

Winster Local History Group

Newsletter 29

June 2004

Next Meeting (our last till after the summer)

Monday 21 June at 7.30. Guided walk round Elton, organised by Elton History Group.

The walk will start from near Elton Old Hall (the former Youth Hostel), which is on Main Street near the telephone box, opposite a bus stop. There's a bit of a green and plenty of space off the road for us to assemble. There should also be plenty of parking available there. We'll be walking probably no more than half a mile, and estimate it will take two hours. There's plenty to see and discuss. We aim to finish at the Duke of York.

Talks planned for 2004-2005

September 20 2004	An Evening of Nostalgia: Old Winster Photographs
October 18 2004	AGM and Social Evening at the Bowling Green
November 22 2004	Chatsworth at Christmas – by Chatsworth, Housekeeper
February 21 2005	There's More to Walls – by Trevor Wragg, drystonewaller
March 21 2005	History of Winster School
April 25 2005	Wirksworth Mines Research Group (to be confirmed)
June 20 2005	Guided Walk along Portway - led by Frank Mason

Please renew your membership in September. Still only £5.

A Contribution from Bill Slaney, Denver House, Main Street, Winster

BRIMSBURY WELL, 1826

Brimsbury Well was standing by the roadside, opposite Robin Hood Stride, for over one hundred and fifty years, always full of water until the supply was cut off (more about that later). I have had an interest in the well since the early 1930s. Reason being, I came to live at the cottage a short distance up the road, towards Winster, known then as Pipers Inn [now Dudwood House], the first inn on the road from Bakewell to Ashbourne. There was no water laid on apart from a well in a field across the road. When the well was full the overflow ran along a land drain under the road to a small trough in the garden, and that was the only water the cottage had. When there was a dry spell in the summer the supply from the well ran low, so it

meant going down the road to Brimsbury Well with two buckets and carrying them back home full of water.



Brimsbury Well. Photo 564 from the History Group Archive. Original owned by Bert Wheeldon, Wensley. The 'well' is said to have been set up by Stanton Hall as a horse trough on the turnpike road that became the B5056. The inscriptions were inlaid in lead ornamented by equal-armed crosses: on the front 'Brimsbury Well A.D. 1826'; on the north side 'Bakewell 4 miles', and on the south 'Winster 1 mile'.

When I came to Winster in 1939, and later on, I would take my car for a wash either to Shothouse Spring or Brimsbury Well. I quite remember washing my car and a man with his car parked just a little way up the road came to me and asked whether the water was fit to drink. When I told him that I had drunk it years ago he fetched a panfull, put it on his primus stove, then had a brew. While his water was boiling he fetched a camera, took a snap of the well with me beside it and said, "If you ever go to Stockport call in my studio and I will show you the result". I never did.

In the summer when I was cycling by I would stop and have a drink of very nice soft water. Way back in 1963 Mr John Pickles was driving his lorry on the way to work and would call at the well to fill his radiator, owing to the water being soft. This he did every morning without fail. Mr Harry Brandon, a motor cyclist, on his way to work at the same place as Mr Pickles, did not notice the lorry pulling over towards the well and unfortunately ran into the back, and it proved fatal.

Later I went to work in Bakewell and would pass the well every journey, which kept my interest going. Periodically I would take my car for a wash until the early 1970s, when, at that time, Elton had a new sewerage scheme, which entailed taking a pipeline from Elton to the new sewerage plant near Picory Comer. In so doing the pipe was laid from Elton to the bottom of Dudwood Lane and across the road into the field, where the well got its supply. I don't know who the contractor was but, disregarding the feed pipe to the well, he just tore a gully to take the pipe along its way to the new filtration at Picory That was the end of the free-flowing water to the well.

At that time I approached Peter Elliott of Birchover, who at the time was on the Bakewell Rural Council, and asked which "body" the well came under. He said it was Winster Parish, but when I asked Winster they then said, "No, it comes under Birchover" and fetched a map to show it was just in Birchover Parish. It seems to me that no-one wanted to take on the responsibility of getting the water to run again.

After a while I decided to get the water running once again so that I could wash my car without wasting the village supply. I took around 10 yards of hose pipe, dug a hole in the field where the water was running to waste, dropped the hose into the hole, weighted it down, placed the other end through the wall and into the well, sucked at this end, and - "hey presto" - water once more, so that I could keep coming to do my usual wash. This I did until I gave up driving in 1996. Then one day, driving in a car to Bakewell, I noticed the hosepipe had been pulled away from the wall, so eventually the well ran dry.

I keep calling it a well but actually it's just a trough but incorporates a milestone as well. When it was first put there it acted as a drinking point for thirty horses and told how much further to go to Bakewell. Today a gritstone trough fetches quite a sum of money, so some bright spark decided to take it to a fresh home. It was reported missing to the police, but they did not know what to look for. I have a great nephew in the police, so I gave him a near description of its measurements and the lettering on each end and in front. The lettering is as good today as it was the day it was carved. I'm a little vague about how they found it and who retrieved it but it landed in the Council Depot Yard at Darley Dale. From there it has been taken to Birchover, where a stonemason has repaired the damage done to it and it now rests outside The Red Lion Inn. From what I have been told, Birchover is going to make a water feature of it and install it somewhere in the village. From people I have been in contact with we all agree that the only place is for it to be placed on the original site at Brimsbury. I don't know who really owns it, but it stood on the highway, which belongs to Derbyshire County Council. They retrieved it after it was stolen and it was Derbyshire County Council who put the drain to take the overflow of water under and across the road and down the field to end up at Hawley's Bridge, so really it would seem to be the responsibility of the Derbyshire County Council, but they have washed their hands of it by handing it over to Birchover.

I would like the Historical Society or Our Heritage to see if they can get it put back where it belongs. After all, it is part of our heritage.

Bill Slaney

Many thanks to Bill for this article, which he wrote because of his strong feelings on the subject.

Brian Long, Chair of Winster Parish Council, comments:

My understanding of the situation is that, after it was stolen and recovered, the police handed it to the County Council. They weren't sure what to do with it, so they passed it over to Birchover Parish Council to deal with as they felt fit. This is because it had previously been by the roadside within Birchover parish. They decided to make a feature of it outside a local pub, but not before they had made some legal arrangements to establish that it would continue to be owned by the parish. I understand that there is to be a plaque explaining why it is in Birchover and not by the roadside where it was previously. Winster Parish Council, as far as I know, has never been involved with it.

Steven Shaw, landlord of the Red Lion, Birchover, explained that because the trough was broken by the thieves it had to undergo restoration by local mason Mark Eaton. The cost was 'into four figures' and was met from various sources, including the Peak National Park Authority, Stanton Estates, Birchover Parish Council, and from the proceeds of various local fundraising events, such as quiz nights at the Red Lion. It was moved from outside the pub on 7 June in order to be fitted on a stone plinth, and it is to be reinstated in time for Birchover Open Gardens on 26 and 27 June.

It seems, then, that Bill's wish to see the trough returned to its original location is not going to be realised. Most History Group members will probably agree that it is a shame that this bit of authentic local history has been lost. By the roadside it doubled as a milestone, with distances inscribed to Bakewell and Winster, features which now have no relevance at all. The inscription "Brimsbury Well, A.D. 1826" also makes it very traceable, and, as Bill says, if the trough had been properly maintained and kept filled, it would probably never have been stolen in the first place.

The people of Birchover have taken sensible measures to make the trough safe from theft and vandalism, and it will be good to be able to view it there. But many of us will see this, as Bill does, as a further erosion of our local heritage.