhill
Bibshall Spring, Edlesborough	Dropping Well, Lathbury
Bidwell, Chesham	Dropwell, Sherington
Billings Well, Horton	Duck Lake Well, Maids Moreton
Bilwell, Long Crendon	Edwards Well, Padbury
Binwell, Quainton	Egloweswell, Whaddon & Nash
Black Pit Pond, Stowe	Egyptian Well, Aylesbury
Blackwell: Chesham, Lane End	eye well: Gayhurst, Stewkley
Bloody Balk, Calverton	Fair Alice, Whitchurch
Blue Pump, Wolverton	Fimblewell, Chicheley
Boiling Spring, Lathbury	The Fountain, Upper Winchendon
Botyl Well, East Claydon	Frewell, Chicheley
Brackwell, Chearsley	Frog Well, Ivinghoe
Breaches Spring, Great Brickhill	Fullwell: Great Linford, Shenley
Bredon Well, Sherington	Gorewell, Hardmead
Bretch Well, Nash	Gorrick's Spring, Calverton
Brightwell, Shenley	Goslin Well, Newton Longville
Britwell, Burnham	Harrowell, Hanslope
Brockwell: Ellesborough, North	Hartwell: Aylesbury, Dunton, North
Crawley	Crawley
Broomwell, Great Brickhill	haunted pond, Bow Brickhill
Caedel's Fountain, Chalfont St Peter	Hawaise Well, Monks Risborough
Caldwell, North Crawley	Hawk's Well, Stowe
Candlemas Pond, Beaconsfield	Hobb's Pit, Buckland
Catewell, Chicheley	Hog Pit, Westbury; Hog Trough: Great
Chadwell: Akeley-cum-Stockholt, Brill,	Missenden, High Wycombe, Little
Leckhampstead, Longwick-cum-	Missenden, Medmenham, Wooburn
Ilmer, Stoke Hammond, Whitchurch	Hollywell, Westbury
chalybeate spring: Gayhurst, Loughton	Holwell: Cuddington, Ellesborough
Chartwell, Great Brickhill	Holy Well: Chenies, Cholesbury, High
Chess Spring, Chartridge	Wycombe, Iver, Linslade, Nash,
Chilwell, Chilton	Ravenstone, Wendover, Whitchurch

'holy wells': Brill, Chetwode, Dorney,
High Wycombe, Hughenden, Ibstone,
Olney, Princes Risborough, Upper
Winchendon, Whitchurch, Wing

Iremonger's Well, Buckingham

Jubilee Well: Lee Common

Lady Hole, Great Brickhill

Lammas Pond, Burnham

Lathwells, Granborough

Lewell, Great Linford

Line Well, Great Linford

Lion Spring, Long Crendon

Little Well, Denham

The Lyde, Bledlow

Maidenwell: Chenies, Great Brickhill

Malmers Well, High Wycombe

Manawell, Soulbury

Mares Pott, Chicheley

Marrowells, Chearsley

Marwell, Newton Longville

Merewelle, Upper Winchendon

Merton's Hole, Little Marlow

Mobwell, Great Missenden

Monks Well, Radnage

Mother Redcap's Spring, Cold Brayfield

Muswell: Brill, Lane End

Muxwell, East Claydon

Narrowells, Beaconsfield

Newel, Adstock

Palm Well, Brill

Park Spring, Whitchurch

Perrins Spring, Frieth

Pinewell, Fawley

Pyrtle Spring, Princes Risborough

Queen Anne's Well, Chalvey

Redwell, Long Crendon

Rockwell: Cublington, Hambleden

Rodwell, Maids Moreton

Roman Well, Radnage

Roxwell, Slough

St Firmin's Well, North Crawley

St John's Well: High Wycombe,
Newton Longville

St Osyth's Well, Bierton

St Rumwald's Well, Buckingham

Salters Well, Padbury

Saltwell, Chicheley

Sandwell, Aston Clinton

Selborne Spring, North Marston

Seven Wells, Shalstone

Sewell, Maids Moreton

Shipmans Well, Great Brickhill

Short Well, Great Linford

Silt Well, Stewkley

Sir John Schorne's Well, North Marston

Skerdinges Well, Sherington

Snails Well, Ashendon

Snaiswell, Lathbury

Sollars Hole, Monks Risborough

South Well, Boarstall

The Spring, Taplow

Stamp Well: Chalfont St Peter, Penn

Stampon Well, Buckland

Stand Well, Dunton

Steened Well, Stone

Steward's Well, Haddenham

Stockwell: Chearsley, Drayton

Beauchamp, Haddenham, Lane End,

Longwick-cum-Ilmer, Mentmore,

Stewkley, Taplow, Weedon

Stump Well, Marsh Gibbon

Swannels, Chilton

Swetewell, Bletchley

Tenwell, Upper Winchendon

Threadwell, Dorton

Tong Well, Great Linford

treasure well: Boarstall, Ludgershall

Tunnwell, Chearsley

Tynker Well, Ivinghoe

Wainhill Spring, Bledlow

Wards Well, Radcliffe

Well Head, Wendover

Wellonhead Spring, Aston Clinton

Wellwick, Ellesborough

Werbung's Well, Brill

Wheaywell, Thornborough

Which Well, Wendover

Whirly Pit, Olney

Whitewell, Newton Blossomville

Whittle Hole, Whitchurch

Wigwell, Great Horwood

Willy Thorn Spring, Maids Moreton

Wombwells, Chilton

Youlsum Spring, Haddenham

Unnamed springs: Bow Brickhill, High
Wycombe, Olney

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