



CLITHEROE TOWN WELLS CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN



Heald Well



Stock Well



St. Mary's Well

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2024: ROUTES – NETWORKS - CONNECTIONS

CLITHEROE TOWN WELLS VISITS: Sat 7th Sept. 2024

Assemble at Heald Well - in front of the Dog & Partridge Inn

1-3 Wellgate, Clitheroe BB7 2DS at 11.00am

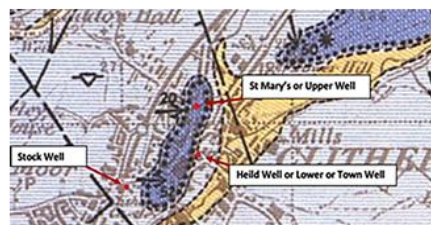
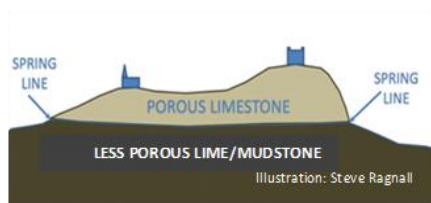
Health and Safety Requirements

- No more than 25 visitors participating at any of the visits,
- Visitors are responsible for making your own way from Heald Well, Wellgate to St. Mary's Well, Well Terrace. A map is provided below. Guidance will be available on the day.
- These are town centre sites. All normal personal precautions are expected of Visitors taking part.
- When entering Heald & St Mary's Wells, please do take care with all steps and changes of levels you will encounter there.
- Stock Well is not included on this tour for logistic reasons. Information on and directions to this site are included in these tour notes for those wishes to complete a visit to all three sites.

Geological Formation the source of Clitheroe's Spring Water Supply

These town wells were not 'bored' or 'sunk' wells. All are naturally occurring **spring - or pool - wells**. Before Clitheroe received 'mains' piped water, in 1856, water sprang naturally out of the ground due to the particular geological formation of the rock outcrop on which the medieval settlement of 'Clyderhowe' (Possibly a combination of the Old English 'clyder' or 'clither' - for loose stones and 'hoh' –for hill. It could also be a combination of Old Celtic words 'clid' and 'dwer' meaning 'the hill or crag by the water')¹ was built.

Here then is the natural geological and hydrological connection, wisely taken advantage of by the many generations of settlers here in the lee of Pendle Hill.



Annotated Extract from the British Geological Survey

¹ Andy Bowes: 'Reflections on the Water' (ROTW) Self Published 2024

Pendle's water pressure builds up in the upper permeable limestone strata and percolates down and through this to the lower, harder rock base. As indicated on the adjacent extract from the British Geological Survey, this eventually sprang out, in many places, around this interface.

These springs – and there would be many more than we can see today – provided a reliable source of drinking water. Initially they would have been enclosed in some basic form of enclosure similar to that still visible at St Helens Well in Eshton, North Yorkshire. Arthur Langshaw¹ identifies the land directly behind The Alleys, (to the North of St Mary's Well and one of the town's oldest residential areas) as 'Springs Field' – further evidence of the geological and hydrological influence on Clitheroe place names.

History

What can be seen on the visits are considered to be, for the most part, Tudor constructions. Stock Well, **not covered in this guided tour for logistic reasons**, is the most altered of all three town wells with only two walls of the C16th enclosure now visible – the Victorian East and South walls.

This Campaign believes the stone enclosures seen today (with the partial exception of Stock Well) were built in response to the grant of two additional 'Fair Days' by Henry VIII. The good people of Whalley had not been paying due revenue from the annual fairs. There were also '...inquieting of the religious person of the said monastery.'² Consequently, in 1519, these rights were transferred to Clitheroe – the administrative centre of the 'Blackburnshire Hundred' to Whalley's distress, and Clitheroe's benefit!



Bronze Age Wellspring Illustration³

Fairs were the source of great interest, amusement, and - in particular - revenue in Late Medieval and Tudor times. Large amounts of fresh drinking water for livestock and people would be required, hence our three public town wells – so significant and substantially constructed then that they remain standing today. This provision survived until a series of local - and national - cholera outbreaks occurred in the mid C19th., resulting in the formation of the Clitheroe Waterworks Corporation in 1854 and the delivery of mains Water in 1856.

It is accepted that all the pre-C16th dates referred to here are debatable - at this point in time. However, recent etymological research, now published in 'Reflections on the Water'⁴, firmly places both Heald and Stock Well as sites which existed prior to the Norman Conquest. This Campaign looks forward to the day when archaeological investigations, and the carbon dating of construction materials, can be commissioned to back up the etymological provenance of these sites being of Anglo-Saxon, if not earlier, origin.

All three wells are Listed Grade II. Each listing recognises that all were **'the only public water supply for the town until 1854 (sic)'** This confirms their joint and equal significance in the supply of public water from the Tudor period (at least) until the 20th year of Queen Victoria's reign. Sadly, Heald and St Mary's have yet to be registered with HMLR. This impedes the due care for these sites which Listing warrants. This Campaign seeks to address this key issue to secure a meaningful future of all three sites by raising their profile and the public consciousness via these guided visits as part of Heritage Open Days 2024 – England's largest public festival.



**Open Pool or Spring Well at St Helen's
Ancient Pool Well, Eshton, N. Yorkshire**

¹ 'Clitheroe's Thousand Years' The Borough Printing Co.1966

² Edward Baines, History of Lancashire (Vol2) Routledge 1870

³ © Northern Archaeological Consultancy Ltd

⁴ Bowes: p1/r1

Heald Well:

The well at the foot of the eponymous 'Wellgate'.

This well has had many names including, at least, the following: **Heil/Hald/Heild Well and also known as the 'Town' or 'Lower' Well.**

These closely associated names – differing perhaps due to the varied pronunciation and fluid approach to spelling at the time, and subsequently Early Norman interpretation of Anglo-Saxon words, all mean the – **'well**

on the slope'. **'Tun'** is the Old English name for a manor or homestead and the root of our present day word Town - which the Norman **'ville'** eventually competed with – and **'Lower'** probably from the Old Norse **'lagr'**,

still recognisable and in use after over 1000 years. In the forthcoming **'English Place-Name Society Lancashire volume'**¹ it's referred to as Heald Well. This has now become the adopted spelling for this site by this Campaign.



Heild Well Circa 1900

This well is sited at - what is now - the bottom of **Wellgate** and just opposite, to the South West, is **Lowergate**. Both further indications of the town's Pre-Norman roots. These sites - by their names - are thus clearly of great antiquity, supporting the case for an Anglo Saxon settlement here in Clitheroe - or **'Clyderhow'** or **'Cletherwoode'** and connect us to a settlement period prior to the building of the Norman Keep. The earliest specific reference to **Heald/Heild Well** - or the **'Lower'** or **'Town'** Well - was during the last four years of Charles I's reign when the 1645 Court Leet assembly recorded: **'The Courts Leet annually appointed: --- Two for looking to cleansing both wells, i.e. the Well in Well Gate called the Heild Well and the Stock Well'**.²

This is the largest of our three enclosed spring wells, with a stepped central pool and a missing South East wall - built over to accommodate what is now Wellgate Fisheries. Here we can see the sunken central section with the raised paved surround enabling users to dip their buckets, flagons, or tankards into the sunken well area for refreshment as they passed over the junction of four of the town's oldest thoroughfares - Lowergate, Wellgate, Duck Street and Shawbridge Street.



Heald Well circa 1900

This would have been a place of great daily, communal, gatherings as the water carriers bent or knelt on the paved and enclosed, spring fed pool and exchanged their news and the gossip of the day. Note the following features here too:

1. The pair of horse mounting steps flanking the NW entrance - and the wear of centuries use both display.
2. The equally smooth and worn steps into the well and the top 'coping' stones, clear evidence of the essential and prolonged use of this well caused by the iron rimmed bucket, the gloved hand, and the iron shod clog which have gone into, onto, and out of this ancient well.
3. The late Victorian or Edwardian cast iron surface water pipe which, brutally breaking into, and out of, the walled enclosure. One of the many previous visitors to this sites believed this was cast at her grandfather's foundry, sited at Well Fold, the Victorian Industrial area that existed behind 28d Wellgate, immediately to the north of Heald Well, now occupied by Tesco's Supermarket

Finally, please pause for a moment before moving on. Imagine the conversations that have taken place here over the centuries: between the **Burghers** - or **Burgesses** - of Clitheroe, their sons, daughters and servants; the town's tradesmen, many employed in the nearby early Victorian Industrial area of Well Fold. Also, their forebears: the Travellers and Traders entering the town from East, South and West – all ready to slake their thirst after a pack-horse trek over the Pennine Hills from Yorkshire, or from one of the great Lancashire ports or cities. Last but not least – think also the weary coach, cart, or pack-horse after their own 'in-service' travels. Then the relief brought to all by the assured provision of Pendle Hill's water contained within its fine Tudor enclosure! It would have been a welcome site and taste – perhaps before something a little stronger at one of the town's numerous inns and public houses!

¹ Bowes: p1/r1

² William Self Weeks: *'Clitheroe in the Seventeenth Century'*, Clitheroe Advertiser & Times 1926-28

Before moving on to visit the second of the three town wells – St Mary's Well – now is the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about Heald Well?

Directions to St. Mary's Well – in Well Terrace will be given here, there is a map at the end of this presentation showing its location and visitors on this Tour are welcome to follow me too.

St Mary's Well, Well Terrace or 'Upper' or 'Over' Well

Welcome to St Mary's or the **'Upper' or 'Over' Well**. All are references used in the records of the **'Courts Leet'** – established in the late C13th – but taking on many of the practices previously used to administer the pre-Conquest, Anglo-Saxon 'Hundreds' and 'Wapentakes'. The first reference¹ to St Mary's Well or any of the towns public wells in the Courts Leet Records was in 1599 where *'Presentments' (suspicions)* were recorded that **'Edmund Standen, Thomas Worswicke, Edward Dugdall, and Annes Deynne for bayrnen, borne or boyrn (to wash or rinse) in the Over Well onse'**. It is interesting to note that many of these surnames still survive here in Clitheroe to this day though no longer under any *'Presentments'*!

St Mary's Well is often considered to have been a Holy Well with all the attendant curative and good luck power associated with such pre-Christian sites. Arthur Langshaw's annotated copy of Lang's 1776 map identifies this as a *'Holy Well'*. Certainly, the sites antiquity and proximity to the Parish Church of St. Mary Magdalene atop one of the town's two rock outcrops – makes this a possibility. There is no actual provenance for such a connection here though it certainly exists for many ancient well sites associated with early Christian Church sites.

This well is the most complete and unaltered of all our three wells and was close to three of the great late medieval houses here in Clitheroe – 'Fishes', 'Well Hall' and 'The Alleys', all now long gone. Like Heald Well, St Mary's does not have the benefit of a registered title with the Land Registry. The consequence of this is that no funds can be raised, or grants applied for to conserve and better interpret this site. Obtaining registration for Heald and St Mary's Wells in the same manner as was done by Ribbles Valley Borough Council, is thus now the top priority of this revived campaign to address this.

Note now the following details of this most complete structure of all the towns former public wells:

1.The central walk way running approximately east/west creating an unequal upper and lower division in the sunken pool with its central overflow channel. Was this separation for filtration on the upper incoming side? – or for clothes washing on the lower side? We are unlikely to know, for sure, pending future, hoped for, archaeological investigations.

2.The Ordnance Survey Benchmark 'Arrow' incised adjacent to the West corner coping stone and the bronze mounting pin. These were used by the OS to relate local levels to the National Ordnance Datum, founded in 1921. It refers to the height above mean sea-level point taken at Newlyn, Cornwall and is the basis of the national datum height for all of Gt. Britain.

3. You can readily see from the well-worn gritstone cube, in the centre of the lower, northerly, outfall section, just how the iron shod washerwomen – and waterboys – could have been the cause of the extensive wear to this hardest of Northern stones after two or three centuries of near constant use – probably accompanied by much conversation too!



St Mary's Well circa 1925.

Courtesy of Clitheroe Castle Museum.



St Mary's Well; Edmunson Buck, Circa 1920

¹ Weeks: p3/r2

4. The robust Carboniferous Sandstone construction, ('Gritstone' as it is known locally), used here for the squared Copings, Jambs, Steps, and Walkway are typical of all three wells. This, as it was much easier to 'dress' these key elements neatly than the Carboniferous Limestone, used for the roughly coursed wall stones. Today's quarrymen inform us that the Gritstone would have been from one of the many Pendle Hill 'delphs' and the Limestone from one of the many quarries between Clitheroe & Chatburn. The similarity of construction strongly suggest a similar source of materials and a similar construction date for all three sites



The now concealed, three chamber horse trough, revealed by 1989 drains repairs: Photo John Lambert

A most unfortunate incident occurred here in June 1888 when the one year old John Houghton drowned. It was the opinion of The Coroner's Jury at the following inquest that:

'Clitheroe Municipal Borough Corporation - remove the horse block and the square stone in the middle of the well as they were a great danger to children'. For whatever reason neither direction was acted on. The standing block remains and though the trough cannot be seen, it does still remain - more or less intact.

Returning to the horse trough, during works to alter the adjacent roadway and repair adjacent surface water drains in 1989 - a three chambered stone horse trough was uncovered. This is the same one referred to in the 1888 Coroner's Jury report. What older and more fascinating discoveries may lay beneath our feet here - and all the town's other ancient well sites? They would certainly make a fascinating subject for full archaeological investigations. Regrettably, all show signs of advancing dilapidation, lack of appropriate care and maintenance and ill-considered siting of incongruous street furniture and signage - most evident here at St. Mary's Well.

This concludes this Guided Tour of our two, most complete, Clitheroe Public Town Wells.

We now hope that you will take time, either today or sometime in the future - to complete the tour by visiting Stock Well situated off Wesleyan Row at the West entrance to Clitheroe Castle Park, as shown on the attached plan. To assist you with this and complete this Guide to Clitheroe's ancient Town Well sites, information on Stock Well is set out below.

Before you do so, now is the time to ask any further questions about St. Mary's Well - or indeed anything you have seen and heard here today. After this we leave to assist with the preparations for the launch of an exciting new book written by Clitheroe Assistant Librarian Andy Bowes' *Reflections on the Water*. More details about this event are set out below.

Stock Well, Clitheroe Castle Gardens, West Entrance off Wesleyan Terrance

Recent research into the actual meaning of 'Stock' indicates that the name for this well is not related to 'Stock Meadow' - the 'pinfold' adjacent to this Well until, probably the arrival of the railway and its marshalling yards in the 1850's - or the town's Public Stocks. Recent etymological research confirms that we can say - 'with near complete certainty'¹ - that Stock Well name is derived from the middle/late English 'stocc' - a tree stump', thus this is the 'well at the tree stump'. The significance of such stumps is that they were where communal proclamations were made in pre-Norman times. Some may recognise the term 'On the Stump' which derives from an early Georgian expression and custom in both England and in America. This was where electoral candidates campaigned from town to town and stood upon a sawn off tree stump to deliver their speech. The origin of our 'Speakers Soapbox Corner' perhaps?



Edmunson Buck at Stock Well circa 1920

¹ Bowes: p1/r1

Stock Meadow certainly was used to marshal 'live-stock' coming into the town on its three Fair Days, eventually added to by Market Days. The provision of a reliable source of drinking water - for livestock and visitors alike - was now vital to support these. This is the smallest and most altered of the three public wells here. The first specific written reference we have for it is in the **Courts Leet records of 1645**.

In response to this Campaign's intent to 'secure a lasting and meaningful future for all three of our town's former Public Wells', Ribbles Valley Borough Council (the Council) made an application to register Stock Well to Her Majesty's Land Registry. Though no title deeds could be found for this well - not uncommon for sites of such great antiquity - the application was successful and was granted by HMLR in November 2019. Sadly, there has been nothing done to conserve - or better interpret - this ancient heritage site since then and no further applications made for Heald Well or St. Mary's Well.

Please take time now to look at the well-worn entrance jamb and coping stones, the result of centuries of daily use by townsfolk and frequent visitors to Clitheroe's Market Days and Fair Days in past times.

The raised and levelled floor are likely to have followed from an incident of 1880 when two children almost drowned! What lies beneath this Victorian intervention we can only imagine. What we can say is that, given its proximity to the Publicly owned Castle Gardens, this would be a prime site for detailed Archaeological Investigations into this site's history and the town's Pre-Norman origins.



Stock Well today. Only two original walls standing or visible

Finally, please note the dilapidated condition of this well where walls are now moving out of alignment and original lime mortar has been replaced with inappropriately hard cement mortar. This is now cracking, and missing altogether in many places, allowing damaging water penetration and destructive frost action into the structure further advancing these problems and accelerating the dilapidation. There can be no doubt that this site is a vital part of our town's history and is now in need of urgent and appropriate conservation along with better interpretation.

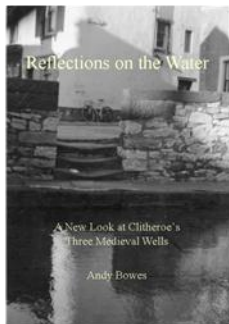
The Municipal forebears of our present Authority consistently cared for all three of these site and prosecuted anyone who 'despoiled' these vital communal amenities, this Campaign seeks to encourage our present Council take all of these sites under its wing and register all three sites, thus enabling a joint Community/Municipal initiative 'to secure the lasting and meaningful future' three unique Heritage Asset sites deserve.

This completes this presentation of the three ancient spring well sites and their significance to Clitheroe's development over the last millennia. Thank you for your interest and either your attendance on the Guided Walk - or 'virtually'!

Related Events & Resources:

Andy Bowes 'Reflections on the Water': A new Look at Clitheroe's Three Medieval Wells. Book Launch & Signing

This takes place at 2.00pm in Clitheroe Library in Church Street - from here it's a simple walk up Church Brow and down to the foot of Church Street - passing St. Mary's Parish Church and Churchyard - both well worth a visit if you have time. This new publication uses the three, spring water sites - and their development into three Public Town Wells - as the 'stream' for the broadest narrative history of this ancient Parish. In doing so, it describes and illustrates the enormous significance of these sites which have served this settlement, in all its forms, for over a Millennia. Further details of this event are also set out below, do attend if you can!



'Water From The Well' - Clitheroe's Ancient Town Wells Video

Local & Marine Historian, Steve Ragnall, (a member of the CTWCC Team, has produced an excellent 30min video on Clitheroe's former Public Wells. This can be viewed on You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQLVloPKLJ4> This compliments the Guided Walking Tour set out above, the 'Reflections on the Water' Book Launch, and the current 'ROTW' Exhibition in the First Floor Exhibition Gallery at Clitheroe Library.



Clitheroe Civic Society's Town Trail.

This provides visitors with a tour of Clitheroe's significant Conservation Areas sites. Downloaded from their Website @ https://clitheroecivicsociety.org.uk/uploads/images/pdf%20downloads/Clitheroe_Town_Trail_Leaflet_VIS04c.pdf Copies should also be available from the Clitheroe Visitor Information Centre at the [Platform Gallery](#) on Station Road, Clitheroe, BB7 2JT see [opening times and full contact details](#)

Concluding Resume

This presentation has been prepared as part of 'Heritage Open Days 2024 Festival: <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/submission-event/guided-visits-to-heald-and-st-mary-s-well-clitheroe-conservation-area.html> This years 'theme' is 'Routes – Networks – Connections' and CTWCC believe that the story of how our ancestors made use of the natural network of Spring Water via their inherent understanding of the connection between their Geological and Hydrological environment cannot be better told than here in Clitheroe with our - still visible an unmistakeable – former Public Town Wells.

We are fortunate to still have such monuments to the indigenous rapport between the first settlers here, the natural environment, and one of its principle elements – drinking water. This, literally, 'writ in stone' legacy from our past was rigorously tended by our municipal forebears during these sites service to the town. And long after this too - as a clear indication of their significance to the town's history, its ancestors and their current descendants. This stewardship has regrettably, but not irreversibly, stalled since the turn of the last Century. It is the aim of this campaign to see this care and appreciation restored for the beneficial reflection of present and future residents and visitors to Clitheroe as far too many have been lost elsewhere. This should not be the fate of Heald Well, St. Mary's Well or Stock Well!

HEALD WELL & ST. MARY'S WELL GUIDED TOUR MAP



'REFLECTIONS ON THE WATER' BOOK LAUNCH

Meet the Author who will be reading extracts from, 'Reflections on the Water': *A New Look at Clitheroe's Three Medieval Wells* by Andy Bowes.

This event runs from 2.00-4.00pm on Saturday 7th September at in the Clitheroe Library Church Street Clitheroe BB7 2DG Further details can be obtained @

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/libraries/find-a-library/clitheroe-library/>

or

Tel: 0300 1236703

Email: clitheroe.library@lancashire.gov.uk

CLITHEROE TOWN WELLS CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN



‘To secure a meaningful and lasting future for all three of Clitheroe’s Ancient former Public Town Wells’

THE ANCIENT WELLS OF CLITHEROE

*Even we, can not recall
Who owned the land, who enclosed with walls.
But here we remain, here we still stand
Since clash of roses, over wild northern lands
and we served all, well!*

*As charters were writ, our pure waters ran free
We slaked your thirst; you filled your canteen.
All partook freely, with rarely a thought
Of where, by whom, this bounty was wrought
Yet still, we served you, well!*

*With clear and free water, you prospered, then grew
Then - beyond our means - too many of you.
Dams, pipes and valves are now your supply.
Yet still we were cared for – and the reason why,
For we had served you, well!*

*Thirsty minds we'll still slake, with will to look,
for Histories ran through us - from fell down to brook.
We're all ancient sites - happen th'oldest in t'land,
With a great story to tell – if you'll now lend a hand,
To save those that served you. Well?*

St Mary, Heald & Stock.

***Clitheroe, 1st Dec. 2020* - and for hundreds of years before.**

(Rev. Aug. 2024)

The Campaign's aims are promoted on - and can be contacted via – the Group Facebook page @
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61563897947816> Direct contact can also be made via by email to the Secretary @
sbcaltld@outlook.com

Clitheroe Town Wells Conservation Campaign