

The Holy Wells of Surrey



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Umbra Press

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The frontispiece shows St John the Baptist's Well, Bisley

The cover illustration shows St Catherine's Well, Guildford

HOLY WELLS OF SURREY

Introduction

This survey of Surrey wells marks a further step forward in the investigation of ancient and named springs in England, and builds on the only previously published work, Rowland G.M. Baker's monograph *Holy Wells and Magical Waters of Surrey*, reprinted in the first issue of the old *Source* magazine in 1985 and now available online. Following my usual practice, I've covered the whole of the old county of Surrey, including those bits of it now within Greater London, and excluding the parishes north of the Thames which it took over from the old Middlesex. I'm also following my 'usual practice' in another respect. Time has gone on in the world of hydrolatric research since I got going over twenty years ago, and nowadays we are less prone to identify saints' or holy wells, or to assume that modern names can hide former reverence at springs; and my colleague Jeremy Harte (Curator of Bourne Hall, Ewell, and author of a forthcoming book on English holy wells) has suggested that the whole category may obscure more than it illuminates. Still, I record absolutely everything in this booklet, and leave speculation for the future.

Even more than the other eastern counties I've surveyed in recent years (Bucks and Kent), Surrey is hydrolatrically mysterious. Geographically, it contains great contrasts in its relatively small area, from the heavy soils of the Weald inland to the alluvium and sands of the Thames basin in the north, none of which seems to have made a great deal of difference to the distribution of wells, unlike Kent, where geography had a powerful influence on the settlement pattern. There are a lot of very good wells, and a lot which have completely disappeared. And why, uniquely among all English counties, are there no explicitly *named* Holy Wells? There is only an unlocated 'Holy Well' recorded in a medieval document, which could be one of the others we know about or which could be lost. I have a suspicion that the three sites called Hale or Hail Pit, or Halewell, actually reflect a sacred status which existed in the past – but that's just a guess.

The evidence for pre-Christian wells in Surrey is hazy. Caesar's Well, Wimbledon, is close to the Iron Age structure known as Caesar's Camp, and at Titsey the spring called Pitch Font seems to be associated with a Roman temple; but in neither case is the relationship particularly clear. What we do have is a couple of sites which *appear* to represent hilltop shrines later converted to Christianity, namely at Chertsey, Guildford and St Marthas. The second-earliest Christian site in Surrey, Farnham, has a spring close to its centre (the Brightwell, traditionally seen as a name suggestive of a pagan context), and of course there are the great springheads at Carshalton and Ewell, already recorded in the 7th century. But none of this is very spectacular, or definite.

And as for Christian holy springs, the number of saints' wells seems satisfying if not exactly abundant, somewhere, especially if we count in the two Jacob's Wells, between the plenty of Kent and the dearth of Buckinghamshire. But the earliest-named are the two St Thomas's Waterings at Peckham (c.1390) and Send (1675),

and almost all the rest seem to rely on inference and suggestion rather than secure evidence. One – St James’s Well at Abinger – we know is a modern coining. The great well of St Anne at Chertsey is not *recorded* as such in John Aubrey’s gossipy history of the county; was it named later in reference to the chapel on the ancient hill overlooking the abbey town? Again, was there a significant cult of St Margaret reflected in Surrey wells? There are a very striking five springs which either *have* been called ‘St Margaret’s Well’ at some time, or which *may* have been to judge by their proximity to a church with a Margaret dedication; but in not one single case is the dedication secured by an early record. It is all very tantalising, and that’s the story of the whole county.

One Surrey hydrolatric phenomenon which isn’t subject to doubt is that of the spa well. Commonly I have been dismissive of healing wells which represent only a modern tradition, but in Surrey they are such a feature of the landscape I’ve included them all. Once Epsom had set the pattern in the early 1600s, and particularly from the first couple of decades of the 18th century, medicinal wells were uncovered in some numbers. In fact, hardly any of the parishes immediately south of London was without one at some time or other, though some lasted no more than a few years. It seemed that almost any spring with a funny taste or cloudy aspect could be hailed as the new Epsom; and Aubrey’s researches extended the process way out into the county’s wilder corners.

Visiting the Wells

Many Surrey wells survive as little more than damp holes in the ground (if that), but part of the business of this booklet is nevertheless to encourage people to visit them and, hopefully, look after them. Not all lie on public property. 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.

I’d like formally to record my thanks to all the people who’ve shared their information with me and allowed me to visit their wells; and to the staff of the Surrey History Centre at Woking for their indefatigable assistance and advice.

GAZZETTEER OF SURREY WELLS

SURREY

Place-Names of Surrey records a **Holiwelle** in 1270. This notice is almost completely unhelpful, as, uniquely among English counties, no spring in Surrey explicitly named ‘Holy Well’ can be identified today. It could refer to one of the wells we know about (Chertsey or Bisley, for instance), or was perhaps a completely different site.
Source: Gover 1934, 366.

ABINGER

Longwells is the former name of the house called High Hackhurst at the top of Hackhurst Lane in Abinger Hammer (TQ 096478). It had a 134-foot deep well, but in the course of no more than 15 years the memory seems to have disappeared. There is some doubt as to whether we should count **Friday Street Pool** (TQ128457) in this survey. Certainly most of its water comes from the mill stream, but there is a spring on the southeast side too. It's an attractive, quiet place, but one writer insists that 'the ghost of Freya, the goddess of nature' rises from the pool on moonlit nights, while the spectre of Archbishop Stephen Langton haunts the woods and paths around it. Freya is a very dubious explanation for the name, and the prelate has been borrowed from the story associated with Silent Pool, ALBURY.

At Abinger Green we find

St James's Well (TQ 121454), the pump, well mechanism and basin impressively covered by a tile-roofed shelter supported by stone pillars and all surrounded by an ornamental iron fence. It makes a rather incongruously grand monument to the munificence of Mr WJ Evelyn, Lord of the



Manor, who, as a marble inscription informs visitors, had the well sunk to supply water to this dry part of the parish in 1893. It is named after the church, though that stands some distance away. An interestingly modern holy well, then, although yards from that little Norman church is a small spring-fed pond which could have been a precursor of this one.

Sources: Corke 1993, 13; Chowler n.d., 97.

ALBURY

Silent Pool has been a notable site for a long while. Aubrey refers to 'Shirburn Spring' in the Albury Park, with a banqueting house for the entertainment of guests, and on Palm Sunday parishioners would gather at the spring to drink sugared water, known as Roman Water in these parts, until in about 1810-11 the Rector managed to suppress the ceremony in favour of a May Day fair held in Weston Wood. But it only became well-known outside the immediate area after Martin Tupper wrote his novel *Stephan Langton* in 1858. The legend of a girl bathing here being surprised by a passing horseman and drowning in her attempt to escape his notice may have been a pre-existing story, but Tupper made King John the villain of the tale and for some time it was treated as a matter of fact. Nowadays the pool – the higher of the two reached by a footpath from the car park beside the A25 – is a pleasant place for a

stroll, its waters unusually clear as the name ‘Shirburn’ suggests. At the very top is a brick structure which could be the remains of Aubrey’s ‘banqueting house’. (TQ 060486).

Amberwell (TQ 045499) is the name of a house on Harrow Hill, the topography right for a spring – but nothing seems to survive.

Sources: Aubrey 1719, iv 69; Wood 1955, 46, 17.

ASHTEAD

The eponymous **Ashtead Well**, ‘adjoining Epsom Well’ on the Common, was enclosed in 1676 for the good of the parish poor, and granted to the minister, churchwardens and overseers on a lease of 60 years. It could be related to the ponds at TQ 185602, otherwise it’s lost. Another public water supply was **Outwell Pond** on the north side of The Street (TQ 187582), which ducks, geese and sheep were barred from using in about 1670 on pain of a 6s 8d fine to their owners; the site seems to be represented by a vacant lot by the roadside. Finally, **Abbotspit** was close to the junction of Pleasure Pit Road and Headley Road, on the parish boundary. Nothing very much is evident now – there’s a sunken area full of concrete rubble south of the junction, but no water. Abbotspit appears on the Tithe Award of 1840, but is almost certainly the same site as the ‘Abbotisput’ recorded as a medieval bound-mark of the lands of Chertsey Abbey in Epsom parish.

There may also be some significance in the fact that the Roman villa here was close to a well sunk to obtain Epsom-like waters, which was in use in about 1880.

Sources: Jackson 1977, 55; Hudson & Guiseppi 1933-63: ii 327; Lowther 1927, 147.

BANSTEAD

In 2001 the Surrey Archaeological Society carried out a very detailed survey of Banstead Common and environs, and noted two water sites. ‘**Roman Pond**’ (not an ancient name) was on the parish boundary (TQ 234539), while **Osgoods Well** was just to the south (TQ 232537). The former is now a shallow depression in the field by the footpath which runs to the north of the golf course, just where the wood ends and another bridleway runs north. Osgoods Well was somewhere within the roughs and fairways of the golf course itself, but we failed to find it. It was beside a Romano - British site, though even the SAS admitted that nothing very much was visible.

Source: SAS 2001.

BARNES

Little Spring (approx. TQ 223755) was, in 1894, ‘famous for its clearness and purity’; its curative properties rivalled the great St Winifred’s Well at Holywell in Wales, and ‘all sorts and conditions come there to drink the water’. It was particularly prized for curing weak eyes in children. It lay on the south side of the Common, close to Hammersmith Road, but should not be confused with a ‘Conduit’ built near it. A rockery was built around it in 1899, and the water was piped away in 1904.

Source: Grimwade & Hailstone 1993, 21.

BERMONDSEY

Bermondsey **Spa** was discovered at an unspecified time in the 1700s. In 1770 Mr Keyne bought a run-down tavern nearby, and promoted the spa, beginning 'entertainments', and opening tea rooms, gardens, and a gallery of his own art! He died in 1800 and the establishment closed five years after.

Source: Clarke 1902, 23-6.

BISLEY

St John the Baptist's Well here (SU 956595) is the only one in Surrey that clearly follows the classic baptismal-holy-well-near-church pattern. From the church, take the footpath that runs across the field, and on the far side and to the right lies the well, a chalybeate spring flowing from a brick reservoir into a small stream, with a short flight of stone steps leading down, an overshadowing tree, and an information board. Again, it is to John Aubrey that we owe our first record of this well: he was intrigued by the name, and found its water turned purple when galls were added. A story also goes that the monks of Chertsey constructed the well after drinking its water. It has a constant temperature; it appears on the Tithe Map as Baptist's Well in 1848; its water was used for baptisms in the church until about 1900, and the *Victoria County History* implies that children were actually baptised *in* it; but by 1908 locals knew nothing of it. It was especially good for sore eyes. The water is now used for baptisms once more, and in 2002 the well was restored, removing a concrete cap which topped it previously.

The village was certainly part of the possessions of Chertsey Abbey and the church itself existed by the 12th century. That both well and church share a dedication implies a close relationship between them, though, as ever, which came first is a difficult thing to judge.

Sources: VCH iii, 398; Baker 1985, 26-7; Aubrey 1719, iii 198; Parker 1908, 215-16.

BLETCHINGLEY

Easy to get to, **Prestwell** – 'the priest's spring' – is probably the pleasant pond next to the footpath at TQ 328503, on the land of what was Town Farm. The name appears in 1451. Far less accessible is **Conduit Well**, which just about survives as a boggy dribble at the corner of the wood south of Whitehill Farm (TQ 335528).

Shatefont is lost. It was supposed to be on a hilltop 'by Cardinal's Cap', wherever that was. The name, first recorded in 1451, suggests it wasn't a pleasant site – 'sewer spring', to put it politely, though the next appearance in 1517 as Shaftisfont indicates a different sense.

Sources: Lambert 1921, 598, 601; Whitaker 1912, 41.

BRAMLEY

The hollow behind Daneshill was known as **Danes Hole** in 1843; no water source survives there today (assuming it is in fact a water-name) (TQ 009431).



BROCKHAM

According to Mr Scott, the well on the village green at Brockham is topped with a cross, which ought to make it a **Holy Well** of some description (TQ 197496). The well as it stands today is a rather fine little Gothic village pump, but whatever may have stood on top of the canopy has disappeared. In fact, it owes its existence to the Rev AB Cheales, who as Vicar in 1864 suggested the construction of a public drinking-fountain as a memorial to local MP and benefactor, Mr Hope, and

this was not even the first site chosen. A cross on top makes a lot of sense given the well's origins, but doesn't make it sacred in any real way.

Sources: Scott 1994; www.brockhamvillage.co.uk.

CAMBERLEY

Deep Well Drive is the name of a modern street – probably no more than 40 years old or so – near St Paul's Church. It presumably commemorates a spring, but nothing can be seen today (SU 882602).

CAMBERWELL

This parish is one of the few in Surrey that commemorates a spring in its name. It was Cambrewell in 1086, possibly 'the Welshman's well', if you will, or 'winding well' – but whichever it might be, local tradition has long attached the name to a well on Grove Hill, once owned by a Dr Lettsom, and in which 'Roman and other coins' were found; the *VCH* even describes it as a Roman well *per se*. Its waters were curative. Mr Johnstone called it **Camer's Well**, and it survives in the garden of no.13 Grove Park, an old brick well visible over the adjoining wall (TQ 334760).

Milkwell, commemorated in Milkwell Yard (TQ 325765), was owned by St Thomas's Hospital, Southwark, and was in existence before 1305.

Sources: Gover 1934, 17; Foord 1910, 208-9; *VCH* iv (1912), 368; Johnstone 1919, 121-2.

CAPEL

Two unremarkable wells in this parish. **Brookwell** is the name of a house opposite Osgoods, but nothing survives today (TQ 166384); one of the other cottages has a nice old well, but that doesn't seem to be relevant. **Gives Well** is named on the 1841 Tithe Award at Beare Green at the northern end of what is now a large pond, but nothing can now be identified apart from the pond itself (TQ 175423). I suppose the name could be a description of the field's properties rather than referring to a spring!



The old state of Anne Boleyn's Well

CARSHALTON

The true history of holy wells often gets garbled over the centuries, and **Anne Boleyn's Well** (TQ 279645) is an excellent example. The story goes that she and Henry VIII were riding from Nonsuch to visit Sir Nicholas Carew at Beddington when her horse stumbled, and where its hoof struck the ground a spring burst forth. The local people built a domed well-house over the site.

This story goes back to Mr Brightling's history of Carshalton in 1872, but whether he penned

the poem in which the legend first appears is not clear. Before that the well was plain Bullen's Well, and, as a plaque on the wall nearby suggests, that name may relate to the Counts of Boulogne who held the manor for a century or more after the Domesday survey, and a chapel of Our Lady of Boulogne which may have stood nearby. So, a holy well, then, but nothing to do with Queen Anne, and still less St Anne, as some have suggested. The well stands on the pavement beside All Saints' Church, capped, full of weeds, with a name-stone, and surrounded by iron railings. It used to be in the middle of the road, and a photograph on show in the Heritage Centre shows the stone kerb and dome. A house called Queens Well once stood behind; today a baleful statue of Anne herself looks goggle-eyed from the eaves of a modern dwelling by the roadside. How something so unspeakable won a sculpture award in the 1960s we can't imagine.

In fact, the more likely saint's well is not far away, **Margaret's Pool** just across Pound Street from the Water Tower (TQ 277645). This spring is one of the sources of the Wandle River, and feeds into the ponds which are so pleasant a feature of the village centre. John Ruskin famously referred to the awful state of the spring in his day as an example of British environmental decline in the preface to *A Crown of Wild Olive*, and, according to local tradition, organised its clearing and restoration with imported stone blocks. Today it looks a bit unhappy again. Whitaker calls it 'Lady' or 'St Margaret's Pool', which is fairly unequivocal though there seems no good reason why it should be under the patronage of either saint. This is almost certainly the spring recorded in the placename *Auueltone* in 675.

There are two notable water-sites in Carshalton Park to the south. The first is **Grotto Spring** (TQ 283641), which is now a very grand brick structure set into a high bank, a central arched chamber flanked by two smaller ones, all above the chutes from which the water flows – or did once. If it was dry in early 2007 after a winter of heavy rain, it's likely to stay that way. The chambers are now closed with grilles and the fabric is



graffitied and sad. Again, the Heritage Centre has a Victorian photo on display showing how the Grotto used to look, with one chamber and a more conventional stone structure. Finally, just to the northwest of that is **Hogpit Pool** (TQ 282642), a name which goes back to 1444. Hogpit too is now dry with a couple of brick drains at one end.

Sources: Baker 1985, 28-29; Brightling 1872, 54-6; Whitaker 1912, 44-5; Wilks 2002, 24; Jones c.1965, 10-11.

CHARLWOOD

Most of Charlwood's wells have gone. **Twinwells** was the old name of Spottles Farm (Spottles Cottage, Sewill & Lane insist, but that's a distinct house), but no wells survive now (TQ 244414). Nor is there anything visible at **Wellpools**, on the parish boundary (TQ 432222), which first appears as Wyggepole, meaning either 'Wicga's' or 'earwig' pool. The **Bell Ponds**, supposedly where the bells were tipped when the Devil overturned the wagons carting them to church – or, more prosaically, flooded stonepits – were in Bellpits Field, 'northwest of the church and over the road', but it isn't exactly clear what this means. Modern maps show a pond behind the old houses on Rectory Lane (TQ 239412), but that seems to have dried up; alternatively there were more ponds higher up the hill, again now dry (TQ 237416). The houses called The Old Well and Spring House along Rectory Lane don't seem to be relevant.

With some relief we discover that **Wickerspit** is still there, and in fact rather lovely. The name is unexplained, though Sewill & Lane record it. Proceed west from the village up Glovers Lane, onto the footpath to Glovers Wood and, just beyond the stile, deviate left to the top of the rise where the pool comes into view, complete with a bench to sit on and contemplate the pale green weed-decorated water (TQ 233409). The wood is now a nature reserve supervised by the Woodland Trust.

Sources: Sewill & Lane 1951, 208, 2, 197, endpaper.

CHELSHAM

Smugglers Hole is marked on the 1:10,000 OS map, a pool in the woods just south of the footpath before it crosses a stile at TQ 380592. No traditions about it are known.

CHERTSEY

The splendid **St Ann's Well** (TQ 028676) here is one of Surrey's best and most interesting. It's not easy to find, however, lying on the northwestern slope of St Ann's Hill amid a warren of paths. Best, perhaps, to follow the old coach road around the flank of the hill and then break off uphill as the path turns left – and just keep looking till you find it! Set into a bank, the well is now an oval brick bath sheltered by a brick hood, and elongating into a rectangular channel, made more irregular with cemented bits of stone. This is completely different from the illustration in Hall's *Chertsey & Its Neighbourhood*, so it has been rebuilt since then. The owners of the hill from 1842, Lord & Lady Holland, converted to Roman Catholicism, which would fit



'The Nun's Well.'

in well with a reconstruction of the well in the 1850s. The 1853 picture looks much like Aubrey's description of 'a fine clear spring, dress'd with squar'd stone'.

Chertsey Abbey was of course the fount of Christianity in Surrey, founded by Abbot Erkenwald in 666: but the relationship of the well to the abbey, and to its surrounding topography, is very obscure. The hillfort, or structure, on St Ann's Hill has never been fully excavated; what work has been done suggests a Bronze Age origin, but too much has been damaged or destroyed to make matters very clear. The hill's former name, Eldebury, was still in use in 1440 when the Abbey was granted the right to hold a fair there on St Anne's Day, and could mean 'old hill' or 'elder tree

hill'. The chapel of St Anne was licensed in 1334 so the current name of the well probably dates to that time; that is, of course, no reason to assume its sanctity began then. We don't even know where the chapel was. There are footings on the hilltop pointed out on all the maps as 'Site of Chapel', but Antony Wood, the Oxford antiquarian, was clear that the house further down called St Ann's Hill was built in its place. A combination of hilltop monument, sacred tree and well would make a great deal of sense here, but it would be nothing more than supposition. Aubrey also mentions the Devil's Stone nearby, which hid treasure beneath but which could never be moved (identical with the 'Monk's Grave', maybe, to which the same story attaches); that legend increases the possibility that the hill was a 'significant place' in pagan Surrey. Manning and Bray were over-pessimistic in 1809 when they claimed the waters were 'not now used for any medicinal purposes', for in 1853 the 'peasantry' were still resorting to the well for their sore eyes, and for its 'famed healing properties'. Where the alternative name 'Nun's Well' comes from is mysterious, but it either inspired or was inspired by a gruesome legend. A ghostly monk is said to walk nearby around a lake, the murderer of a nun at 'St Ann's Convent' (where was that, we wonder?) who he had buried alive in a sandpit here. A later writer states that the monk in fact haunts a pond at the 'Cedar Grove' pub (the *Golden Grove*, perhaps, which is on the hillside?), and the well is the resort of the nun, whose 'deep begging sighs' can be heard 'on certain nights ... On such a day, this place reeks of remorse, suffering and sorrow'. Not something we noticed.



Aubrey also mentions the **healing well** on the eastern slope of the hill, in Monk's Grove. It was 'much celebrated heretofore for its virtues', was lost and covered over, and found again a few years before he wrote. 'Anciently' it was 'dress'd with stone' and a block put there to mark the spot. It's even more difficult to find than St Ann's Well, being no more than a shallow stone-lined ring, dry and, on our visit, full of leaves, halfway down the slope towards the road, where the hill flattens out (TQ 029674). The construction is very similar to St Ann's Well and so the two were doubtless rebuilt at the same time as an attempt to romanticise the hilltop remains. The hill was passed to public ownership by Lord Camrose in 1928.

Finally, we have **Huberdeswell** in 1237, a bound-mark of the Abbey's lands in Trinale and Osle. All the names are now unidentifiable.

Sources: VCH iii, 413; Hall 1853, 14; Aubrey 1719, iii 185-6; Wheeler 1905, 141; Manning & Bray 1809, iii 226; Green 1973, 270-71; Long 2002, 84; Hudson & Guiseppi 1933-63, i 92.

CHIPSTEAD

Mugswell is a chameleon well indeed. The name, despite the plaque on the well, does not appear in Domesday Book, though it is a venerable part of the parish – at least, under its earlier names of Muggs Hole or Monks Hole. For some strange reason the Rectory used to be here, some 2 miles distant from the parish church, until 1902 when a more convenient one was built. The Well House Inn may have been the impetus behind exalting the status of the well, first to Monkswell (hence the street of modern houses nearby with that name) and finally to St Margaret's Well as it now, and most implausibly, claimed. The well, nicely situated in the pub garden, is a deep old stone shaft-well with water at the bottom, but is now topped by an execrable Jack-and-Jill type structure whose roof wouldn't stop things falling in the water, and whose bucket couldn't hold any.

Sources: VCH iii, 189; www.megalithic.co.uk.



CHOBHAM

Fowlers Wells Farm, just north of the centre of the village, is a pleasant 17th-century cottage now surrounded by new development; the whole area around it is called Fowlers Wells, but apparently **Fowlers Well** itself is in the drive – and, most of the time, under the gravel – of the cottage. It's a beehive-shaped dry-brick well of no very great antiquity to judge by the brickwork, and the current owners still use it for water in the summer. The Farm became Blackmans Farm in the 19th century, after its then owners, but has since reverted to the older name.

Three wells in this parish are lost. 'Le **Westwell**' appears in 1344; **Berewelle** was a late-14th century bound-mark of Chertsey Abbey's lands in the parish; and Aubrey mentions a 'ston'd **well**' in Valley Wood near Raden or Radium, which was iron-bearing and rarely froze.

Sources: Schueller 1989, 177; Hudson & Guiseppi 1933-63, ii 82, 178; Aubrey 1719, iii 207.

CHURT

The venerable **Cresswell** (SU 893390) appears in local records in 1556, and now presents as a spring-fed pool, the head of a series of ponds, just beside Tilford Road (formerly Cresswell Lane) – though you must wade through a sea of bracken and nettles next to the bridleway to get a view of this peaceful spot. The modern house name Hartswell on the other side of the road has no significance – there's a decorative wellhead in the garden and deer often stray in!

Source: Brooks 2000, 33, 52.

CLAPHAM

The lost **Spring Well** (approx. TQ 286753) was the town's main water supply, 'a fine spring' on the north side of the Common. An illustration from the 1820s shows water-carts drawing from it, a large circular dip-well with what looks like a wooden frame across the mouth.

Sources: Hanbury 1887, 16; Clegg 1998, 24.

COBHAM

There were two distinct spa sites in this parish. **The Spa**, whose virtues were, according to Aubrey 'discovered about three years since by a country-man using it in his food; as also giving it to his pigges', was at Gorse Green in Downside, and at its bottom, he was told, were 'stones like Bristow diamonds'. In 1736 it was declared superior to Epsom waters, but by 1793 was only 'formerly much resorted to'.

Photographs from the 1930s show it as an ordinary cottage well (TQ 107578).

Cobham Wells, also called 'Spa Bottom Well' or 'Fairmile Water', was a separate site at TQ 122621, and had a brief 18th-century vogue which faded thanks to Jessop's Well at OXSHOTT.

The 18th-century landscape gardens at Painshill include a rather unkempt **Cold Bath**.

Sources: Taylor 1982, 98; Taylor 2003, 52.

COULSDON

The curiously-named '**Well called Boxfordesmere**' is recorded in 1496. Perhaps it was related to Boxford Close at TQ 358611, or Well Shaw to the south of it? **Peter's Hole** at TQ 292567 is mentioned in 1810 and the name survives in the wood, Petershole Shaw. It makes a rather doubtful well-name, however, and nothing can be seen there today.

Sources: Rumble 1971-2, 32; Hudson & Guiseppi 1933-63, ii 161.

CROYDON

The parish of Croydon seems to be full of ghostly water-sites. At the Wheatsheaf Inn, Thornton Heath, there was a **duckpond** (TQ 313677) haunted by a murdered landlord's daughter – or a princess, in another account. It has been filled in. So has **Brown's Pond** in Conduit Lane (TQ 345644). This was an old pond, next to

Coombe Lodge, which was filled in 1845, whereupon the ghostly servant girl who haunted it moved to a new pond at the corner of the lane. Finally, a spectral stable boy haunted a well at Henley Farm down which he had been pushed; it was discovered in 1981.

Beulah Spa (TQ 328700) was not haunted, though a male ghost in modern clothes does manifest at the Beulah Spa pub. The spa, on the corner of Spa Hill and Beulah Hill, had been 'long restored to by country folk for its medicinal properties', and was later described by a medical authority as the country's purest and strongest saline spring. The grounds – and there were 30 acres of them – were laid out by Decimus Burton, and opened by Lady Essex in 1831. Visitors paid a shilling at a 'rustic lodge', enjoyed themselves in an octagonal reading room, camera obscura, maze, rose garden, lakes, circus ring and archery butts, and could sample a military band, dancing, fortune-telling, or minstrel singing. The Spa Well, in its wigwam-shaped hut, rose 15 feet and then fell amid a rock grotto. Competition with the Crystal Palace led to the spa's closure in 1854; in the 1930s the spring still survived under boards on a path at the All Nations Bible College. The Spa Hotel closed in 1937.

Sources: Stewart 1989, 12-13, 33, 57, 20; Long 2002, 82; Ryde 1938, 136-7.

CUDDINGTON

Howell, Hawelle in 1201, means 'well on a spur', and there was one at about TQ 233620.

Source: Gover 1934, 73.

DORKING

Mag's Well (TQ 145455) is officially in the parish of Holmwood, but has always been associated with Dorking and so we include it here. It has been continually mentioned in lists of Surrey wells since Aubrey described it. 'The reason why it is called Mag-well', he related, 'was because a poor Wench, whose name was Meg, that was troubled with the Itch, and lived hereabout, first cured herself with washing'. That prosaic tale didn't stop writers from speculating by the later 1800s that it derived from 'St Margaret's Well', probably by analogy with the one at Lingfield whose attribution is *slightly* more convincing. An early-19th century medical man, intrigued by the notices of the spring, visited it in December 1817, and found it contained within a bath, which had a plug, and a roofless building some seven feet by four or five, and four or five feet high, reached by five steps. There were separate baths for humans and animals, the latter being 'frequently brought from a distance to be cured of various distempers'; nevertheless the well was 'very neglected', and there were only a few inches of water, which was warmish and of no definite taste. The water was supposed to be cold in summer, and warm in winter.

Subsequent records show that the well's healing reputation lingered a long while. 'It still has a certain repute', wrote Mr Jennings in 1884; a walk ran to it from Dorking, though it was 'familiar to very few', and people sent for its water which was supposed to be good for the eyes and, confusingly, remarkably cold. A contributor to the *Victoria County History* in 1911 could remember children being bathed in it, and

maintained it was iron-bearing. A few years later, it was 'frequently visited by tourist parties and groups of children. The water is fresh and pleasant to drink'. All these quotations show both how opinion can differ regarding a single spring, and how its fortunes can wax and wane over time. Mag's Well was too remote and its location too unpromising to become a spa, but in the golden age of the motoring trip between the wars it underwent a renaissance. Considering there's never been any doubt over where it is, the disagreement over its properties does make one wonder how reliable such descriptions really are.

Today, Mag's Well is best reached from the south along Wolvern Lane which runs north from Coldharbour. A walk of about a mile leads to Upper Meriden Cottage; after the house, follow not the footpath that runs along the edge of the garden but the one to the left of it heading downhill. After a couple of hundred yards this path is crossed by another, and the well is to the right. There are in fact at least two springs: one higher up the slope, a polygonal brick bath set into the ground which seems to be a foot or more deep, and, near the path, a built up brick well with the broken remains of a corrugated iron roof. Between the two is a moss-covered brick reservoir. Jennings only saw one in 1884; it's impossible to know which. It seems a shame that one of the most written-about wells of Surrey is in so sad a state.

Hall Place Spring (TQ 169472) is much easier to reach, being right beside the junction of Inholms Lane and Spooks Hill in Holmwood, surrounded by a few trees. It's marked on the Ordnance Survey, but has no known history, and despite months of heavy rain in 2006-7 little water could be seen even though the rest of the muddy field seethed with moisture. The run-off should empty into the stream. There is another **spring** yards away opposite the gate of St John's Church, but as that's a Victorian foundation it has no special significance.

Sources: Aubrey 1719, v 163; Allen 1831, ii 185-7; Jennings 1884, 117-119; Andre 1899, 18; VCH iii, 144; Anon c.1920, 68-9; Smith 1985, 18).

DUNSFOLD

St Mary's Well (SU 999362) gets a mention in most surveys of holy wells. It lies down a lane from St Mary's church, close to the river – very muddy most of the time. The little brick well-house covered by its picturesque tiled roof and carved image of the Virgin Mary often gets photographed. Designed by WD Caroe and dedicated in 1933 by the Bishop of Guildford, the funds for the



structure were raised by the Dunsfold Amateur Dramatics Society. The well cured sore eyes.

This *ought* to be a clear-cut case of a holy well linked to a church, and, given its location, probably a comparatively late dedication like the Mary wells we find in the Kentish Weald. But *perhaps* it's even later than that. On the 1871 O.S. map it appears merely as a 'tank', not even a well. The earliest record of the name comes in 1897 when the well's medicinal use had recently ceased. There was a 'vague oral tradition' of the Virgin Mary appearing in the vicinity, and of Catholic pilgrimages, helped by regular visits by the priests from the nearby seminary at Wonersh; a group of Roman Catholics from London is said to have arrived in the parish about 1900 having heard that 'the Blessed Virgin Mary was always in residence at Dunsfold'. It would be fascinating to know the origins of the story.

Sources: Baker 1985, 26; Andre 1897, 17; Wainwright c.1980, *Eastern* 54; Murray 1898, 403; Ollard 1919, 62.

EAST CLANDON

Roam Wells is the name of a wood in the parish (TQ 06 53); there is no obvious source of water today. The name occurs in 1843.

Source: Gover 1934, 138.

EAST HORSLEY

At Newmarsh Farm a pond called **Robins Hole** is shown on the Tithe Map of 1847 (TQ 107566), but nothing survives today. 'Robin' could be the bird, or a fairy name.

EAST MOLESEY

The **Spa** in Molesey was in Spa Meadow between the Mole and Ember rivers where the Esher road crossed two bridges (approx. TQ 149677). There is no story of how its powers came to people's attention, so it may well have been an ancient healing spring. Mr Clarke, the Lord of the Manor, fenced it around, and in 1761, sometime after his death, his widow agreed the parish could open a path to the spring from the Common, and fit an iron pipe. The churchwardens were ordered to appoint 'some poor person' to look after it, and any visitors who came to take the waters, but by 1843 they were refusing to make any outlay on it, so it had probably ceased to be used in any significant way. There had been a thatched well-house. The water was piped to Matham Manor, where it filled a ten-foot deep well in a reception room, for bathing, and by 1908 only a depression in the middle of the field showed where the Spa had been.

Sources: Whitaker 1912, 54-5; Williams 1950-53, April '51.

EGHAM

St Agnes's Well was a popular healing well in the late 1700s, but it's doubtful that it was a site of any antiquity. There was a family in the Bishopsgate area of the parish in the 14th and 15th centuries surnamed 'Atte Welle', but the name does not appear until 1791, and the presence there of 'St Agnes Villa' makes one wonder, as so often,

which came first. Mr Turner, in 1926, wrote that people had come ‘for curative purposes within living memory’, even though the site was occupied by the Princess Christian Home for Boys. Now it is a set of apartments called ‘St Agnes’s Cottages’, and there is no well (SU 982711). ‘With the view by Hassell [presumably the watercolourist and engraver John Hassell] in 1804’, Turner goes on, ‘some details respecting the well were given, but these are quite apocryphal’. It would, however, have been good to know what they were!

Other lost wells include the ‘fount called **Wylemoteswell**’, a boundary-mark of a Chertsey Abbey manor in 1277-79; and two **medicinal springs**, one near ‘Pele Pits at Trotsworth’ which was purgative, and one a mile away which cured sore eyes, both noted by John Aubrey.

The only surviving notable well in Egham is the **Prewell**, first recorded late in the 13th century, and which gave its name to Prune Hill. The spring is still south of the road at SU 999702, but very private.

Sources: Turner 1926, 26, 190, 258; Hudson & Guiseppi 1933-63, ii 16; Aubrey 1719, iii 166.

ELSTEAD

Culver’s Well lies somewhere to the north of a footpath running northwest from the Seale Road (SU 894454), but that’s all we can say. It *may* be the pool, swallowed up among rhododendron bushes to the left of the cut through the undergrowth along the line of the telegraph wires and a few yards beyond the second pylon after the car park; or it may lie somewhere beneath the earth amid the footings of the nursery of c.1900 which we were assured were there, but failed to find. Our local guide claimed he’d spent forty years looking for it. Perhaps the nursery owner was Mr Culver; but elsewhere, a *culver* is a pigeon or dove, and the English Place-Name Survey does list a ‘Colverwell’ somewhere in Surrey in 1389.

Sources: Gover 1934, 366; local info.

EPSOM

Larkhall, a house on the edge of Epsom Downs just west of Longdown Lane South, used to be called **Shepherd’s Well**. Nothing seems to survive there today, though the house sits in a dip which is just right for a spring (TQ 223595).

The most famous wells in Epsom were, of course, the much written-about spa sites known as the **Old & New Wells**. The story went that a farmer, Henry Wicker, first noticed the Old Well in 1618 when his cows refused to drink at it; the first certain record comes in 1629 when Abram Booth mentioned ‘Ipsom Well’, only recently discovered and made accessible. He saw ‘sick people from faraway places’ who drank from the spring and took away the water, assisted with glasses by an attendant. Some have argued, though, that a doctor came to view the well soon after James I’s accession in 1603, which would make it one of that large class of medicinal springs of long standing converted to spas. Indeed, according to *Lloyd’s Evening Post* in 1769 – a source whose accuracy is admittedly open to question – the Old Well was ‘a pond on the common where poor people for ages had resorted to drink the waters and wash their sores and the cures performed were astonishing’.



There has been much argument over the history of the spa, and where responsibility lies for its ups and downs of fortune. The bare facts seem to be as follows. A Dutch visitor, Willem Schellinks, described the well and multi-roomed Well House in 1662, when the rental value was paid to the poor of the parish; he and his friends drank 3 or 4 pints of the water each per day! In 1665 the Quarter Sessions ordered the well to close for fear of plague, but it was open later when Samuel Pepys came here and found it run by some women who paid £12 rent to the Lord of the Manor. That Lord's widow, Mrs Evelyn, built a paved shelter for the well in 1675; Robert Boyle tested the waters in 1684; and by 1695 the spa was so successful that its custom had caused 'a very great increase of buildings' in the parish. A Mr Symonds seems to have discovered what became the saline New Well, in the centre of town, in 1699. By the early years of

the 18th century the social aspects of 'taking the waters' had already taken over from the medicinal ones. The New Well was opened commercially by John Livingston in 1707, who also leased the Old Well and kept it going for about six years before concentrating his efforts on the more conveniently-situated New Well. In 1717 Celia Fiennes came here, and viewed the 'large light room' attached to the well, the coffee house, games rooms and shops for 'sweetmeats and fruit'. Mr Livingston died in 1727, and the Wells gradually lost their popularity. Later attempts at revival met with a poor response, though the Old Well itself (TQ 192601) was not condemned as unfit to drink until 1950.

Epsom Well today presents a rather fine impression: a new well-head with wrought iron uprights supporting a lamp, a proud inscription around the slate curbing calling attention to the site's history, and a flight of neat steps at the end of Wellway, all built in 1987 to celebrate the jubilee of the establishment of Epsom & Ewell Borough. Sources: Clark 1960, 1-41; Lehmann 1973, 89-97; Lehmann 1985, 77-79; Denbigh 1981, 31-6.

EWELL

One of the most fascinating well-sites in Surrey, if only, as so often, for the questions it raises. There are few 'well' placenames in the county, yet here is one of the oldest anywhere: 'Euuelle' appears as long ago as 675, the 'great spring' in question being a powerful fountain that gives rise to the Hogsmill River. There is much evidence of scattered Roman, and older, activity in the area, but the spring was never properly Christianised, although St Mary's church was near. By the 15th century the spring was Cakes Well, and 'Kattswell, the head of the river' appears in 1577, but suggestions that these are corruptions of 'St Catherine's Well' are outlandish – why should the saint's name have disappeared *before* the Reformation? Abraham Pococke knew it only

as ‘a very fine spring’. Today, of course, **Ewell** is the lovely pond in the grounds of Bourne Hall, the local library-cum-museum-cum-leisure centre (TQ 219627). Ghostly ‘figures in the costume of an earlier century were seen to stroll and take their pleasure’ in the grounds, but have taken offence since the place was opened to the public and have not been seen since.



The so-called Long Spring is a separate water-source, screened from the Ewell pool by a wall, and at the head of it is **The Dipping Place** (TQ 219627), enclosed to celebrate the Battle of Waterloo and moved to this site when the road was rebuilt in 1834. It was used for rheumatism in the earlier years of the 20th century, and even in the 1960s was thought good for the eyes; a pint drunk at bed-time would cure a cold. Now it includes the town’s

War Memorial. Opposite the Dipping Place can be found the outflow of another **healing spring** (TQ 220628), now a pool confined by two walls. There was a spring in the Rectory Paddock (just over the wall), in which ‘marble baths’ were noticed in 1786 (what were they?). This ‘crystalline cool bath ... one of the coldest in England’ was soon working ‘remarkable cures’ and was frequented ‘by many genteel people’, which must have been nice. Less reputable was the **well**, now lost, whose water was supposedly taken daily to Queen Elizabeth for her own use; the notorious John Rouse bought the house with the spring in its cellar, and in 1621 drowned his children in it. After that nobody was much interested.

Ingerhameswelle, recorded in 1408, has also disappeared.

Sources: Gover 1934, 75; Aubrey 1719, 202, 236; Meekings & Sherman 1968, 63; Pococke 1888, ii 171; Willis 1969, 120; Stewart 1990, 84; Willis 1931, 41-2; Deedes 1913, 20.

FARNHAM

Waverley Abbey was founded in 1128. All was well, until 1216 when the spring which supplied the monks with water, the Ludwell, dried up. An ingenious monk called Brother Simon discovered a new source of water which was conduited into the spring, and known as **St Mary’s Well** thereafter. There it remains, in a cave along a footpath off Camp Hill, closed with a metal grille, but through which the water still dribbles (SU 870457). Was it merely a secular well adopted and made ‘holy’ by a religious institution? Possibly, because Ludwell probably means ‘loud spring’, but Aubrey records the tale that the ancient British King Lud came here to wash his



wounds after a battle.

The well certainly had an after-life, thanks to the legendary witch Mother Ludlam who made the cave her home. According to Francis Grose's *Antiquities of England and Wales* (1774), the helpful crone would lend household items to people if they came to her cave at midnight, turned round three times and thrice asked her for an object, promising to return it within three days. This arrangement ceased when one local failed to bring her cauldron back. The place 'seems to excite solemn contemplation', wrote Grose, and sometime after his account the cave was 'improved' with benches and channels for the water; it certainly looks as though it has been romanticised and made more grotto-like at some time.

Farnham itself has traditions of a number of wells. This we might expect: the town is the site of the second oldest Christian settlement in the county, about twenty years behind Chertsey, and local placenames carry hints of some pagan Anglo-Saxon significance to the area. However, several well sites first appear in the monograph *Saxon Farnham* penned by Elfrida Manning, daughter of the sculptor Sir Hamo Thornycroft – an historical work so idiosyncratic that it's difficult to know how much credence to give to some of the wells its author mentions, especially as she was the only writer to have noticed most of them. Some of Manning's wells are in fact in Hampshire; the Farnham ones are as follows.

Bitwell was at Vernon House on West Street, now the town's library (SU 837467); none of the staff have heard of it, and though the gardens now have a pleasant fountain (and a ruinous little Gothic grotto) there's no well. Manning derives the name from *bytt*, a flask, but interestingly there was a meadow here in the 15th century called *Le Bittyng*. Manning says **St Mary's Well** was a 'horse pond at the corner of Crooksbury Road'; *which* corner isn't clear, and the only pond along the road today is in the garden of the house called Botany Wood at the junction with Compton Way (SU 875463). A second **Bitwell** was supposedly identical with Stone Pond, 'in a dip west of Crondall Lane' at Dippenhall, a completely unlocatable site. Finally, Manning mentions **Bourne Mill Spring** which 'must surely have been sacred', and flows into the Hale or Nodder stream. She suggests the latter name derives from the Romano-Celtic deity Nodens. Bourne Mill on Guildford Road is easy enough to locate (SU 853474), but has no spring – what it has is a large mill pond whose waters cascade through a number of channels around the building.

Manning also mentions another **St Mary's Well** whose existence is less dubious: it was somewhere near the row of houses on East Street called St Mary's Place, and probably among the warehouses and stores to the south (SU 845473). In Lion & Lamb Yard is a **haunted pump**, the focus of an extraordinary collection of phantoms: 'a tired looking lady wearing a riding habit', footsteps in the building behind the pump, a man who walks through a wall, a woman who sits at a nearby restaurant, and a figure in a smock (SU 838468). Lastly, **Brightwell**, lying near the centre of the town – though not the church – would be a good candidate for the original pagan site of the parish if there was one. Now, however, there is no well, and soon even Brightwell House which records the name will be demolished (SU 842469). Temple says the house used to be called Lowlands, and the date of the name is unknown.

Broad Wells (aprox. SU 826447) and **Louse Hole** (SU 817471) both appear on the Tithe Map in 1841. The topography of Louse Hole is right for a spring. Sources: Hope 1893, 164; VCH ii (1905), 77; Allen 1831, ii 233-4; Aubrey 1719, iii 361-2; Manning 1970, 30; Farnham Museum files; Temple 1963/73, 113, 118; Parratt 1993, 12.

FETCHAM

We would normally judge that ‘spring’ names associated with woods had more to do with wood than water, but **Ash Spring** Copse here does have a spring, albeit not a very interesting one – just a dribble running through the trees immediately east of the Godstone House greenhouses (TQ 138569). **Hale Pit** to the south is lost; it lies on the parish boundary at the end of Downs Lane and the name suggests, though does not necessarily prove, a watery site (TQ 146544).

FRENSHAM

Aubrey mentioned the **medicinal spring** here, an Epsom-type water ‘but lately discover’d, which begins to be in vogue’. He gives the location as Holt Common, which could be the place over the border in Hampshire.

Source: Aubrey 1719, iii 367.

GODALMING

One of the ancient minsters of Surrey appears to have stood south of Godalming town in Tuesley – or *Tiweslei* in 1220, preserving, possibly, the name of the Germanic deity Tiw. The church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and there was a fair held each year in the Minster Field until 1540. So the **Lady Well** is a significant site, even though its earliest record is on the 1841 Tithe Map. The spring is now just beside a footpath and visible within the chainlink fence surrounding the Lakes, a concrete and stone channel pouring water through the bushes (SU 968421); it lay within the romantick gardens of Busbridge Hall laid out in the 18th century. Ladywell Convent nearby is a Roman Catholic foundation dating from 1956.

Much more prosaically, **Brownswell** also appears on the Tithe Map, and now feeds the Broad Water. You can spot what appears to be the outlet of the spring emerging beneath a house immediately west of the lake, between it and the car park of the Broad Water leisure centre (SU 981453).

Source: www.megalithic.co.uk, 2004.

GODSTONE

The romantically-named **Diana’s Well** was beside the stream flowing through Leigh Park, but sadly is now swallowed up within one of the ponds (TQ 363507); and a **haunted well** at a house on the site of a farm is unlocatable. It was frequented by ‘Whistling Jimmy’ who fell in after coming to draw water, and whose ghost was laid after his pendant cross was recovered. It isn’t clear whether we should regard **Devil’s Hole** (TQ 352537) as a water-site, as nothing is there now, and Hogtrough (TQ 3753), a name which does often indicate a watery place, seems to have no such significance here. **Pond Well**, in the far south of this stretching parish, indeed

survives as a pond, beside the footpath leading from the main road at Gate House Farm. It appears in 1844 on the Tithe Award (TQ 366432).

The best-known well in this parish is the **healing well** at Iron Pear Tree House.

Whitaker claims John Aubrey as the earliest authority for it, but that doesn't seem to be the case; instead what we know about the well's early history comes from an advert in the *General Evening Post* of 1752. There was here an 'Iron Pear Tree' whose fruit noone would eat, tainted as it was with some mineral content in the soil. A Mr Bonwick sank a well and cured himself of gout with beer brewed from the water – not that anyone without that malady would be willing to quaff it. By 1752 its water was conveyed to London inns (where there might be plenty of needy gout-sufferers) three times weekly and sold for 2 shillings a gallon. The poor could drink at the well itself *on the recommendation of a gentleman*. The well fell into disuse, was revived in 1778, but 'little used' when Manning & Bray recorded it in 1809. Today the well feeds a pond and series of pretty cascades in the garden of Iron Pear Tree House (TQ 355489).

For **St Thomas's Well**, see under OXTED.

Sources: Lambert 1929, 7, 9, 13; VCH iv (1912), 288; Janaway 1991, 13-16; Whitaker 1912, 56; Fairall 1935, 26-8.

GUILDFORD

Down the attractive lane which runs round the foot of St Catherine's Hill we find **Artington Spring** – or **St Catherine's Well** according to one writer – a stream rising next to the path, running under a little stone arch and past a stone seat, and into the River Wey, which crosses the so-called Pilgrim's Way here (SU 994482). In the late

19th century schoolchildren drank its water in bottles with sugar or treacle, a custom we more usually find in northern counties, and its water cured sore eyes. The hill, of course, is topped by a 14th-century chapel, part of the parish of St Nicolas, Guildford, which had its own fair surviving well into the 1800s long after the chapel itself was ruined. For more legends of the hill, see below under ST MARTHA'S.

St Edward's Well, Sutton Green (TQ 004537), is a strange site. It lies just outside the churchyard of the St Edward the Confessor's Roman Catholic chapel, Sutton Place, a lovely square stone well-head mounted on steps and topped with a wrought-iron frame for a bucket which has long since gone. The well, we are told, was in regular use until about 1900 when it was covered and the birch trees planted nearby (the source claims by Mr J Webbe-Weston,



but the family had died out some years before that date). And that's all we know. Sutton Place is an ancient manor house which once included a St Edward's Chapel, first mentioned in the mid-14th century and so perhaps named in honour of the king at the time. The chapel had been gone for many years when, in 1876, Captain Salvin, the new owner of the estate, constructed this very elaborate Catholic church on the site: so whether the well was named then, or whether it's a medieval holy well, no one now can determine. The church has a quite spectacular collection of relics, worth seeing in their own right!

Blackwell is the name of a former farm and collection of cottages west of the town, reached by a long, long driveway off the A31. There are no early forms for the name, and though there is a muddy shallow pond here (SU 959495) I suspect it may actually refer to the stream which rises higher up the hill.

Sources: Baker 1985, 26; Elliston-Erwood 1923, 16; Williamson & Kelly 1929, 31.

HAMBLEDON

On the boundary with Godalming, and on the land of Tuesley Farm, we find **Shad Well** (SU 966409), virtually inaccessible across an overgrown field and within a hedge, emerging from an outcrop of Bargate stone and with what may be the remains of a stone basin visible. It appears on the 1874 Ordnance map, and the name means 'boundary spring'.

Source: Wainwright c.1980, *Central* 52.

HASCOMBE

The **Raswell** is a delightfully lighthearted Gothick house perched on the hillside overlooking Godalming Road, and Raswell Cottage at the bottom of the hill is 15th-century – but there seems to be no well there today, if that's what the name refers to (SU 999384). Elsewhere we hear of the **Hore Springs**, which are a bit of a mystery. It seems suspicious that just over into Bramley parish we find the *Nore* springs – that is, at the head of the Nore Brook, rising around a desolate pumping shed in the wood east of the footpath that runs north of Nore itself (TQ 016394). Those are surely the ones intended.

Mention should be made of the two wonderful public **drinking fountains** erected by Edward Rowcliffe Lee in 1893, one in the village and clearly spring-fed (SU 999398) and the other, dry, by the road to Cranleigh (TQ 027385).

Source: Thurrell et al 1968, 145.

HASLEMERE

The two main ancient sources of Haslemere's water supply still survive, though the more venerable, **Pyle Well**, is not in a happy state. It first gets a mention in 1517 and appears frequently in town records afterwards; a well-keeper used to live in Well Cottage opposite it on Lower Street. On the south side of Lower Street, just east of the junction with Sandrook, the ground rises steeply and beside a narrow path, and overgrown with weeds, is a brick structure which seems to be the well (SU 902328).



An old red-brick arch can be made out, now filled and topped with concrete and shored up with more modern brick buttresses.

Town Well is much better looked after, and can be found in a small garden area at the end of Well Lane (SU 906329), complete with a plaque giving some of its history, though not that John Norman was fined 5 shillings in 1655 for allowing his wife to ‘annoy and corrupt the water’.

It’s pretty corrupt now, clear enough but

full of frolicking tadpoles. The well is a beneath a stone arch set into the wall (which was described as ‘modern’ about 1980, though it looks quite antique), closed with an iron gate, and set in its own enclosure with steps leading down, very pleasing.

Sources: Wainwright c.1980, *West* 29; Swanton 1914, 20, 42, 94, 98, 168).

HINDHEAD

Wagner’s Well was at Dowlands, a house on the Portsmouth road about a mile from the Seven Thorns Inn. This *seems* to be in the vicinity of what is now the Robinia Care Home where a well is shown on old editions of the OS (SU 877345). In 1851 it was a shallow basin some five feet in diameter and two feet deep, and ‘has never been known to dry up, even in the hottest summer’. Of course, the far more famous Waggoner’s Wells are not far away in Hampshire, but this is a completely distinct site.

Source: Napier 1851, 92-3.

HOLMWOOD

Tilling Springs is the source of the Tilling Bourne, a private pool lying along Whiteberry Road, a bridleway southeast from Broadmoor (TQ 140449). The main spring pours from a very picturesque little spout on the south side, itself fed by a small and quieter pond above.

HORLEY

A **haunted well** at Haroldsea House is the scene of a terrifying manifestation (approx. TQ 299425). On one day a year (November 11th, says one source), the sound of a bell tolls from a well in the orchard, growing louder towards midnight. If that was not scary enough, ‘many years ago’ a phantom army in ‘grey helmets and chain mail’ appeared there and marched through the house.

Sources: Stewart 1990, 70-71; Janaway 1991, 65.

KENLEY

All Kenley’s wells are now lost. The oldest is **Stamputte**, ‘the stump well’, appearing in the surname of one Luke atte Stompe in 1329; Stumps Lane was named after it

(approx. TQ 334586). **Hog Trough**, a name usually indicating a watery site, was a similar place further along Stumps Lane close to the Valley Road junction, and is recorded in 1842 (approx. TQ 337592). Finally, the ghost of an old lady was ‘regularly’ seen at a **haunted pond** at the junction of Hayes Lane and Pondfield Road (TQ 321581 or 319592). The haunting ceased when the pond was filled.
Source: Brooke 2002, 22, 34, 179.

KINGSTON

‘About half a mile from the Bowling Green at the west end of the town’, says Aubrey, ‘is a spring that is cold in Summer, and warm in Winter; it bubbles up, and is called **Seething-Well**. The inhabitants thereabout do use to wash their eyes with it, and drink of it’. This famous well was absorbed into the public water-supply by the Lambeth Water Company in 1882, but ‘a very old ivy-covered well-house’ survived at the junction of Brighton and Portsmouth Roads, beside what was the Fox & Hounds pub (approx. TQ 173673). A more likely holy well, as such, was the ‘spring of beautiful water’ supplying the town pump at the church – perhaps an ‘**All Saints Well**’ at one time (TQ 178693).

Sources: Aubrey 1719, i 46; Ayliffe 1972, 36, 55-6.

LAMBETH

Lambeth Wells (approx. TQ 310790), on Lambeth Walk, was a fashionable spa; in the late 1600s the water was sold for a penny a quart, but its origins and early history are unknown. Its popularity went into decline thanks to St George’s Spa nearby, and the building was shut up as ‘a public nuisance’ before being let as a Methodist chapel and finally a pub, The Fountain.

Sources: Montgomery 1889, 10-11; Allen 1831, i 210.

LEATHERHEAD

Physical Well may well still exist, but the only reference to it is too vague for us to pinpoint it today. In the early 1900s it was ‘an old well in the midst of Ashted Woods’, called ‘the Physical Well’ because its properties were the same as those of the Epsom waters. Even at that date it was dry and disused. A photograph from that time shows a stone arch beneath an earthen bank.

Sharnwell, on the other hand, is still very much operating and rather a nice well, very easy to find just on the south side of Thorncroft Drive as it crosses the bridge to Fetcham Grove. A strong flow of water emerges from a culvert in a stone wall, sheltered under a modern concrete slab, with steps leading down, and empties into the River Mole. The name is unexplained, but the spring is almost certainly the unnamed one mentioned by Aubrey under Fetcham parish.

Sources: Sedgwick 1905, 66-7; Varley 1998, 166; Aubrey 1719, ii 264.

LIMPSFIELD

On Limpsfield Common, **Yalden Spring** can be found along a path east of the National Trust car park on the east side of Moorhouse Road, at the bottom of an

incline and just where the Titsey Estate land begins (TQ 429522). According to the Trust noticeboard it is a spring 'unique in East Surrey and is home to a number of rare aquatic species'. These seem like grand claims for the muddy, dull pool which rises beneath a beech tree and then feeds a larger one below it. The name is unexplained, but the well appears on the 1871 O.S. Way down in the south of this stretching parish is **Burn Pit**, now a fishery (TQ 412412), opposite the interesting-sounding Ladycross Farm.

The parish's third spring, **Jacob's Well**, appears on the 1871 Ordnance Survey. It is now a dribble emerging from the brambles at the bottom of the slope on the land of Trenchley Cottage (TQ 423513), though there are some stones and bits of brick walling in the wood which look as though they may have been part of some structure.

LINGFIELD

There are two rather confusing wells in this parish, and two doubtful ones. Right in the centre of the village is **Gunpit** – otherwise known as the village pond (TQ 386435), now a very tidy affair with benches and ducks, and beside it is an ancient oak tree which came to mark the boundary of Puttenden and Billeshurst Manors. Sir Reginald Cobham, not content with the tree, added St Peter's Cross to the site in 1437 (according to the VCH – a plaque on the side claims 1473). A parish lock-up was added to one side in the 1700s. The cross-obelisk eventually lost its cross, and somehow came to be topped by a basin removed from a chalybeate spring 'on Lingfield Common near Coldharbour Lane', which gives it a very odd appearance and links in with the next site.

Mag Well is very confusing, though thankfully Fiona McIntosh has done a lot of work trying to disentangle the truth. 'At Coldharbour, Lingfield Common', say modern commentators. The well gets its first mention from John Aubrey, who said it was 'empayl'd about' and issued from a freestone basin. In property it was like Tunbridge water, and its common use dated from about 1673 when an old man was cured of ague by drinking from it. The only location he gave for it was 'on the common'. In 1768 a parish map noted a chalybeate spring at Coldharbour, the first mention of one there. Manning & Bray in 1809 also referred to the spring on 'Lingfield Common', the basin, and the cross; Brayley forty years later stated that Mag Well had been covered after the enclosure of the parish and the basin (which he claimed was of iron) was removed to the village as a holy water receptacle for the use of the church. Ogilvy wrote (in *Pilgrimage in Surrey* (1914)) that the Surrey Archaeological Society encouraged the replacement of the basin 'deeply stained by the mineral water which obtained for the spring the title of Guldens or Golden Well', which is the first (and only) occasion that crops up. By this time, the only portion of common land left in the parish was at Coldharbour – hence the misidentification of Mag's Well as the one there rather than the one further south; it can't have helped that Mag's Well at Dorking was also near a place called Coldharbour. The probable genuine site can be found along a footpath running west of Swissland Road in the Dormans Park estate, to the side of a house called Tanglewood, over the stream and

just right of the path (TQ 391414). It's a boggy mess, but the chalybeate stain is still evident.

Then, there's the business of the chapel. Once the well's location was moved to Coldharbour the presence of 'Margaret's Hill' to the northwest, the supposed site of a St Margaret's Chapel, soon meant that 'Mag' was inevitably interpreted as a corruption of St Margaret (as in Hayward & Hazell). However, there *was* a chapel licensed in 1336 at a place called *Deune*; could that be St Margaret's? and at Dormansland, as McIntosh speculates? It means the dedication is not *completely* fanciful.

From all this, we turn to the two 'pit' placenames, **Waterham Pit** and **Goats Pit**, both water sites although the second is now lost (TQ 420464). Waterham Pit still has a pond, by a footpath just to the west of Dwelly Lane (TQ 416466). It's nothing special – the weed-filled pond on the other side of the road is more interesting, pale green and eerie.

Sources: Cobham 1899, 19; Baker 1985, 28; Aubrey 1719, iii 48-9; McIntosh 1985; Hayward & Hazell 1933, 35, 77.

LONG DITTON

Brightwell, recorded on the 1843 Tithe Map, has now disappeared (approx. TQ 195653). At **Barwell**, on the other hand, there is still a pond at TQ 169631 which can be found below Barwell Cottage (though the source may be further to the east behind Barwell House). The name appears first in about 1242, and seems to mean 'barley spring'.

Source: Gover 1934, 58.

MERROW

Parishe Well, a parish water supply a hundred feet deep, was 'near the church' (at TQ 027507 or thereabouts), and maintained by the landlord of the Running Horse pub who took contributions from those who used it.

Source: Lewis 1998, 11.

MERSTHAM

At the foot of the hill topped by the amazing whitewashed fabric of St Katherine's church is **Pilgrim's Pond**, next to the drive of the house called Wellhead, and within sight of the equally striking folly tower above (TQ 289538). According to local tradition, it was 'covered by a stone canopy, and ... resorted to by the pilgrims', but by the 1970s it was 'sadly neglected' and so it seems today – in fact, it isn't even easy to see. The so-called Pilgrim's Way passes close by, and one wonders whether this spring may have shared the dedication of the church.

Sources: Palgrave 1860, 22; Morris 1971, 28, 33.

MITCHAM

There was a **haunted well** here at a cottage on Mitcham Common where the murderer James Reed hid out in about 1900. By the 1950s there were manifestations

of voices, steps, the smell of lavender, and a grey lady. The well was found in the drawing room of the house, and was filled in to halt the hauntings.

Source: Stewart 1990, 19.

MORTLAKE

At East Sheen was an **eye well** (approx. TQ 205754), used in and around the 1870s; and **Butterwell** was 'near the park wall' and supplied the now-lost Owens Pond, which places it near the White Lodge on the edge of Richmond Park and East Sheen Common (approx. TQ 200744). **Pale Well** – the name is unexplained – is still marked on all the maps, which is a good sign, but is now nothing more than a circular municipal flowerbed at the end of Vicarage Road (TQ 209749). The dry spout, and some of the stones edging what would have been the pond itself, are, strangely enough, painted blue!

Sources: Foord 1910, 244; Hailstone 1983, 14.

NEWDIGATE

It's a shame that **Chilsom's Well** can't now be located, despite the description that it was 'on the roadside, east of Beam Brook'. Aubrey, who didn't name it, described it as being like the Epsom waters. A Dorking chemist, Mr Wilson, who was quizzed about the virtues of the spring in 1906, confirmed it was 'a deep and always clear spring ... held in repute for the past 100 years as an eye lotion and a cure for sprains and bruises, a reputation which the analysis of the water fails to justify'. It was a saline aperient with some ammonia content, similar to the Carlsbad spa waters. It was, Mr Wilson went on, 'totally unfit' to drink and as it only produced about four gallons of water an hour 'I doubt if it is worth the trouble of protecting it'. Nobody knows who Chilsom was.

Hog Trough – another of those ambiguous names – is now a dry pond just beside the footpath running southeast from the far end of Cudworth Lane, at the corner of a field (TQ 216413). It may fill up in winter; it was certainly a pond on the 1843 Tithe Map.

Sources: Aubrey 1719, iv 268; Calcutt 2002, 55-6.

NUTFIELD

Both named wells in this parish appear on the 1844 Tithe Map. **Gibbs Well** appears to feed the fishponds at Priory Farm, against the hillside to the right-hand side of the pond when viewed from the anglers' car-park (TQ 304497). **Tapners Wells**, surprisingly, survive just to the left of the footpath under the M23 after it emerges from the tunnel: there is certainly one spring spouting from a pipe set into the bank, and other streams seem to rise around the wood.

OCKHAM

Aubrey mentioned an **alum well** here, which was purgative. The water was useless for brewing or washing.

Source: Aubrey 1719, iii 245.

OUTWOOD

The intriguing **Wasp Well** is not only a spring, but also a house built about 1840, yet its name is unexplained – and it may not survive. The spring in question is in a now-wooded part of Outwood Common. A path leads onto the common just east of the junction of Brickfields Lane and Millers Lane, and within a few yards crosses a stream. About twenty yards up the stream, the channel is fed by a sluggish dribble of water emerging from the base of an oak tree. This may be Wasp Well – it fits the map location – or it may not (TQ 325455). Unhelpfully, the duckpond which is the main source of the stream definitely isn't it.

OXSHOTT

As it lies in the middle of the Prince's Coverts, part of the Crown Estate, you have to write off to Windsor for permission to visit **Jessop's Well** (TQ 159611). Yet another minor mid-18th-century spa, this chalybeate and saline spring on Stoke Common was already named after the unknown 'Jessop' when the Rev Dr Hales described it in *Philosophical Experiments ... on Chalybeate or Steel-Waters* in 1739; not long after, the lord of the manor, Mr Fox, built a well-house over it. It was so powerful an emetic that a man who stood barelegged in it to clear it out was purged for a week. The water was sold at Owen's Mineral Water Warehouse at Temple Bar, and the Clives of Claremont had it supplied to their Berkeley Square house for 6d a bottle: Cobham



Wells fell into disuse because of Jessop's, but by the 1830s it had declined in its turn. The well-house was restored in 1931. The existing fabric looks as though it's been restored a couple of times since then, with its concrete lintel and a roof that is very modern though already needing repair; I find it difficult to imagine that there's much in the building that dates back to the 1700s. Headley & Meulenkaamp's book of British follies describes it as 'pitiful', and it's difficult to dissent. The well is capped and it's not clear where the water emerges, notwithstanding the little bridge you cross to get to it.

Sources: Hembry 1990: 173; Taylor 1982, 98; Walker 1968, 94; Whitaker 1912, 57, Gidvani 1996, 142; VCH iii (1911), 494; Headley & Meulenkaamp 1990, 116.

OXTED

St Thomas's Well here is usually described as being in Godstone, but it lies in this parish (TQ 375537), along the bridleway that runs north from Barrow Green Lane and over the M25, right over the hillside from a stile. From here, leave the path and turn right along the top of the field, enter through a gate in the far corner, and

scramble down the slope and round to the right where the spring will be found pouring from a pipe in the bank through a series of agricultural troughs in steel and concrete. This is the 'grateful spring still known as St Thomas's Well', lying close to the pilgrim's path – and that is all we know of it. **Locks Well** was somewhere around the junction of the High Street with the A25 (TQ 383522), and appears on the 1841 Tithe Award: nothing is obvious now, unless a well-head survives beneath the tangled undergrowth in the gullies around the main road.

Source: Lambert 1929, 9.

PECKHAM

The great pilgrim spring of **St Thomas's Waterings** (approx. TQ 337783), mentioned in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, may have been in this parish, at the junction of Albany and Kent Roads, or it may have been just into Camberwell; but it's difficult to tell. It isn't even quite clear whether it was a true spring, or a pool whose waters rose elsewhere; John Ogilby's map of the road in 1675 shows it as a 'rill' that originated near Grosvenor Park in Camberwell. It was here that pilgrims on their way to Canterbury, having started off in the City, watered their horses – the first stop on the journey outside the metropolis, and the first in a chain of holy well sites along the route which became named after Thomas Becket, whose shrine was the pilgrims' chief goal.

Sources: Manning & Bray 1809, iii 402; Bonner 1927, 125-6.



PEPER HAROW

Considering that the **Bon Spring** is, architecturally, one of the most impressive wells in the country, it seems amazing that it's come to so little attention – although it is now inaccessible and so visitors will not be able to see it. I remember the astonishment I felt when, following a track at the eastern edge of a field, into a wood on the far side, and down a path to the right, the well-house eventually came into view. It was a Gothic folly consisting of a deep recessed archway set into a bank, covering a stone bench. To one side of this was the well-chamber itself, where the water poured through a grotesque head beneath a tall niche into a stone tank and

out beneath a window. Just below this structure, a flight of stone steps led down to a round basin into which the water emerged from more tiny Gothic arches. That may have been the original site of the spring before the changes of the 1840s.

Those changes were the work of the famous architect AWN Pugin, employed in 1843-4 by the 5th Viscount Midleton, owner of Peper Harow Park, to refashion Oxenford Grange in the manner of a 13th-century farm, as it would have been when Waverley Abbey owned it. Pugin usually declared that his medievalist architecture was severely 'natural' and 'practical', but seems to have been completely taken away with the romantic potential of the Bon Spring and produced a piece of pure

architectural fancy. Although part of the Peper Harow estate, the Grange and Spring are officially in the parish of Witley.

John Aubrey is our first recorder of the spring: he stated it was good for sore eyes and ulcers, and that harts-tongue grew round it. From then on it gets occasional mentions in guidebooks, and appears on the 1874 Ordnance map as 'Bonfield Spring', until Elfrida Manning decided to call it a 'Holy Well' – for which there is no authority. Today it has vanished even from the maps.



The Stews is a spring which lies across a green from a row of modern houses, in a steep gully. Its stream flows into the river Wey (SU 932441).

Misreading the map while looking for the Bon Spring, we called in at Peper Harow Court and were directed downhill from the house to the riverside, where in a dip an extraordinary sight comes into view – the **Bath House**, a domed brick structure set into the bank to cover a rectangular tank of water about a foot deep and intended, apparently, to look like a Roman shrine. Only one of the two spouts now lets water, with high stone benches all around and a decoration of knapped and unknapped flints. It's shown only as a 'tank' on the 1874 Ordnance map, and its history is lost (SU 935448).

Sources: Aubrey 1719, iv 39; Adams 1860, 345; Whitaker 1912, 56; Wainwright c.1980, *Central*: 88; Manning 1970, 30.

PUTTENHAM

The easiest of wells to find is just within the churchyard here, now dry, but nicely restored with an inscription and grille covering the thirty or so feet down to the invisible bottom (SU 933478). It's officially referred to only as 'the village well', yet cannot but have been a full **holy well** in the past, probably bearing the dedication of St John the Baptist as the church itself does. It was last used in 1750, and rediscovered in 1972 when its covering collapsed.

Source: Scott 1994, 161.





REDHILL

Waterslade Spring, in the angle of Elm Road and Whitepost Hill (TQ 272502), was clearly a very attractive well once. It consists of an open-faced brick cone about four feet high, with an inscription over the trough, and a brick-lined open bath some six feet or so square. Now the well is dry and the inscription has long worn away. The structure looks perhaps 150 years old or more, but its history is lost.

Source: Moore 1999: i 111.

RICHMOND

Two wells in Richmond were used by the Charterhouse of Sheen as part of the brothers' water supply. **Hillesden Well** was mentioned in the original foundation charter of 1414-15, and

to judge by its name could have been on Richmond Hill. **Pickwelleswell** was granted to the convent in 1466 because Hillesden Well was insufficient for its needs. It was on Richmond Green (approx. TQ 177750). Better known were **The Wells**, a chalybeate spring discovered in the 1670s, and opened as a spa in 1696, with the usual accompaniments of concerts, balls, assembly rooms, and gardens. By the 1750s it had become disreputable, and in 1763 a neighbour, Mrs Houblon, bought it and closed it down. Benjamin Allen mentioned another spring in the New Park, which was ocherous but which had never come to anyone's notice as far as he was aware. Sources: Cloake 1977, 151; Cloake 1991, 34; Allen 1831, ii 431.



ST MARTHAS

There are, or were, two named wells on St Martha's Hill. **Lid Well** can be found by following the footpath south from the Keepers Lane car park or west from Waterloo Pond on the A248 (TQ 035482), and sits in the gully to the west of the path as it winds through Colyers Hanger (the ground here is rather boggy and nettle-ridden). The well is a pleasant brick and concrete cube containing something over a foot of clear water that pours in from a pipe on one side, and eventually flows into the Tilling Bourne. Today the spring marks the boundary of St Martha and Albury parishes. **St Martha's Well** is supposed to have been at Tyting Farm, now derelict, on the north side of the hill (approx. TQ 022486).

Like St Ann's Hill at Chertsey, this site has clearly been of some significance over some millennia. There are a number of shallow enclosures on the hilltop, now

virtually invisible, which seem to be Bronze Age in origin with some signs of being re-used by the Saxons; a sixth-century pot was found in one (a stone circle was mentioned in 1948, but this seems to have been a mistake). The dedication of the church to St Martha has caused much speculation. In 1463 Bishop Waynflete was granting an indulgence to pilgrims to the church, then dedicated to 'St Martha and all Holy Martyrs', though 'Saynt Marter' appears around the same time. Could it have been a garbling of St Thomas the Martyr? Difficult to see why, despite the proximity of the Canterbury pilgrimage routes. It is far more reasonable to accept the alternative suggestion that there was a tradition of a local martyr or group of martyr-saints in the area, which received formal recognition later on.

Shrouded in less mystery, and still intriguing, are the Good Friday dances which were held in the rings in the 1800s. Brayley's *Topographical History of Surrey* of 1850 is the first account, and in 1870 the festivities, complete with band and games, came to the attention of *The Times*. Some time before 1912 they came to an end, their 'riotous' and 'indecorous' nature having aroused disapproval: it was remarkable that they took place on the solemn fast of Good Friday anyway. Finally, we have the strange legend that St Martha's Chapel and St Catherine's south of Guildford were built by two sister giants as penance for some unspecified sin; they only had one hammer between them, and took turns to use it, throwing it to each other from hilltop to hilltop!

Sources: Bonner 1927, 132; Whitaker 1912, 41; Wood 1955, 10-46; Alexander 2004, 45-7, 83-4.

SALFORDS & SIDLOW

Not all named wells are of any great antiquity. **Spinner's Well** seems to be fairly clearly datable to 1967 when a new owner bought the former gardener's cottage of the Kinnersley Manor estate and gave the house its current name – not, apparently, from any existing tradition, but pure fancy. The well is there next to the house, and rather pleasant it is too, a 'classic' roofed domestic well built over what is obviously an older structure, and complete with two lamps for dark evenings, but it has no old significance.

Source: local info.

SEALE

The dubious Elfrida Manning (see FARNHAM) refers to the **Holybourne**, being the boundary between Farnham and Puttenham. This makes no sense as those two parishes don't share a common boundary. Puttenham and *Seale*, however, do, and for a few hundred yards it runs along a stream which rises at a spring just across the track from New Barn Cotts north of the Puttenham road, and down a steep bank in the wood (SU 911481). The water is beautifully clear and there is a lot of stone about, some of which blocks the channel in a clearly deliberate arrangement. A holy well? Possibly, though there's a rather large question mark over it.

Source: Manning 1970, 30.

SEND

On the corner of Woodhill Road and the B2215 is a tree-shrouded pond which is marked as **St Thomas's Watering** on John Ogilby's travellers' map of the London-to-Portsmouth road in 1675. The pond seems to have a separate source from the stream, which rises in Clandon Park. It was presumably a watering-place on the pilgrim route up from the southwest towards Canterbury, on analogy with the famous one at Peckham and others in Kent.

Source: Bonner 1927, 126; <http://www.geog.port.ac.uk/webmap/hantsmap/hantsmap/ogilby/og30larg.htm>.

SHERE

Three – at least – of the Winterfold Wood wells lie in this parish. **Lamb's Well** is a small water-filled pit just below the northern of the two Winterfold Cottages, just south of the footpath (TQ 064437). There are only a few inches of stagnant-looking water, and this whole area has a disagreeable, oppressive atmosphere as pine trees tower above, blocking the light. **Dewdney's Well** is a pond beside one of the bridleways at TQ 073435, or it seems to be – the OS map shows it slightly to the north of where the pond is, but then it doesn't show the pond. A couple of the houses on the wood's edge off Hound House Road bear the name 'Dewdney' as well.

Ironically, the best well in the wood, **Wickets Well**, isn't marked at all. 'Used in the past by tenants on the Bray estate', this well is now a pleasing walled pool just south of the fire-break path that runs east-to-west across the whole wood (TQ 067432).

We're not sure about **Halewell** (TQ 069443), which certainly was the name of a house on the edge of the wood, in the right sort of location for a well; but the house is now known as Winterfold End and 'Halewell' is known to no one.

Sources: Spayne & Krynski 1988, 24-5; Palmer 1994, 41-2.

SOUTHWARK

A probable **Holy Well** beneath Southwark Cathedral was revealed in a 1970s excavation (TQ 326804). The well, which dated to the late Roman period, had been used as a dump for sacred images – an altar, a statue of what was variously identified as Apollo or a hunter-god, a maritime deity, and a *Genius* or local spirit. The Apollo, if such it was, had been broken in two, and *then* burned. Here were the cult objects of a pagan society being consigned to the darkness, presumably by victorious Christians who then either built or adapted the place of worship on top – a rare, explicit glimpse into a time of religious and social upheaval.

Rather more shadowy is the public well at St Margaret's Church, in the middle of the road and in 1456 repaired by the churchwardens there (approx. TQ 325803). A '**St Margaret's Well**'? Possibly, given the location and the suggestion of Margaret dedications elsewhere in the county.

Even less likely to have been a holy well as such was **St George's Spaw** (approx. TQ 398715), though we cannot *quite* rule out a connection with the ancient church after which these mineral springs were named. They were first advertised in 1730, when the pub close at hand changed its name to the St George's Spaw from the less

healthy-sounding Dog & Duck! The wells ‘would cure most cutaneous disorders, and [were] useful for keeping the body cool, and preventing cancerous affections’. The Spaw was highly popular and fashionable for a time, but the buildings were pulled down in 1811 to make way for the Bethlem Hospital, and the well itself was declared ‘a decidedly unsafe water’ in 1856.

Finally Southwark parish offers us the charmingly-titled ‘well or watery place’ called **Slutts Well**, northeast of St George’s Fields on land called Mill Bank in 1652.

Sources: Hammerson 1978, 206-12; Merrifield 1987, 97-9; Rendle 1878, 29-30; Thomson 1978, 39-40; Aubrey 1719, v 155, 163; Guiseppi 1899, 59.

STREATHAM

Yet another parish with a **Spa** (approx. TQ 308716). The springs were supposedly discovered in 1660 when horses sank in an unexpected bog, and cures followed (Aubrey says these ‘cures’ were actually experienced by a group of thirsty weed-diggers, who discovered the water’s purgative abilities rather dramatically). The first spring was just below Wellfield House, on the south side of Lime Common, and another was found a few yards away. Aubrey related that the waters were first drunk in earnest about 1670, that the three wells had a ‘mawkish’ taste, that the middle one was a ‘vomit’, and that the common dose was three cups to the nine usually taken at Epsom. A tailor had his sight improved by the water treatment. The Wells changed hands rather often, and ‘their different owners were alternately pushing and indolent’. A house was built to accommodate visitors, and by 1701 there were concerts every Monday and Thursday in Summer, the water was supplied to London hospitals and was served free at various coffee houses. By 1750 the springs were ‘arched over, secure from rains’; but things were changing by the end of the century, when the well was ‘much resorted to’ but only ‘by those who cannot afford a more expensive journey’. Eventually the old spring was eclipsed by a new one in Wells Lane; the water was still being sent to hospitals in the 1830s, but it was only the tail-end of a long tradition.

Sources: Aubrey 1719, i 215-17; Allen 1831, i 296; Arnold 1886, 95-104.

SUNBURY

Maerswille is one of our oldest recorded wells – it appears in King Edgar’s charter of 958 – and means ‘boundary spring’. Tapp reckons it was ‘probably at the Cross, slightly south of the rail bridge where it crosses Green Street’, which is unhelpful as it doesn’t. Still, that would put it at about TQ 100699, where nothing obvious survives, notwithstanding the liquid-sounding streetnames such as Home Waters and Benwell.

Source: Tapp 1951: 1, 6.

TATSFIELD

The spring called **Crundel**, ‘a crundle being a well’, first appears as Crundale in 1402, close to fields which in later centuries were called East and West Well. The site is now lost.

Source: Leveson-Gower 1874, 206.

THAMES DITTON

The stretching ancient parish of Thames Ditton includes two well-sites on its Tithe Map of 1843. **Brookwell** was somewhere south of Claremont Road in Claygate (TQ 152632). If the manhole cover, which certainly shelters water, in the middle of the lawn in front of a little court of houses at the end of Bankside Drive has any significance at all, then **Pugswell** just about survives (TQ 164658).

THURSLEY

It's encouraging to find a named well still doing good work. **Coombswell**, named on the Tithe Award of 1849 (as Coombwell), has since 1960 been piped to supply the houses which cluster here at the top of the valley just north of Haslemere, though at the far end of Thursley parish (SU 902355). Its water is very pure, and it produces a modest 2,600 gallons a day – though as much and more runs down to keep the stream flowing. Before 1960 it filled a pond which, in the days when the bridleway which runs just above was the coaching road to Haslemere, was used to water the horses. Traces of prehistoric iron workings have been found nearby.

Source: local info.

TITSEY

Pitch Font is nothing much to look at today, a rather sorry and inaccessible pond to the rear of Pitchfont Farm (TQ 401546). The name first appears in 1391, derived unconvincingly by the only authority to pronounce on it from 'small hill', or a *pightle*, a meadow. Yet the Latin loan-word *fuinta* for 'spring' suggests a Roman site – and indeed there was a villa, and, more excitingly, a temple not far away down the hill. The temple seems to have been in use for no more than about a century (from about 100 AD to the early 200s, perhaps), and, if as suggested it marked a boundary between the tribal areas of the Regnenses and the Cantiaci, it may have been less important by the end of that time. It is, of course, also close to the ancient 'Pilgrim's Way' trackway.

Sources: Leveson-Gower 1874, 191; Lewis 1966.

WALTON ON THE HILL

Brockwell was a spring just north of the village (approx. TQ 217553); it's named in the 1841 Tithe Award, but nothing survives.

WANBOROUGH

The whole of this little village was once amply supplied by the water of **Wanborough Spring**, which can be found beneath a small stone building in the grounds of Wanborough Barn (SU 935491). Remains of the cress beds are still visible, and a stone pump-house below the house itself.

Source: local info.

WANDSWORTH

The intriguingly-named **Old Man's Well** appears on the 1843 Tithe Award (TQ 242743).

WARLINGHAM

The **prophetic spring** in this parish is quite famous, but completely lost. It rose 'at the approach of some remarkable alteration in Church or State', said John Aubrey, who had heard it appeared in 1660, 1665 and 1668. The site was a grove of trees in Westhall, and the waters disappeared at Foxley Heath before emerging again in Croydon. At Court Farm there was a **haunted well** (approx. TQ 344592): the farm's owner in the 1700s had been murdered by his creditors and thrown down the well. At the full moon in February the whole event is aurally re-enacted, complete with sounds of a horse carriage, angry voices, a gunshot and a splash. The story was still current in the 1960s.

Slines Green Pond, on the junction of Limpsfield and Slines Oak Road (TQ 372579), is another haunted site, and we indeed found its atmosphere rather forbidding and unpleasant – though perhaps that was related to visiting as dark was falling on a dull winter's day. 'About a century ago', says Mr Stewart, the horses pulling a coach along the way were scared by a highwayman, and pulled the whole vehicle into the water, drowning themselves, the four passengers and the driver. The phantom coach emerges occasionally from the water, 'its lights blazing and the passengers screaming' – though this hasn't apparently happened of late.

Hail Pit is marked on the Tithe Map of 1841 (TQ 395596). No water site survives. Sources: Aubrey 1719, iii 47-8; Stewart 1990, 60-61; Stewart 1989, 75.



WIMBLEDON

From Camp View on the east side of the Common, Robin Hood Lane runs westwards towards the earthwork known as Caesar's Camp. As you past a house on the right, bear right, and after a few hundred yards as the trees on the right give way to a golfing range, **Caesar's Well** will appear just to the left as the ground falls away downhill (TQ 224715). This beautifully-situated well still looks

as it did when it was restored in 1872 – a circular basin of twelve stone slabs with the legend 'HW PEEK MP 1872' just 'peeking' above the water (though the HW has now crumbled away) as a memorial to the politician who helped preserve public access to the Common.

In the 18th century Caesar had not appeared in local legends, and the well was called Robin Hood Well, at which time its water was so pure it was held to be medicinal. In

1829 it was encased in brick, and Mr Vazie, a London surveyor, was sent to investigate the feasibility of it being piped to Chelsea; 'Wimbledon Springs' was the accepted name then. By the 1860s it was described as 'a never-failing spring of water improperly called the Roman Well', after which time Caesar became its patron. Caesar's Well in Ravensbourne, Kent, also acquired its name sometime in the mid-1800s, before which it had been just 'Cold Bath' or 'Old Bath', so perhaps the two sites, which are so similar in many ways, influenced each other. Both are pure, and perhaps medicinal springs; both have an earthwork nearby; and both were caught up in campaigns to preserve an area of ancient common land threatened by private enclosure at around the same time. The well dried up in 1911, but a new borehole was sunk and it has remained full ever since, though there's not enough water today to fill the drinking-trough just below. Neolithic arrowheads and knives have been found nearby.

Caesar's Well has been identified with the public spring which one Edward Atkins was ordered to fence in and keep protected in 1574; but that seems more likely to have been one on Southside, given a pump in 1815 and known as 'the Village Pump' until it was declared unfit in 1882. That site is now marked by a round stone.

Shad Well ('the shallow well') is pretty uninspiring in comparison. It's now a pond just to the rear of Warren Farm to the west of Caesar's Camp, and though the map shows a well in the undergrowth above the pool nothing is clearly in sight (TQ 219711). Shadwell Wood is to the south, but the authorities seem definitely to place the spring here. It appears in 1558 (or 1559 according to Millward), when the parish decreed that no one should divert it.

South Well was a public well in Brewhouse Close, Southwell Lane, near the church, recorded in 1617.

Far more spectacular, though not a holy well of any sort, was **Spencer's Well** in Arthur Road (TQ 246715). This began in the 1760s as a thirty-foot borehole to supply Earl Spencer's house. In 1798 it was deepened. The bore went down to 563 feet whereupon the water suddenly shot up at pressure to a height of a hundred feet and nearly drowned the welldiggers. The well was enclosed in a domed building, saved from collapse in the 1970s, and now a house. We might say, Earl's well that ends well, if that were not too awful.

Sources: Millward 1972, 91; Millward 1989, 6, 61-2, 141; Bartlett 1865, 4; Johnstone 1912, 90-91, 96; Gover 1934, 39; Rattue 2003, 27-8.



WOKING

According to a writer in the *Folklore* journal in 1953, there was a spring running from a peaty bank by the road downhill from Hook Heath which was good for eye

complaints, and George III used to have its water brought to Windsor. This description does not make identifying the **eye well** very easy, but the only extant spring in the area – which sort-of fits – is private and inaccessible in the garden of the house called Secrets on Hook Heath Road (SU 986567). Just along the road is a modern development named Holywell, presumably a red herring.

French's Wells is the name of a modern housing development (SU 988589). The name is unexplained and certainly nothing well-like survives.

Source: Baker 1985, 26.

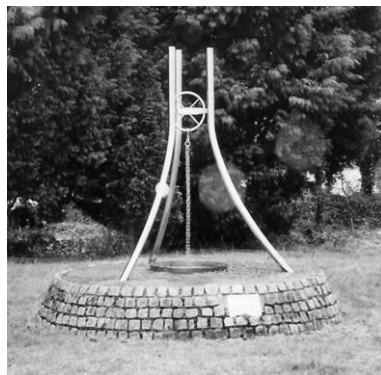
WONERSH

Madgehole is right at the top of a coombe at the western edge of Winterfold Wood, a lovely 17th-century farmhouse and a more modern dwelling above it. Given that 'hole' names are often water-sites, I wondered whether this might be related to the 'Mag' well-names we find at Dorking and Lingfield, and conceivably Chipstead; and sure enough there is a well here, by the road just above the farm, about five feet across and made of brick – probably no more than a hundred years old by the look of it (TQ 053432). It bears a wooden cover but there is water not far down. So there it is – Madge Hole.



WORPLESDON

There is some argument over the site of **Jacob's Well**, which first makes its appearance in 1807. A Mr H Farris, writing in the *Surrey Advertiser* in 1963, stated it was 'an ancient brick well' in the bank on the roadside opposite Willow Grange (now the Bishop of Guildford's residence); 'everybody knew it as Jacob's Well' (SU 994533). But the consensus now seems to settle on the spring that once lay in the middle of Jacob's Well Meadow, and therefore the village of Jacob's Well, further to the east (TQ 001530). That has gone, but its site is commemorated by a rather odd monument erected for the Millennium, an impressionistic interpretation of an old village well consisting of three curving stainless-steel legs supporting a wheel and chain, all sitting on a base faced in chipped stones. **Polywell** is clear enough, a pond beside a (very muddy) footpath running north from Wood Street village (SU 955516); its name appears on the Tithe Award of 1841.



Aubrey mentions a **medicinal spring** here which was like the Epsom waters, but tells us only that it was at Mr Henry Smyth's.

Sources: Gover 1934, 164; Miller 1994, 2; Worplesdon 2000, 31; Aubrey 1719, iii 326.

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Alphabetical list of Surrey Wells

Abbotspit: Ashtead	Boxfordesmere well: Coulsdon
Alum well: Ockham	Brightwell: Farnham, Long Ditton
Amberwell: Albury	Broad Wells: Farnham
Anne Boleyn's Well: Carshalton	Brookwell: Capel, Thames Ditton
Artington Spring: Guildford	Browns Pond: Croydon
Ash Spring: Fetcham	Brownsell: Godalming
Ashtead Well: Ashtead	Butterwell: Mortlake
Barwell: Long Ditton	Caesar's Well: Wimbledon
Bath House: Peper Harow	Cakes Well: Ewell
Bell Ponds: Charlwood	Camer's Well: Camberwell
Berewelle: Chobham	Chilsom's Well: Newdigate
Beulah Spa: Croydon	Cobham Wells: Cobham
Bitwell: Farnham (2)	Conduit Well: Bletchingley
Blackwell: Guildford	Coombswell: Thursley
Bon(field) Spring: Peper Harow	Cresswell: Churt
Bourne Mill Spring: Farnham	Crundel: Tatsfield

Culver's Well: Elstead
 Danes Hole: Bramley
 Deep Well: Camberley
 Dewdney's Well: Shere
 Diana's Well: Godstone
 The Dipping Place: Ewell
 Epsom Wells: Epsom
 eye well: Mortlake, Woking
 Fowlers Well: Chobham
 French's Wells: Woking
 Friday Street Pool: Abinger
 Gibbs Well: Nutfield
 Gives Well: Capel
 Goats Pit: Lingfield
 Grotto Spring: Carshalton
 Gunpit: Lingfield
 Hail Pit: Warlingham
 Hale Pit: Fetcham
 Halewell: Shere
 Hall Place Spring: Dorking
 haunted pond: Croydon, Kenley
 haunted pump: Farnham
 haunted well: Croydon, Godstone,
 Horley, Mitcham, Warlingham
 healing well: Chertsey, Egham, Ewell,
 Frensham, Godstone, Worplesdon
 Hillesden Well: Richmond
 Hogpit Pool: Carshalton
 Hog Trough: Kenley, Newdigate
 Holy Well: Surrey, Brockham (?),
 Kingston (?), Southwark (?)
 Huberdeswell: Chertsey
 Ingherhameswelle: Ewell
 Jacob's Well: Limpsfield, Worplesdon
 Jessop's Well: Oxshott
 Lady Pool: Carshalton
 Lady Well: Godalming
 Lambeth Wells: Lambeth
 Lamb's Well: Shere
 Lid Well: St Marthas
 Little Spring: Barnes
 Longwells: Abinger
 Louse Hole: Farnham
 Ludwell: Farnham

Madgehole: Wonersh
 Maersville: Sunbury
 Mag's Well: Dorking, Lingfield
 Milkwell: Camberley
 Monkswell: Chipstead
 Mugswell: Chipstead
 Nore Springs: Hascombe
 Nun's Well: Chertsey
 Old Man's Well: Wandsworth
 Osgoods Well: Banstead
 Outwell Pond: Ashted
 Pale Well: Mortlake
 Parishe Well: Merrow
 Peter's Hole: Coulsdon
 Physical Well: Leatherhead
 Pickwelleswell: Richmond
 Pilgrim's Pond: Merstham
 Pitch Font: Titsey
 Polywell: Worplesdon
 Pond Well: Godstone
 Prestwell: Bletchingley
 Prewell: Egham
 prophetic well: Warlingham
 Pugswell: Thames Ditton
 Pyle Well: Hazlemere
 Raswell: Hascombe
 Roam Wells: East Clandon
 Robin Hood's Well: Wimbledon
 Robins Hole: East Horsley
 Roman Pond: Banstead
 Roman Well: Wimbledon
 St Agnes's Well: Egham
 St Ann's Well: Chertsey
 St Catherine's Well: Guildford,
 Merstham (?)
 St Edward's Well: Guildford
 St George's Spaw: Southwark
 St James's Well: Abinger
 St John the Baptist's Well: Bisley,
 Puttenham (?)
 (St) Margaret's Pool: Carshalton
 St Margaret's Well: Chipstead (?),
 Dorking (?), Lingfield (?);
 Southwark (?)

St Martha's Well: St Marthas
 St Mary's Well: Dunsfold; Farnham
 (3)
 St Thomas's Watering: Peckham,
 Send
 St Thomas's Well: Oxted
 Seething Well: Kingston
 Shad Well: Hambledon, Wimbledon
 Sharnwell: Leatherhead
 Shatefont: Bletchingley
 Shepherd's Well: Epsom
 Silent Pool: Albury
 Slines Green Pond: Warlingham
 Slutts Well: Southwark
 Smugglers Hole: Chelsham
 South Well: Wimbledon
 Spa: Bermondsey, Cobham, East
 Molesey, Streatham
 Spencers Well: Wimbledon
 Spinners Well: Salfords & Sidlow

Spring Well: Clapham
 Stamputte: Kenley
 The Stews: Peper Harow
 Tapners Wells: Nutfield
 Tilling Springs: Holmwood
 Town Well: Hazlemere
 Twinwells: Charlwood
 Wagner's Well: Hindhead
 Wanborough Spring: Wanborough
 Wasp Well: Outwood
 Waterham Pit: Lingfield
 Waterslade Spring: Redhill
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