Water Supply in Chaddesden

Water – we take it so much for granted, don't we? This fact was brought home to me back in April 2019 when early one morning I turned the kitchen tap on and only a trickle of water came out. It transpired that a major water-main burst in Derby had left whole areas of the city virtually dry; fortunately, repairs were speedily made and, for me at least, the water was back on only a few hours later. This event prompted me to think about how Chaddesden people managed for a water supply in years gone by, long before mains water was laid on in the 1920s and 1930s.

Undoubtedly the main requirement for the siting of a settlement in any particular location was its proximity to a plentiful and dependable source of water. In our case, we can imagine that the people who first created their small community here over a thousand years ago saw that Chaddesden Brook would be capable of meeting their basic needs. As time progressed, these early settlers would naturally look for further supplies of water, such as springs on sloping areas of ground where an impermeable layer (clay, for example) would stop the downward progression of rainwater. Alternatively, springs might appear on the ground where they had followed fault-lines in the underlying rocks, or broken out at the level of the local water-table. With the gradual passage of time more springs would be located and wells dug, and as the population of the village gradually increased the availability of water would be an obvious limiting factor in the provision of new properties. Clearly if your land did not have access to water, either your own or perhaps a shared supply, then there would be little point in building a new house.

The early editions of the Ordnance Survey's 25-inch maps show the locations of many wells and pumps in Chaddesden, these are marked by a tiny circle and the letters "W" or "P" respectively. Fig. 1 shows several examples in the centre of the village and here I shall look at just two of them in more detail. The property on the left, sometimes known as the Lockage but also as the Oxo House (because of the O-X-O pattern of its roof tiles), was variously a wheelwright's and a blacksmith's [Note 1]. Margaret Poyser remembers being told that the blacksmith was kept very busy back in the days when ponies from Stanley Pit came to Chaddesden to be shod and miners brought their picks for sharpening. The ponies were turned out in a small paddock by the side of the Lockage and in the middle of the field was the pump which supplied water for use in the house. It is interesting to see that in this particular case, the pump was situated 25 yards south-east of the property it served. With the passage of time the house was demolished, Reginald Road South built and the well forgotten, but in 1988 the occupants of 146 Reginald Road South were making alterations to their front garden and unexpectedly came upon the old well, which was apparently some 30 feet deep. On the right-hand side of Fig. 1 is Fernbank, 146 Chaddesden Lane (also known as Whitecroft), and here we can see that the well was sited some 7 yards to the south of the house and adjacent to the lane; it appears to have fallen into disuse many years ago and is not visible at the present time.

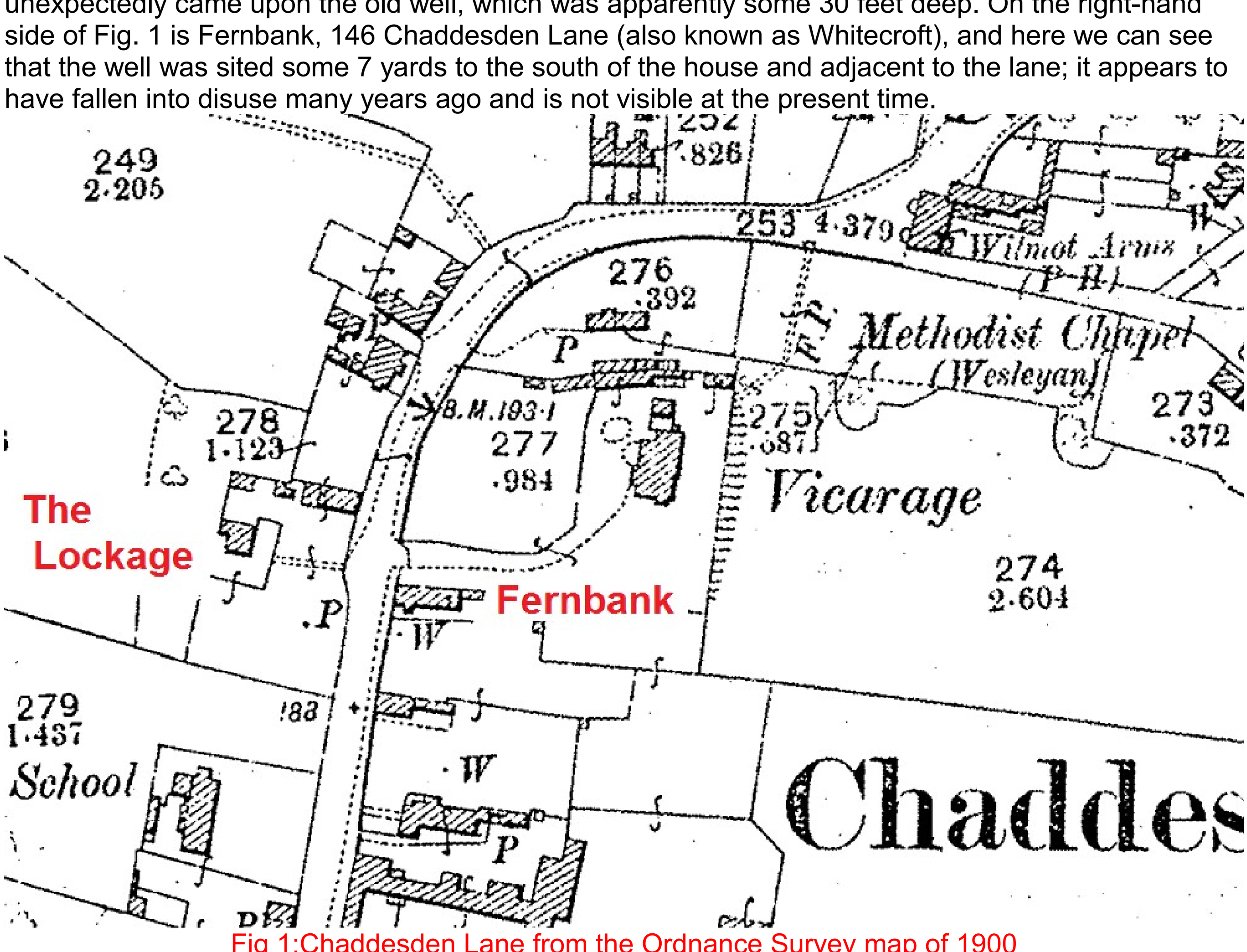

Fig 1:Chaddesden Lane from the Ordnance Survey map of 1900

Early wells were sometimes excavated with a bottle profile, i.e. they were wider at the bottom than at the top, but nowadays the wells most likely to be encountered are of a cylindrical shape, with a minimum diameter of around three feet. Practical considerations mean that it would be extremely difficult to excavate a well with a diameter less than this ... try marking out a three-foot diameter circle and then imagine yourself at the bottom of, say, a twenty-foot-deep well-shaft trying to dig away at the soil below you! The first consideration involved in excavating a new well was deciding exactly where to dig. One idea might be to look at nearby properties; if they all had viable wells in their gardens, then it was probably quite likely that a new well in a somewhat similar spot in your own garden would prove to be equally productive. Incidentally, it was considered to be "bad form" to dig a new well too near an existing well as this might deplete the original well's supply; in general it was said that a new well should lie outside a circle centered upon an existing well whose radius was equal to the depth of that well.

Other householders preferred to locate underground water by retaining the services of a dowser or water-diviner, the practitioner of perhaps the most unusual of all the old country crafts. Armed with nothing more than a forked hazel twig, the dowser would criss-cross the property until he detected an up and down movement in the twig; marking the spot in the turf below him with a wooden peg, he would continue "mapping" the ground in this way; all the time watched by the householder who was hoping that the result of the dowser's work would be an excellent supply of clean drinking water. The dowser maintained his ability was simply a gift, but of course there were many who did not believe he could detect anything at all and that the whole process was just a sham; however, they were generally silenced if the dowser offered to work on a "no water, no payment" basis. Incidentally, some people claim to be able to dowse for underground water using materials other than hazel. A few years ago, a Chaddesden gentleman was showing me how he got results when using a bent metal coat-hanger; sure enough the metal rod bounced up and down as he moved over a particular spot in his garden ... I tried the same experiment and got absolutely no reaction at all.

Early wills occasionally provide documentary evidence of a well, for during the probate process it was frequently the practice to include an inventory of the deceased's goods; this work usually being undertaken by three of four neighbours or close friends. Some Chaddesden inventories make reference to a well, as the following four examples demonstrate:

30 May 1588, the goods of William Clarke, husbandmen, included "a bucket and a cheene for a well", which were listed along with many other disparate items.

23 April 1605, the goods of John Ive included "Cartes, harrowes, plowes, plowyrons with some thinges about the well", all valued together at £2.

8 December 1613, the inventory of the goods of the village baker, Ralph Outram noted "in the kytchen, brasse, pewter, spits, Cobirons [firedogs], with things belonging to the well", which were valued at £2. It is interesting to note that shortly afterwards Ralph Outram's widow, Jane, subsequently married again, this time to Richard Cheadleton and from a document in the Derbyshire Record Office (DRO D3155/6353) it appears that Richard and Jane continued to occupy the property of her late husband while his son, Ralph Outram jnr, was under age. However, by 1616 the young man had evidently gained his majority and so Richard and Jane agreed to surrender the property to Ralph jnr provided he pay his mother £3 annually as her dower. This was agreed, and the list of items included in the handover mentions an oven and kneading trough (Ralph snr had been a baker, remember) as well as "the stone trough at the well" – no doubt the same well as mentioned in the inventory made three years previously.

28 April 1619, the goods of Anne Pegg, widow, included "the meaner [manure] in the yeard and the well frame and bucket and harnes", together valued at 10s 8d. From the perspective of this article, the inventory of Anne's possessions is especially interesting since it also mentions the reversion of a lease worth £2 of Well Paddock. More than 170 years later, Well Paddock was marked on the Chaddesden Enclosure map of 1792 as a small field of about six acres lying between Morley Road and Wood Road, approximately where Sandfield Close, Oakwood, is today; evidently back in the seventeenth century the well which gave it its name must have been of considerable importance to justify having the whole field named after it!

Down the centuries, the actual method by which a well was dug changed comparatively little. Once the site had been decided upon, the well-digger, armed with little more than a spade, a plumb-bob, a bucket, and a labourer to operate a windlass, could begin his work. In Chaddesden's clayey soil, the process used to involve the construction of a circular wooden collar or curb of the required diameter which was frequently shod or reinforced with iron; next the ground was excavated to the depth of perhaps one foot, the collar placed at the bottom and the first course of brickwork "steining", or well-lining, placed on the collar. Now the real work began, the well-digger stood inside the hole and excavated underneath the collar until it, and the bricks it supported, dropped a few inches enabling the second course of bricks to be placed on top of the first course. Slowly and laboriously this process was repeated over and over again as the well-digger and the brick steining gradually descended into the earth. If hard ground was encountered the steining could be discontinued otherwise it would extend right to the bottom of the shaft. The rate of progress was governed to a large degree by the speed at which the digger could fill the bucket with soil, his labourer at the top of the well hauling it up, emptying it and then sending it back down full of bricks. Hopefully, at the end of three or four days' hard work there would be a plentiful supply of water at the bottom of the well. Later changes to well construction techniques seemingly saw the use of the wooden collar discontinued, the new bricks simply being carefully laid under the previous course [Note 2]. Whichever method was used, the well-digger always needed to keep his wits about him for this was definitely not a job for the faint-hearted!

Chaddesden Hall, the imposing home of the Wilmot family, would have had several different wells and pumps scattered about the house and grounds, although only one is marked on the Ordnance Survey maps. In Mr. Harold Fearnehough's 1991 book, "Chaddesden a History" (pp.26-27), he gives an account of the Hall, written by the late Mrs. V. M. Clews, who noted that inside the Hall, "To the left were the kitchens, sculleries and pantries. The water for these was drawn from pumps on long stone sinks". She also added, "The wine cellars were on this side of the Hall too and were reached by descending a flight of stone steps to another pump." Finally, Mrs. Clews also recalled a pump in the laundry garden which "bore the date 1749." This latter pump seems to be the one shown on the OS maps. In the Chaddesden Parish Council archives kept at the Derbyshire Record Office in Matlock, one of the minute books (DRO D568/1/3) notes that on 5 September 1935, "A discussion took place with regard to houses in the course of erection on the Old Hall site. Mr. Guy stated that he had been informed that the houses were directly on top of one of the old wells. It was agreed that his informant meet the surveyor on the site." This was potentially a worrying situation, but later that year, on 7 November, it was reported that, "Surveyor and local residents had said none of the new houses were erected on top of old wells."

Not far away from the site of the Hall, but on the opposite side of Chaddesden Lane, the occupants of number 77 uncovered a 30-ft deep well-shaft in their back garden while making alterations in May 2004. This must have been the original water supply for the property, which was most likely built a few years prior to the laying of the water mains. Now, it might be thought that the parishioners of Chaddesden would have welcomed the idea of a dependable piped public water supply, and the Derby Mercury newspaper of 25 April 1924 carried an account of a special parish meeting held at Chaddesden School to discuss the possibility of having piped water laid on to the village. More than one hundred ratepayers attended, and heard the surveyor's estimate of 15s per yard for connecting to the Nottingham Road main. If the pipes were laid some 2½ miles through the whole village, the total cost would be over £2,500. The meeting was told that although a Government subsidy could be obtained if the work commenced immediately, there would still be a large increase on the rates for years to come. As can be imagined, a discussion followed and it was noted that although no-one would be compelled to have piped water connected to their property, the costs of the project would nonetheless be levied on all ratepayers. This did not please various householders who vociferously complained that they had only recently paid as much as £60 to have a well sunk, and could not therefore agree to the additional further expense of having "town water" supplied. Eventually it was proposed that the question be postponed for a number of years, and although many people abstained from voting, the resolution was still carried by 26 votes for, and 6 against.

I found the reactions of these ratepayers in 1924 fascinating – given the option of a new supply of clean, piped water at an additional cost or continuing to use their own recently-dug wells, they chose the wells! I don't think I would have made that decision. Of course, nowadays we are profligate in our use of water, for example a modern household of four people might well use 100 gallons (450 litres) of water each day. Somehow the appeal of any potential cost benefit in using a well would seem far less attractive if we had to carry endless buckets back from the well to the house; indeed it would probably be asking too much of a smallish domestic well to produce this quantity of water, for example, a 3ft diameter well would contain some 44 gallons of water per foot of depth, and it might take some time for this amount of water to percolate into the well. Almost as if to demonstrate the fickle nature of public opinion, the Derby Daily Telegraph of 4 September 1928 noted that property owners at Chaddesden were now in favour of a public water supply and Shardlow RDC therefore resolved to approach the Derby Corporation, with a view to the extension of its mains. Derby Town Council were the owners of the biggest waterworks in the area, having purchased the privately-owned Derby Waterworks Company for £351,000 in 1880, and from the late 1920s onwards it became an important selling point for anyone marketing a Chaddesden property to note that "Town water is now laid on."

As the development of Chaddesden proceeded apace, some natural springs that had not caused any particular problem back in the days when it was just a small village began to give people cause for concern as the population grew. The Parish Council minutes of 7 November 1935 in the Derbyshire Record Office (DRO D568/1/3, p.36) note that "Mr. Leuty brought up the question of the spring at the junction of Chaddesden Lane and Ismay Road." The councillors decided it should be connected up to a nearby drain.

If you had walked up Church Lane in the early years of the twentieth century, you would have seen the parish pump in its own small enclosure, fenced off from the other properties and accessed through a gate on the north side of the lane. At busy times of the day, anyone wishing to use the pump would have to stand for some minutes in a queue of other local residents, all waiting in turn to fill their buckets. When the pump broke down around the time of the First World War, there was considerable argument over the liability for its repair; in the end nothing was done and the pump ceased to be recorded after about 1930 [Note 3]. Only a few yards away, the residents of the six little almshouses opposite the west end of St. Mary's Church sometimes used the parish pump, but it seems they once had their own well, too. In 1983, my father and I were talking to Mr. Charles Hurd of Breadsall, whose family used to run the Old Hall Nurseries in Chaddesden Lane, and he told us he remembered a pump at the back of Almshouse no.6 (i.e. the southernmost one). He also said that the neighbouring Verger's Cottage had two pumps in the kitchen, one of which was for soft water ... a pump inside one's home was thought to be highly desirable, since it removed the need to go outside in all weathers to draw buckets of water! Fig. 2 shows the old pump outside the dairy at Brook Farm in Chapel Lane; note its wooden covering, designed to provide some insulation against severe winter frosts!

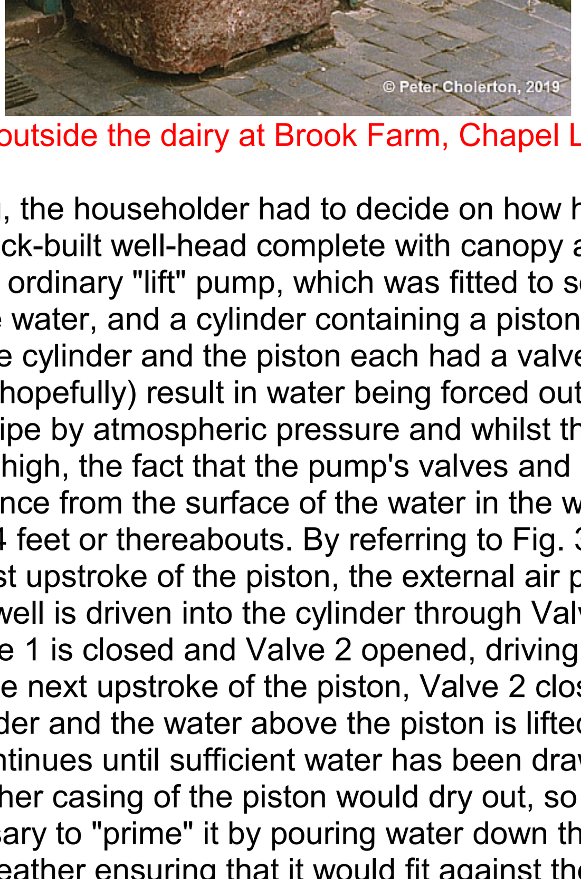

Fig 2: Pump outside the dairy at Brook Farm, Chapel Lane, in 1986

Whenever a new well was dug, the householder had to decide on how he was going to access the water, either by means of a brick-built well-head complete with canopy and windlass, or a cast-iron pump. This second option, the ordinary "lift" pump, which was fitted to some wells, consisted of a pipe descending down into the water, and a cylinder containing a piston, usually cased with soft leather to ensure a tight fit. The cylinder and the piston each had a valve and pumping the handle of the cylinder vigorously would (hopefully) result in water being forced out of the spout. The well water was actually pushed into the pipe by atmospheric pressure and whilst this would notionally support a column of water about 34 feet high, the fact that the pump's valves and piston were inherently leaky meant that the maximum distance from the surface of the water in the well to the cylinder of the pump could not practically exceed 24 feet or thereabouts. By referring to Fig. 3, we can see how a typical lift-pump functioned: on the first upstroke of the piston, the external air pressure closes Valve 2 and at the same time water in the well is driven into the cylinder through Valve 1 [Note 4]. On the first downstroke of the piston, Valve 1 is closed and Valve 2 opened, driving some of the water into the top part of the cylinder. On the next upstroke of the piston, Valve 2 closes again, more water from the well is driven into the cylinder and the water above the piston is lifted up and some runs out of the spout. The pumping action continues until sufficient water has been drawn off. If the pump had not been used for a while, the leather casing of the piston would dry out, so to get the pump to function once more, it would be necessary to "prime" it by pouring water down though the top of the cylinder ... this would wet the leather ensuring that it would fit against the sides of the cylinder once more.

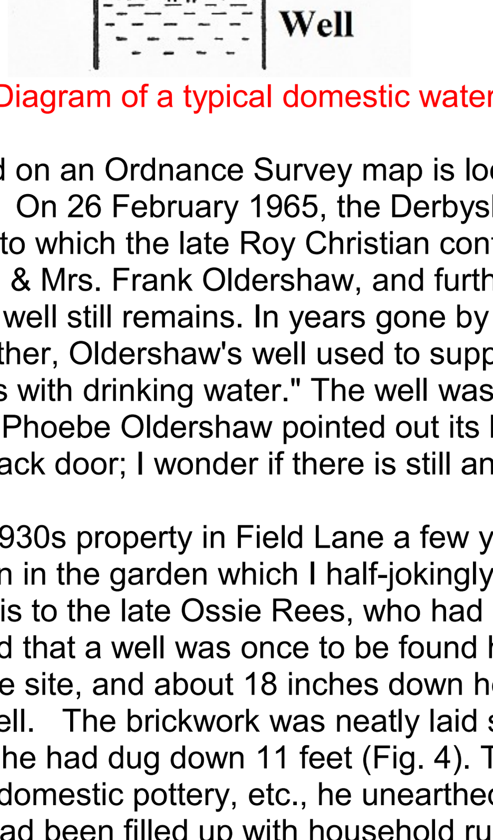

Fig 3: Diagram of a typical domestic water pump

One well that has never appeared on an Ordnance Survey map is located at the back of Jasmine Cottage, 117 Chaddesden Lane. On 26 February 1965, the Derbyshire Advertiser newspaper ran a detailed feature on Chaddesden, to which the late Roy Christian contributed. He wrote that the cottage was then the home of Mr. & Mrs. Frank Oldershaw, and further commented, "Although the old pump has been removed, the well still remains. In years gone by when other wells in the village ran dry during prolonged hot weather, Oldershaw's well used to supply the other villagers, and many farmers would fill their milk churns with drinking water." The well was subsequently covered over but around 1986 or thereabouts Mrs. Phoebe Oldershaw pointed out its location to me, conveniently sited only a few yards away from her back door; I wonder if there is still any water in it these days?

Shortly after acquiring their late-1930s property in Field Lane a few years ago, Ken and Margaret Poyser noticed a slight depression in the garden which I half-jokingly suggested might just be an old well. I subsequently mentioned this to the late Ossie Rees, who had lived in this part of the lane many years previously and he confirmed that a well was once to be found hereabouts. In his spare time Ken Poyser began to excavate the site, and about 18 inches down he found the unmistakable signs of brick lining – it was indeed a well. The brickwork was neatly laid so Ken decided to continue his work and by the summer of 2009 he had dug down 11 feet (Fig. 4). The quantity of old plastic washing-up bottles, beer bottles, domestic pottery, etc., he unearthed demonstrated that when the well had finished its useful life it had been filled up with household rubbish.

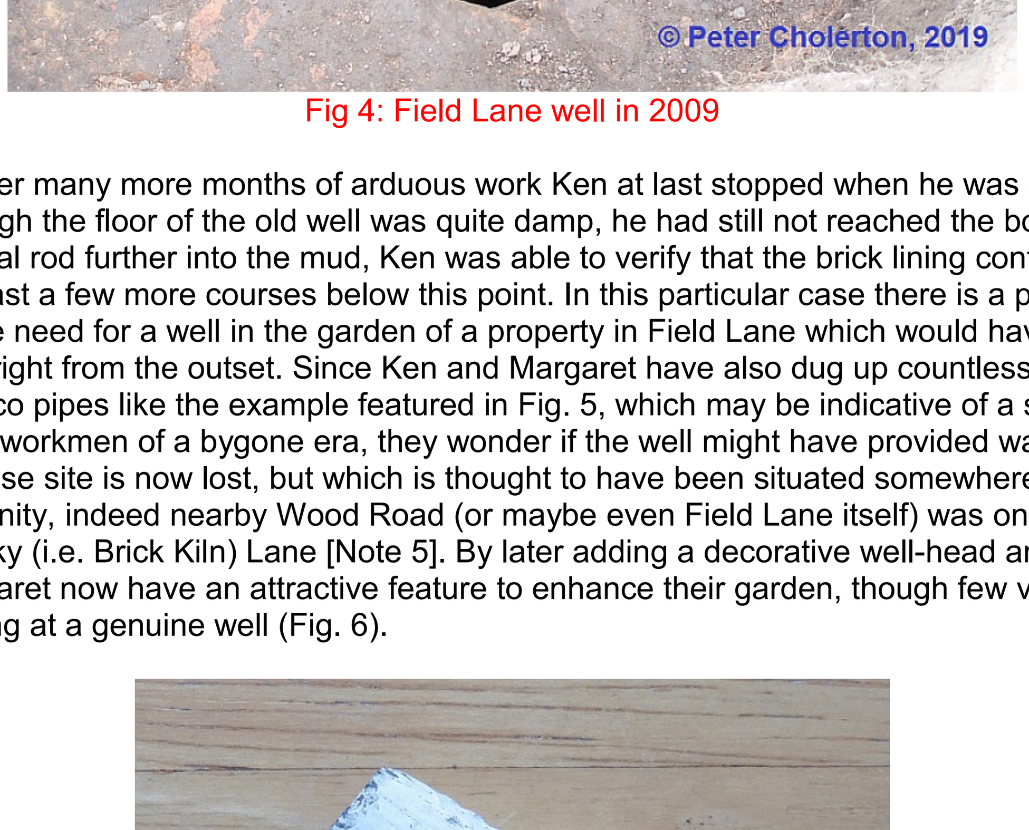

Fig 4: Field Lane well in 2009

Eventually, after many more months of arduous work Ken at last stopped when he was at a depth of 21 feet; although the floor of the old well was quite damp, he had still not reached the bottom! By pushing a metal rod further into the mud, Ken was able to verify that the brick lining continued on down for at least a few more courses below this point. In this particular case there is a puzzle concerning the need for a well in the garden of a property in Field Lane which would have had a mains supply right from the outset. Since Ken and Margaret have also dug up countless fragments of old clay tobacco pipes like the example featured in Fig. 5, which may be indicative of a site once frequented by workmen of a bygone era, they wonder if the well might have provided water for the old brickyard, whose site is now lost, but which is thought to have been situated somewhere in the immediate vicinity, indeed nearby Wood Road (or maybe even Field Lane itself) was once known locally as Bricky (i.e. Brick Kiln) Lane [Note 5]. By later adding a decorative well-head and canopy, Ken and Margaret now have an attractive feature to enhance their garden, though few visitors realise they are looking at a genuine well (Fig. 6).

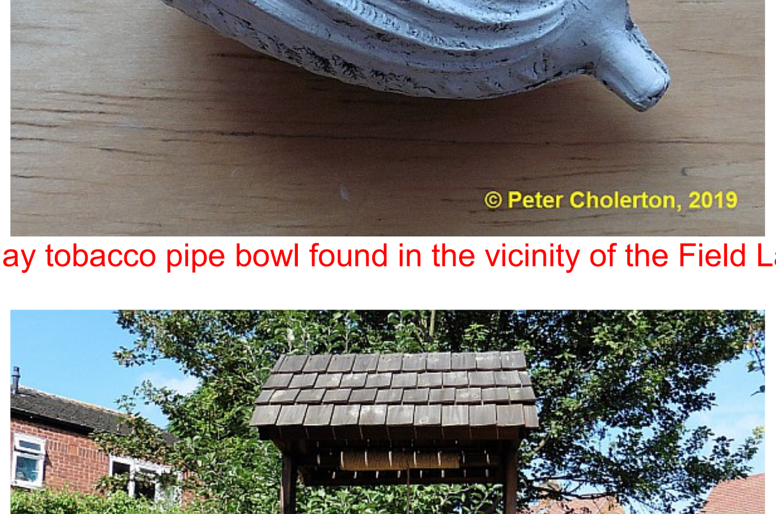

Fig 5: Clay tobacco pipe bowl found in the vicinity of the Field Lane well

Fig 6: Field Lane well in 2019

Ossie Rees (whom I mentioned in the previous paragraph) and his parents came to live in Chaddesden in 1927 when he was just 3 years old. Initially they lived in a wooden bungalow on the north side of Field Lane and then in 1934 moved a few yards down the road to Thatched Cottage (now no. 16). Ossie (1924–2011) had a wealth of Chaddesden memories and gave me a couple more water-related stories. In 1938, aged 14, Ossie began to work for brothers Harold and Ray Willetts at Stoney Flatts Farm on Wood Road [Note 6]. In farming circles the Willetts were well known as the founders of the acclaimed Chaddesden Herd of British Friesian cattle. One of Ossie's jobs was to work the pump in the dairy in order to fill a large tank with water, which was then used to cool the milk. In the evenings he would release a tap on the tank to let the water play over the floor to keep the building cool too. Another one of Ossie's tales concerned a Mr. & Mrs. Poole who in the early 1930s lived in what Ossie described as a "gypsy caravan" on the Oakridge allotments off Morley Road. They did not have access to a well for Ossie remembered them saying they drew their water straight from the adjacent Lees Brook and that "it tasted excellent." Fortunately for their health it was not long before the couple moved into a more conventional property on Morley Road. The old Ordnance Survey maps do mark the presence of one well on the Oakridge site, but most of the allotment holders, my grandfather included, simply got their buckets of water from the brook [Note 7]. At least one of the modern properties built at Oakridge towards the end of the 1960s is known to have a spring in its back garden, and I understand the water temperature remains fairly constant at around 48°F (9°C).

The next few wells all belonged to properties which were once grouped around the periphery of Chaddesden Green, an area of ground bounded by Morley Road to the north-west, Chapel Lane to the south, and Chaddesden Brook to the east. The Orchard, later called Beckside Cottage, which was demolished when the Wilmot Garage was built, was once the home of Mr. Jesse Cokayne and his three sons, who for many years were the bell ringing team at Chaddesden Church. The article about Chaddesden in the Derbyshire Advertiser of 26 February 1965 referred to earlier states "An unusual feature of the cottage was the well, which was in the kitchen."

Number 19 Chapel Lane was once known as Green Farm. In the 1990s it was the home of Phyllis Fountain and her brother George. While visiting their cottage one day, I was chatting to George about the property's original water-supply and, by referring to an old Ordnance Survey map, I was able to show him the approximate location of an abandoned well some 15 feet to the west of their kitchen. George mentioned that the next door cottage (i.e. number 21) once had an old well too, theirs was apparently fed by a spring and reached by four steps, but had also been covered in, although there was then some talk of reinstating it.

Tucked away from the road down its own drive, 20 Morley Road was formerly three separate cottages (nos. 20, 22, & 24), collectively known as Feltwell Cottages; the well in question being situated just a few yards to the south-east. The actual origin of the name is not clear, but this is how the properties were known until at least the 1940s.

Close by Feltwell Cottages is number 28 Morley Road, for many years the home of Miss Dorothy Passmore, who died at the age of 90 in December 2010. This little cottage once possessed an intriguing well. From what I have been able to piece together by talking to people who knew Miss Passmore, her front door opened into a short hallway between the dining room (to the left) and lounge (to the right). At the end of the hallway was a door underneath the stairs providing access to a good-sized cellar, in the corner of which was a well with some sort of cover over it. When Miss Passmore and her relatives first moved into the cottage in the 1940s they apparently had to use the well for drinking water, presumably because my own distant relation, Miss Harriett Annie Cholerton, who had run the Chaddesden Village Post Office from the premises until her death in January 1941 had never seen the need to have piped water laid on. It seems likely that the well was not a particularly deep one and probably tapped into a spring a few feet below the floor of the cellar; Miss Passmore did happen to mention that after the nearby brook was culverted in 1971, her cellar occasionally flooded.

Until the early 1920s, successive generations of my family had lived in an old farmhouse which stood where number 51 Morley Road is situated today, and my grandfather, John Robert Cholerton (1895–1974) could recall the old pump that stood close by its front door, which was once the only water supply for the farmhouse and the adjacent properties to its north and south. My grandfather said that in winter, the pump used to be thatched to stop it from freezing, and as an added precaution, its handle was propped up with a hayfork at night-time, so that if the weather was extremely severe, it would still be possible to commence pumping the next morning. Next door, 49 Morley Road (Woodbine Cottage), once formed part of the stable block to our old farmhouse, but was seemingly converted into a residential property at some time very early in the twentieth century. When I first remember it, Mrs. Stower (1901–1981) lived there and my grandfather told me that her father, Mr. Stephen Fell, grew tired of having to use Cholertons' well all the time, and so dug one for his own property. Mr. Fell was obviously accustomed to digging since he had been a labourer at Nottingham Road Cemetery, and so 49 Morley Road ended up with its own water supply. The well was fitted with a pump which was enclosed in a small brick structure to protect it against the elements, and sometime around 1968 when my father and I were walking past her cottage, Mrs. Stower happened to be in her garden. Dad mentioned the pump and Mrs. Stower asked if I wanted to taste the water. I replied in the affirmative, and Mrs. Stower fetched a glass from the house, worked the pump until a stream of water came out and gave me a glass full ... it was surprisingly cold! After Mrs. Stower's death in 1981 the old pump was either removed or stolen, but when the cottage was substantially rebuilt a year or so later a replacement was provided and, as far as I am aware, is still there today.

In the 1970s I regularly walked my dog past Hill House (now the White House Children's Nursery) on the east side of Morley Road, and just a yard or two inside the property's western boundary it was possible to see a short length of iron pipe protruding about 18 inches above ground level. The Ordnance Survey map of 1900 showed that the pipe was in exactly the place an old well was marked, which was actually then located within the grounds of the adjacent Hill House Cottage (Fig. 7). An earlier map of 1883 proved that both the well and the cottage pre-dated the construction of Hill House. I imagine the well was later equipped with a pump and when this eventually fell into disuse its outer metal casing was removed, leaving just the short length of piping that I noticed.

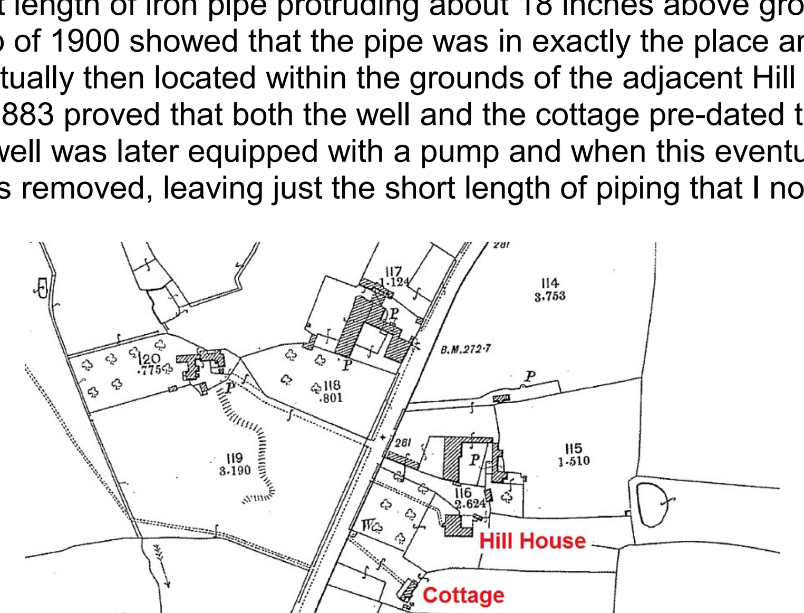

Fig 7: Well at Hill House, Morley Road (Ordnance Survey map, 1900)

The Convent of the Holy Name on Morley Road began life as a large, early nineteenth-century private house called variously Moor House, Moor Grange, The Grange, etc. In 2018 I was talking to one of the sisters at the Convent and asked her if they had ever come across any signs of a former water supply. She told me that when they moved into the Convent in 1989 considerable building works were put in hand but no wells or pumps were discovered. Apparently, the original cellarage was greatly reduced when alterations to floor levels were made and although one cellar still remains it does not contain a well.

Only some 150 yards to the east of the Convent was Lodge Cottage on Morley Road – as its name suggests it was the former lodge to Moor House. In January 1995 the cottage was offered for sale, and in their property particulars the estate agents, Harpur Gadsby, noted, "We further understand that within 2 metres of the rear house wall is a well which has been capped in concrete ... " Curiously, this does not seem to be the pump which is marked just outside the cottage's garden on the first two editions of the large-scale Ordnance Survey maps (1881 and 1900). Lodge Cottage was demolished in April 1995 and today its site is occupied by 227 and 229 Morley Road.

Back in 1989 I came across an example of a well shared between properties, when Jean and Rod Hacking, who were then living at Holly Cottage at the top of Morley Road kindly let me have a look at the deeds to their house. In a conveyance of 1921 between Thomas Holt (the Vendor) and Arthur Miller (the Purchaser), the legal grant to the purchaser included the following phrase, "Together with the right to take water from the well on the land belonging to the Vendor [Holt] on the opposite side of the road [now South View, no. 283] on payment of one third of the expense of keeping the well and pump in repair." The pump was still being shown on the large-scale Ordnance Survey maps as late as 1966.

In 1859 a deep well sunk on Chaddesden Common was to prove extremely troublesome for its diggers, Samuel Sandars and Richard Dolman, when they had to appear before the Derbyshire Quarter Sessions on a charge of obtaining from Sir Henry Wilmot of Chaddesden Hall the sum of £3 by means of false pretences with intent to defraud. The case hinged around the fact that Sir Henry had contracted with the men to sink a well. They charged him £15 10s 0d for sinking it to a depth of 63 feet, whereas subsequent measurement found the depth to be only 54 feet and Sir Henry alleged they had thus defrauded him of £3. Mr. George Briggs was called to give evidence. He had been employed by Sir Henry to measure the depth of the well. When he visited the site, he found the two accused plus a man named Taylor there. Dolman descended into the well and Briggs let down his measuring tape and as he assumed Dolman was holding the tape properly, noted the depth to be 63 feet. Some days later, however, Briggs returned and measured the well with a line and plumb-bob and found it only 54 feet deep. He told Sandars, who said he was willing to refund the money; Dolman added that since the date the well was first measured, a few feet of earth had been taken off the top of the well. The jury clearly believed believed there had been no attempt to deceive by false pretences and quickly returned a verdict of Not Guilty on both men.

A few years later, another Court case concerning a Chaddesden well was featured in the pages of the local newspapers. At the County Police Court on 6 February 1863, William Ordish, described as a lad with a crutch, was summoned by Samuel Borrey for throwing dead and poisoned rats into his well. Another lad, Thomas McConnell, told the Court that he saw Ordish fetch two dead rats from a farmyard, clamber over a wall and then drop them into Borrey's well. Ordish strongly denied the charge, but when Borrey was called he said he had traced the marks of Ordish's crutch to the mouth of the well and had drawn up one of the rats in his bucket. The Magistrates ordered William Ordish to pay 8s 6d costs.

From about 1925 onwards, the lack of affordable houses prompted some people to move into a range of temporary accommodation, tents, sheds, caravans and suchlike, etc., in a field off Highfield Lane. This action caused great consternation to the Parish Council, District Council, and locals alike, since the irregular nature of these dwellings naturally did not meet the recommended standards of the time. Within a few years there were twenty or so of these temporary properties and some of the site's neighbours complained they were besieged with (amongst other things) requests for water, although the new residents claimed they were getting their water from a spring in a neighbouring field (Derby Daily Telegraph, 4 May 1929). Shardlow RDC eventually served formal notices on the occupants and the temporary dwellers gradually moved away [Note 8].

As I conclude this look back at the history of our local water-supply, it is worth mentioning that one of the UK's biggest water-supply infrastructure engineering projects of the twentieth century passes through Chaddesden, though, because its pipeline is buried underground few people are aware of its existence. The Derwent Valley Aqueduct which extends for some 120 miles in total was a colossal project, designed to supply Derby, Nottingham, Sheffield and Leicester with water. In the late Victorian period the Derwent Valley Water Board was formed in order to meet the growing demand for water from these expanding centres of population. Over many years, three new reservoirs, Howden (officially opened in 1912), Derwent (1916), and Ladybower (1945), were created and the water transported solely by gravity via aqueducts and pipelines to Ambergate, where they diverged to form the Derby / Leicester and Nottingham lines. Other later phases involved the duplication and triplication of various sections. As far as Chaddesden is concerned, the course of the aqueduct is first shown on the Ordnance Survey's 1914 and 1919 editions of its 25-inch and 6-inch maps respectively. As may be seen in Fig. 8, the aqueduct is shown running from Morley Lime via Chaddesden Common to Birch Wood at Locko and beyond. The tiny building marked "Valve House" at Chaddesden Common, just a few yards to the north of the road leading from the crossroads to Stanley still serves as a visible reminder of the aqueduct today.

The Derby Evening Telegraph of 29 June 1938 reported that "the nine-and-a-half miles long steel aqueduct from Ambergate reservoir to Chaddesden, which will eventually carry water to Derby and Leicester, is now half completed", this, I would imagine, refers to a duplication of the original pipeline. The newspaper advised that construction by Lehane, Mackenzie & Shand began in September 1937 was well ahead of schedule. The work had been commissioned by the Derwent Valley Water Board to improve the services from Derwent and Ashopton reservoirs. From Drum Hill the 48-inch diameter steel pipeline travelled over Breadsall Moor before descending gently to Chaddesden Common where it would join another new 39-inch diameter (second) pipeline from Chaddesden to Sawley built by G. F. Tomlinson & Sons, before eventually progressing south-eastwards towards Leicester. One little-known fact is that wherever the buried pipeline passed underneath a road, its route was marked by small, green-painted metal gates hung between small stone gate-posts, presumably so contractors could quickly gain (pedestrian) access to the pipe should the need arise.

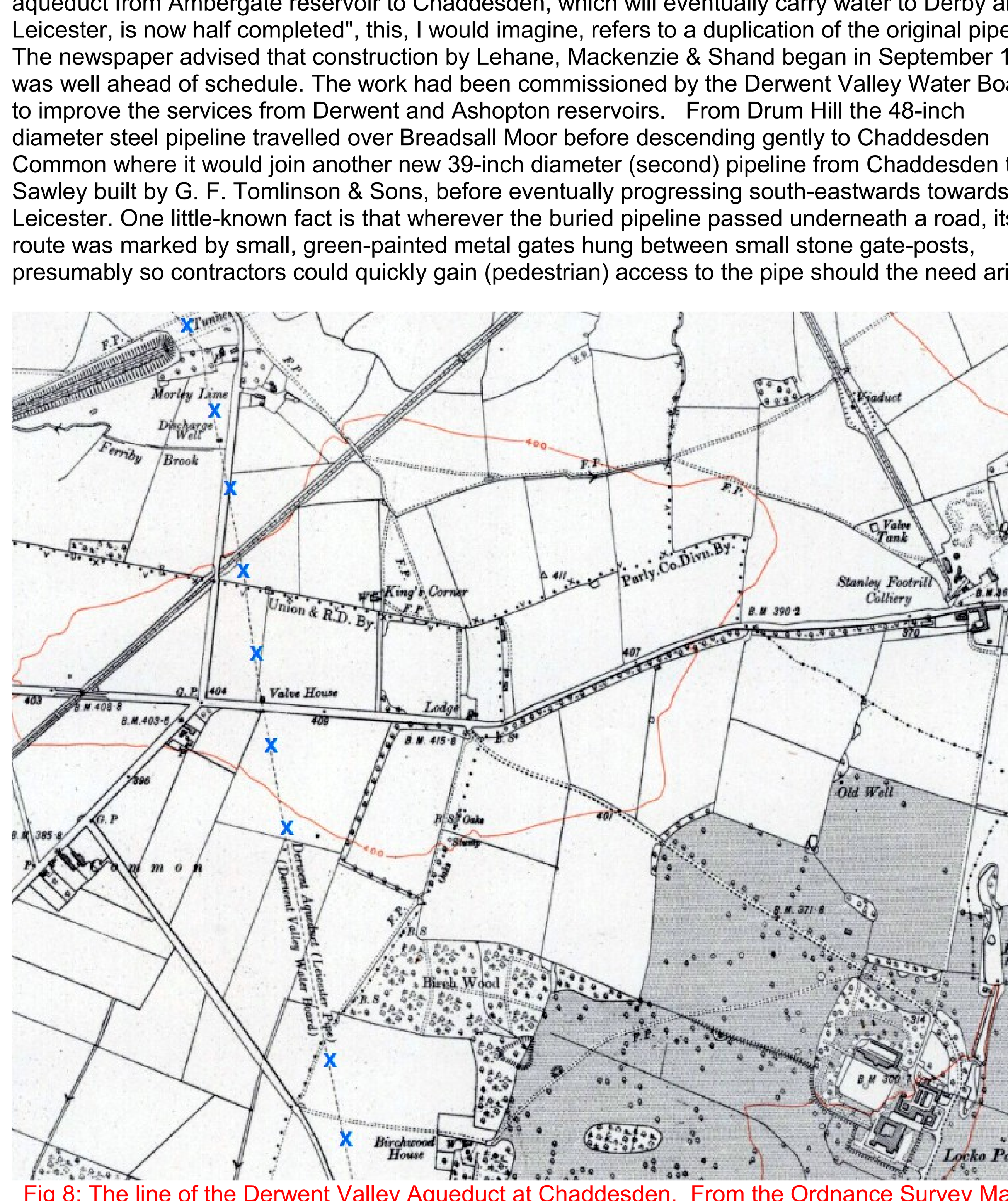

Fig 8: The line of the Derwent Valley Aqueduct at Chaddesden. From the Ordnance Survey Map of 1919 (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)

Two of these gates were visible until a few years ago on the road leading from Chaddesden Common crossroads to Stanley; the first was by the valve house on the north side of the road and its companion was immediately opposite. Recent works in the vicinity of the valve house have altered the access somewhat, but thanks to the ability of Google's Street Map facility to look back at previous imagery, a picture of the north gate and the valve house as they were in 2008 can be seen as detailed below [Note 9].

Earlier in the article, we saw how the residents living down in the centre of the village in 1924 rejected the idea of a piped water supply on cost grounds, because many of them had recently paid to have their own private wells installed. Not everyone shared the same view, for some years previously, in 1908, Chaddesden Parish Council had written to Shardlow Rural District Council asking them to use their influence to persuade the Derwent Valley Water Board to construct a junction pipe at Chaddesden Common to serve the houses there. The RDC's Clerk quashed their hopes when he remarked there would not be a water supply available for anybody until 1910.

The twentieth century also witnessed the construction of other water supply features in the locality. In November 1932 the Derby Daily Telegraph reported that the Water Committee of Derby Town Council recommended "laying a new six-inch main from the Derwent Valley Water Board's supply at Chaddesden Common to a point opposite Moor Grange [now the Convent of the Holy Name], and the construction of a break-pressure tank be proceeded with at an estimated cost of £1,650", and then further noted that it was proposed to buy two and a half acres of land on the Common, for the purpose of a high level service reservoir. By 1935, a book published by Derby Borough Council commented that although most of Derby's share of the Derwent Valley Water was received at the Little Eaton Works, a "small percentage is received at Chaddesden Common, where the pressure is broken at 406 feet above the ordnance datum for balancing the Chaddesden and Spondon districts." The book further advised its readers, "The higher districts of Spondon are supplied from a Reservoir with a Top Water Level of 351 feet above ordnance datum, which is balanced by a Break Pressure Tank erected at Chaddesden Common, having a Top Water Level of 406 feet above ordnance datum, supplied by a connection to the Derwent Valley Main, and also by occasional pumping from the Booster Pump at Spondon, which was originally fixed for boosting up the pressure in the mains before the Reservoir was constructed" [Note 10]. The Spondon reservoir mentioned here is the old Spondon No.1 Service Reservoir off Dale Road, which was built on some four and a half acres of land conveyed by Capt. J. A. E. Drury Lowe of Locko and others to the Borough of Derby on 25 July 1930 ... it was demolished a few years ago and replaced by the houses of Dove Meadow off Huntley Avenue. The more familiar Spondon No. 2 Service Reservoir on Longley Lane would not be completed until 1959. The large, earth-covered mound of the balancing reservoir at Chaddesden Common was once quite a prominent landscape feature, and although now virtually surrounded by the houses of Oakwood, it is still possible to see it from Monarch Drive or the adjacent public footpath.

One final fact worthy of note is that when St. James's Church in the tiny north Derbyshire village of Derwent sank under the waters of the new Ladybower reservoir, its church bell was saved and subsequently installed in the tower of St. Philip's Church here in Chaddesden ... perhaps it was fitting that the bell's removal to Chaddesden was to a parish through which passed the giant pipeline carrying water from the same reservoir!

Footnotes

Note 1. See the article about William Hodgkin, wheelwright, in Chaddesden Historical Group's Newsletter, Issue 45, October 2014.

Note 2. "Rudimentary Treatise on Well-Digging, Boring, and Pump-Work", by John G. Swindell, 4th edn., London, 1860, p.33.

Note 3. The story of this particular pump has been covered in more detail in my article "The Parish Pump", in Chaddesden Historical Group's Newsletter, Issue 55, June 2016.

Note 4. The diagram showing the internal construction of a lift-pump was adapted from an illustration in "General Science, Part 1", by F. Fairbrother & E. Nightingale, London, 1952, p.117.

Note 5. In "Derbyshire Miscellany" (No. 10, October 1958, pp.161–2), a short article by Raymond Window entitled "Some Notes on Chaddesden" contained the following paragraph relating to the brickworks: "In Glover, Vol. II, Part I, Page 205, under the entry for Chaddesden is the bold statement that 'Excellent bricks are made in the township'. I have not succeeded in locating any other reference to brickmaking but local enquiry has produced the information that the brickworks were situated in what is now Field Lane, Chaddesden, and which, apparently, was formerly called Brick Kiln Lane. There are still two old cottages in Field Lane which were associated with the brickmaking." Mr. Window's reference to "Glover, Vol. II, Part I" is to "The History, Gazetteer & Directory of the County of Derby", published by Stephen Glover in 1829. Mr. Window obviously understood Brick Kiln Lane to have been an alternative name for Field Lane; however, other sources suggest it was Wood Road.

Note 6. Stoney Flatts Farm was also known as Wood Farm.

Note 7. For further information about the allotments, see my article "The Oakridge Allotments" (Parts 1 & 2), in Chaddesden Historical Group's Newsletters, Issues 47 and 48, February and April 2015

Note 8. The front page of the Derby Daily Telegraph of 17 April 1929 carried pictures of the types of dwellings that were being occupied at Highfield Lane.

Note 9. To see the September 2008 Google Street View image of the Chaddesden valve house together with one of the characteristic small iron gates marking the point at which the aqueduct crossed the road, go to this link: https://www.google.com/maps/@52.9501928,-1.4077278,3a,37.5y,341.32h,83.02t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1snX2xRnsjjBPUP4DH5qUJYg!2e0!7i13312!8i6656

To compare with the latest April 2019 Google Street View image of the same area, go to this link: https://www.google.com/maps/@52.950196,-1.4077093,3a,37.5y,337.23h,84.57t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1si5xpBZuKpAbIvO6bjsJSzw!2e0!7i13312!8i6656

Note 10. "1835–1935, Centenary of Local Government: County Borough of Derby", Derby, 1935, p.93.

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