

CHUTE RESERVOIR

Upper Chute

CHUTE

Hawk Hill

Chute Down

Chute Standen

Coldridge Wood

CHUTE BOOSTER STATION

CHUTE FO

BULK SUPPLY FROM SOUTHERN WATER AUTHORITY

WILTSHIRE FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

E.A.H.Y. COMPETITION

'Your Village and Wiltshire's Heritage'

MARK SHEET

INSTITUTE..... *CHUTE*.....

TITLE OF ENTRY... *From Tumblers to Taps*...



THEME & ORIGINALITY:
PRESENTATION
CONTENT a) Interest
 b) Illustration
 c) Research

MARKS	
Maximum	
20	15
20	15
20	14
20	16
20	13
<u>TOTAL</u>	73

JUDGES COMMENTS: *A thoroughly researched piece of local history, very well presented.*



WILTSHIRE FEDERATION
OF
WOMEN'S INSTITUTES



AWARDED TO

Chute

W.I.

FOR

"YOUR VILLAGE & WILTSHIRE'S
HERITAGE COMPETITION."

from
tumblers
to taps

Chute
& Chute Forest
W.I.
September, 1975.

FROM TUMBLERS TO TAPS

The two parishes of Chute and Chute Forest lie in Wiltshire in Downland on the Hampshire border about eight miles north-west of Andover. There appear to have been nearly a dozen different ways of spelling the name Chute, which means wood or forest, but it is known as Cat-um in Domesday Book. This scattered community which was originally in the old Hundred of Kinwardstone is descended mainly from farming stock who found employment on the four big estates, the men working on the land and the women in service in the big houses. The present population is 460, only about 100 less than in 1861 when it was 564. The original vast wild forest was cleared and revealed an area of chalk soil, particularly up on the downs which in parts are nearly 800ft. above sea level. This meant that water supplies were obtained either from wells or ponds in the olden days, but later on the newer houses were built with galvanised underground tanks which caught the rain water. This was then boiled before drinking and was mainly used for domestic purposes. Those cottagers with wells would draw the water in buckets and many a cottage had two large earthenware pans in their brewhouse or pantry, one kept for drinking water which was drawn from their own well or perhaps from the nearby village well, and the other pan was filled with water from the pond and was used for washing or domestic purposes. To those who can cast their minds back to the first half of this century mains water seemed such a forlorn hope that a common saying was "Ah, that'll only happen when water comes to Chute".

Wiltshire has comparatively few wells or borings of great depth and it is noteworthy that one of the seven between 400 and 500 feet should be in Chute. One of the last wells to be dug in the village was in Deep Field, but altogether there are about 25 known wells, one being recently discovered during excavations at Nos. 3 and 4 Orchard Cottages, at Chute Forest.

Just near the village well in Upper Chute a Mrs. Ginny Reeves lived in an old thatched cottage. Many years ago when water ran down the side of Forest Lane she built her own little bridge over into the lane from her garden. Some of the older inhabitants can still remember old Ginny wearing a faded sunbonnet rushing down her garden path every time a horse and cart went down the lane shouting "Mind my bridge, you mind my bridge".

The village well at Upper Chute is of great interest and is one of the few thatched wellhouses left in the County. About fifty odd years ago the wellhouse collapsed during the night and Mr. Ronald Foster, then a young lad, and some of his pals were accused of knocking it down. In fact they were as surprised as the rest of the village to see the ruins the following morning. The illustrations (Figs. a, b and c) show an important event in the early 1930s; this was the re-opening of the wellhouse which had been rebuilt, the roof re-thatched, a new gate put on and instead of taking your own bucket for drawing the water there were now to be two buckets which were part of the wellhouse. Illustration (Fig. d) shows how the water was drawn, the tumbler being the cylindrical drum on which the wire rope was wound and the wooden and leather brake was used to stop the bucket from slipping down into the well again.

Before this new wellhouse was built, when you went to the well - and there was an expression that many people can remember as "goin' t'well" - you took your own bucket, fastened it on to the chain with a big clip rather like a clip that you might have on a dog's lead, and then you would release the brake and the chain with the bucket clipped on the end would start descending the well. You usually controlled the bucket going down into the well by using the brake, but there are several people who can remember having great fun letting the bucket drop very quickly without controlling it, but you had to stand well clear of the handles which would be spinning round at quite a speed. There were in fact two handles, one each side of the tumbler, so drawing the water was made much easier if you could "go t'well" with another person and each one would take a handle for winding up the buckets. You could hear the bucket hit the water, and after waiting for a few minutes for the bucket to fill you would then start rewinding the wire rope, and when your bucket reached the top of the well you would unclip it and carry it home.

Sometimes the wire rope broke and the bucket dropped off and was lost at the bottom of the well, and there were days when the men of the village took grappling hooks and lowered them down the well on the end of a rope to try and rescue the lost buckets. This was quite an occasion when you went down to the wellhouse and tried to find your long lost bucket. Could it be that some went home with rather better buckets than they had originally lost? Naturally all sorts of other



Fig. a.



Fig. b.



Fig. c.

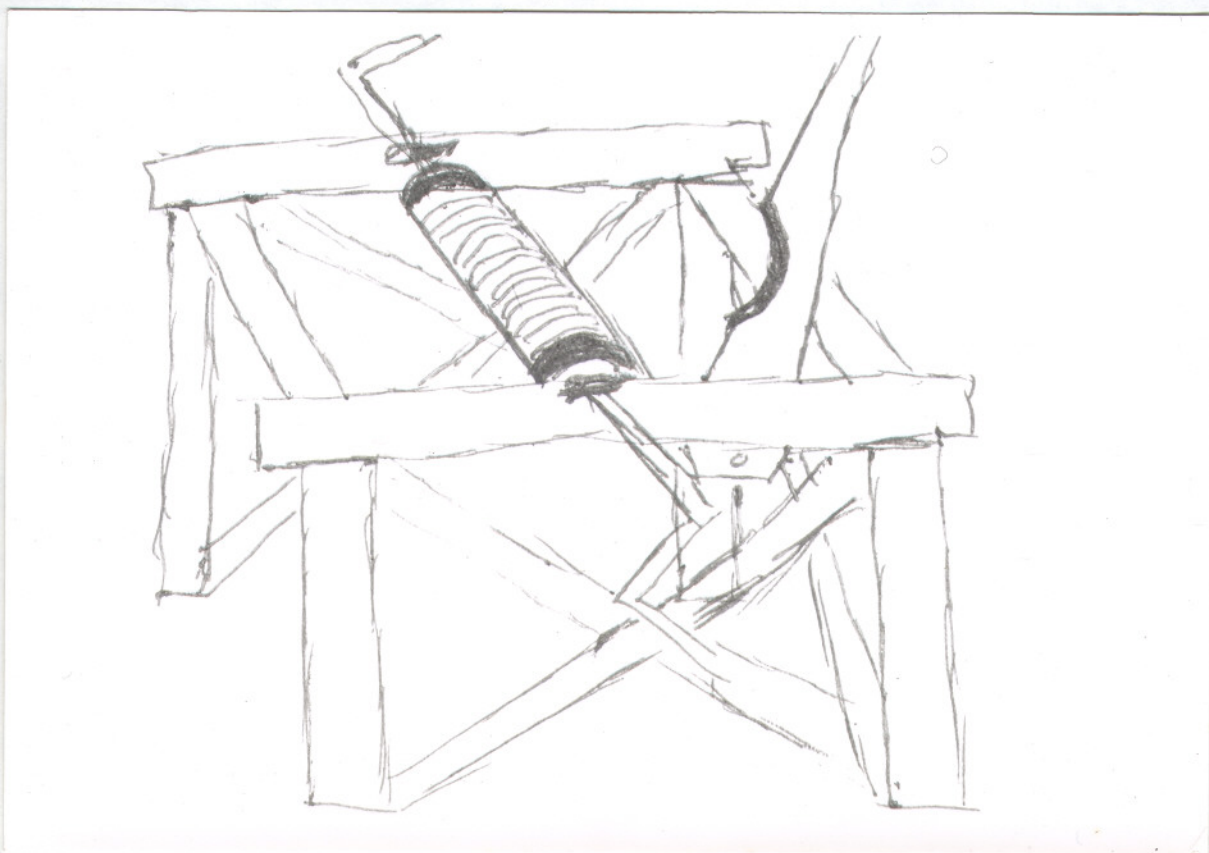


Fig. d.

From a sketch by
R. Foster

interesting things came up out of the well but only one local inhabitant remembers the well ever being properly cleaned out, using a horse to draw up the buckets or dredgers. It was not so very many years ago that you were not allowed to draw water on a Sunday; it was not the done thing to go to well on The Sabbath, so you had to make sure that you had enough water to last you from Saturday to Monday.

One could tell the depth of the village well by stretching the rope from the wellhouse to the corner of the High Street. It didn't include the chain, which was 22 yards long, so the village well was one of the deepest in the area, being about 270 feet. The date of origin is unfortunately unknown but it is a landmark in Upper Chute and although it has long since been covered over for safety's sake there are plans in progress at the moment to re-thatch the roof and preserve its character as a contribution towards European Architectural Heritage Year. This will be undertaken with local help and subscriptions and it was almost an unanimous decision that the wellhouse should be preserved and not pulled down, which is encouraging in these days.

Sometimes drawing water from a well was not without its hazards as shown in the threatening letter to Miss Elizabeth Nicholas in 1863. It is interesting to see that two of the three signatories could only make their mark and were not able to write their name (Fig.e).

The art of well-digging was a skilled job. The site of the well was located by a water diviner and they dug until they got to solid ground, having bricked round the first 6 feet from the top. This was possibly against frost damage. The dirt, etc. was brought up in a bucket and a man at the top held a plumbline so that the well was dug straight. The Chute wells went over 200 feet deep and it took many months to dig them. If the diggers struck flint it all had to be brought to the surface in a bucket, which meant a lot of heavy work. When they reached the bottom of the well they would light a candle to test for gas or foul air, and to descend the well the diggers would use a seat and a safety rope. However, the local well-digger, one Tom Fisher, was a notable character and many people remember to this day how Tom would descend to the bottom of the well that he was digging in a most unorthodox and dangerous fashion, not by using the usual method but on his old pickaxe

handle. Then he would be hauled up again, sometimes with one foot in a bucket. If he got wet while digging he would never go for dry clothes but simply let his clothes dry on him. While digging any loose flint, chalk or stones was prevented from falling and injuring the diggers by a warning shout from those at the top and the men would then quickly put their flat spades or shovels over their heads (Fig. f).

There are several stories connected with wells. One interesting one was when Mr. Charlie Withers was trying to make an existing well a bit deeper and they were pumping the water out so that he could go down and dig. As he was leaning over to see how things were going his wallet fell out of his pocket straight into the well. The men who were helping him got a big pan and tied four ropes to it which they let down several times to try and scoop up the wallet which they could see floating on top of the water. However, they were unlucky. Three days later Tom Fisher went down and rescued it. They then went on digging the well a bit deeper, and Mr. Withers had got down about another 9 feet when disaster struck. Because it was dark underground they were using a gas generator off a motor bike with a piece of rubber tubing and a burner on the end of it as a means of lighting. Unfortunately Charlie hit this rubber tubing while he was digging, knocked off the burner and the well filled up with gas. They were drawing the chalk, etc. up in a milk churn and just as the churn got to the top of the well Charlie struck a light. There was a big explosion and they had to tip out the chalk very quickly from the churn and let it down the well again, bringing Charlie up in it and possibly saving his life by their prompt action.

There was also an old lady who lived down at Honey Bottom named Miss Betty Smith who, at the age of 90, drew her water from a well with a bucket on the end of a rope. There was no tumbler and no handle, she just let down her bucket on a rope and pulled it up again - quite a feat at the age of 90!

A book by Victor Bonham-Carter called 'The English Village' tells about the custom of beating the parish bounds. "This is an inheritance of the days when maps were neither plentiful nor accurate and when it was incumbent on the Vestry to prevent encroachment upon parish territory. The usual perambulation was led by the parson and the churchwardens, and attended by a large following from the village. A point was always

To Miss Elizabeth Nicholas

I hereby give you notice on behalf of myself and Tenants, not to trespass on my Premises at Chute, for the purpose of drawing water from the well, and that if you do so after this notice, I shall consider you a wilful trespasser, and take legal proceedings against you

Dated June 8th 1863

Charles Wild
Charles Smith
George Knight

Fig. e.

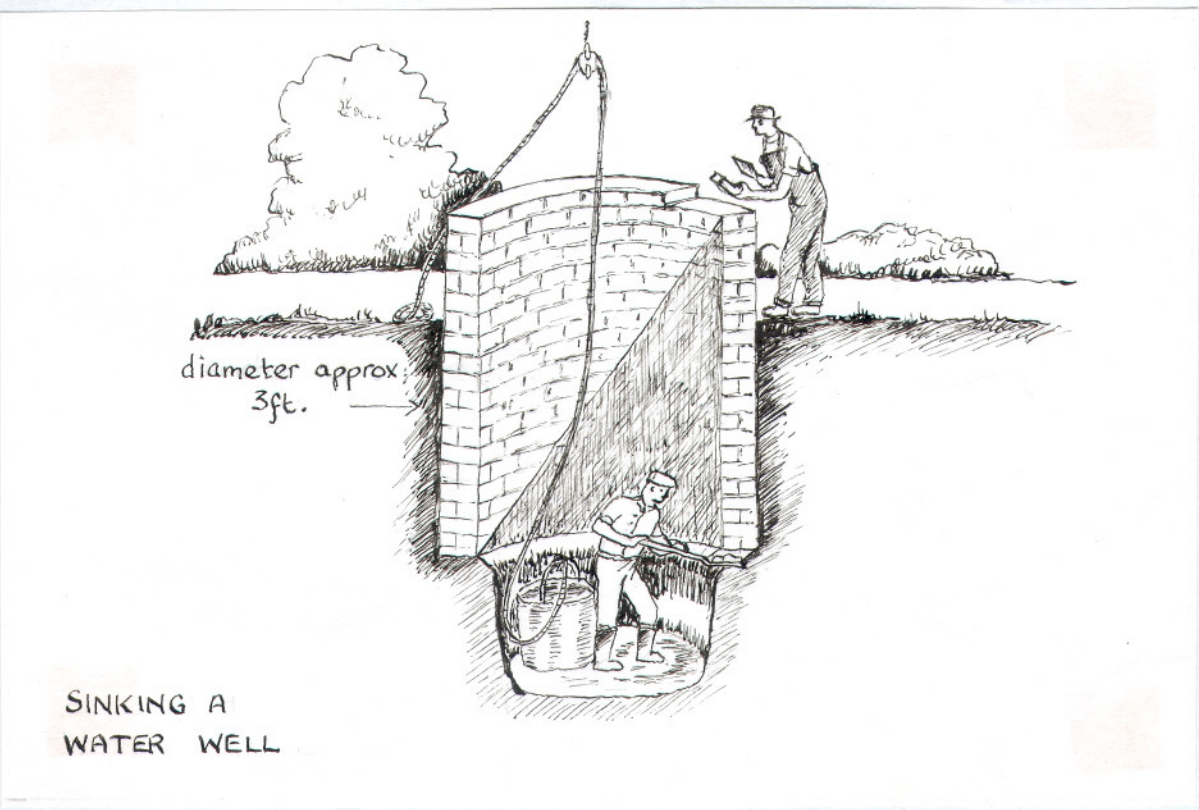


Fig. f.

Note on well construction

As regards the brickwork at the top of a well, I had a well made for me some years ago, and the Builder who also was the Digger, told me that the top 6ft. should be of cemented bricks to keep out the surface water which might be impure, while lower down there were courses of bricks just resting one upon another to keep the loose soil back.

R. L. B. Stilwell

made of taking as many boys as possible in order that they, the future generation, might become acquainted with the appropriate landmarks, hedges and boundary stones which defined the limits of the parish area." Whether in fact they trod the boundaries every year in Chute nobody can tell as they can't remember, but it was an old rural custom to have this annual perambulation of the parish bounds. The Chute and Chute Forest parish boundary went right through the middle of the well outside the Hatchet Inn, so when the boundaries were beaten a man or boy was lowered just down a few feet into the well.

The well at Chute Cadley (Fig. g) which was the old village well for that part of Lower Chute shows quite clearly the tumbler, chain, wire rope, brake and the two handles.

One or two farmers bored for water. Mr. Charlie Withers Senior bored 665 feet, which cost him £1,000, and somebody in Tangley, a nearby village, unsuccessfully bored 750 feet. Mr. Withers' bore reached greensand but eventually after some years the pump broke down and the engine needed repairing. It was then that Mr. Withers became connected to the mains.

Another source of water was, of course, the ponds. There were several in Chute and these were mainly used for animals to drink from, with the exception of the village pond in Upper Chute which was strictly kept for washing water. It was fenced in and had steps leading down into it, and woe betide anyone found throwing things into it! Some say that it was made in 1887, Queen Victoria's Jubilee year, but this may be just hearsay. Unfortunately the pond has been filled in during the last few years.

On the 1880 Ordnance Map a large pond is shown opposite the old forge where the horses probably watered while waiting to be shod. No one can remember this pond and it is thought that it must have been filled in when the red chestnut trees were planted. Butts pond used to be opposite the present telephone kiosk in Upper Chute and there are several others at Chute Standen, one on the village green at Chute Cadley, Chute Lodge (Fig. h), at Manor Farm next to the church and one outside Forest House. Many of the older ponds have been filled in but there are two up on Chute Causeway known as Limmer Ponds which are interesting. These are probably old chalk pits, as were many of the others, but one of the two ponds at Limmer is a "dead" pond as it is completely covered



Fig. 9

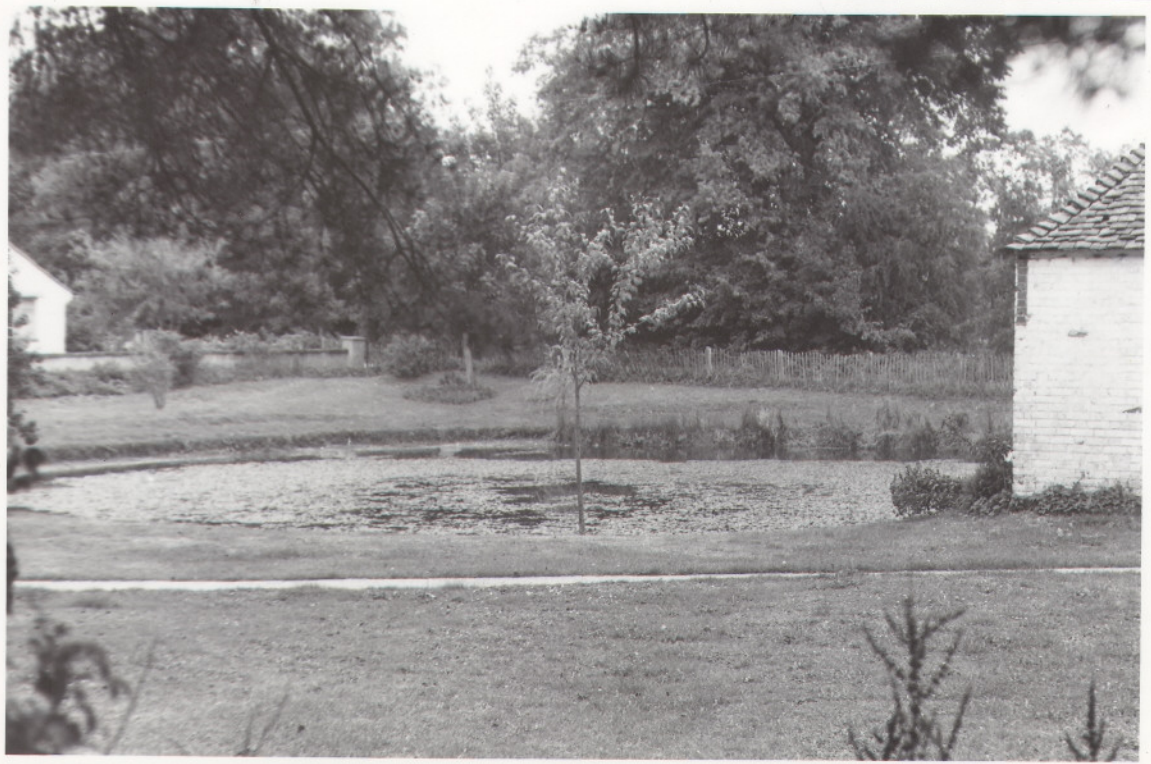


Fig. h.

over with vegetation which takes all the oxygen out of the water. The larger of the two ponds has a lot of plant and water insect life and there is a certain amount of controversy amongst the local folk as to whether these two ponds were some of the old original dewponds.

Before going into the question of the dewponds there are two stories connected with ponds. Way back in 1794 there was a bad coaching accident on the Causeway. There was a pond called Gosmere Hole which lies on the left-hand side going towards Conholt Park. The coach was travelling from Andover to Marlborough and evidently it overturned and the horses and all the passengers were drowned in the Gosmere Holes. Another more humorous story connected with ponds is told by Mr. "Dickie" Green, who was the village blacksmith for over 50 years. His father and uncle were returning from Ludgershall on foot, where they had been to collect some medicine from the local Doctor for an old man known as Granfer Knight. On the way back they supposedly felt a bit thirsty and thought they would sample some of this medicine, which was probably cough mixture. By the time they had reached the pond which used to be at Ladies Lawn they discovered to their horror that they had drunk half the bottle of medicine. Knowing the trouble that might befall them when they got home and being rather frightened, they decided to fill up the medicine bottle with pond water. This they did and then walked on up to Chute, and Granfer Knight was none the worse for his diluted medicine!

An interesting supply of water in the olden days were the dewponds. It is very difficult to find out if there are in fact any of the original dewponds left in Chute; many of the ponds are undoubtedly old chalk or clay pits, but there are two ponds in Conholt Park that are real dewponds, we think. It is worth noting how these ponds came about. The word "dew" is possibly derived from "Dieu" or God - the dewpond may have meant filled by God. They seem to be somewhat mysterious in their construction. In 'Highways and Byways in Wiltshire' there is an article stating that the downland cattle used these dewponds as they were the only source of water. "In the making of a dewpond the first thing to do is to dig or hollow out a space far larger than that required for the water. All this is then thickly covered with dry straw, which in its turn is overlaid with clay, puddled and even, and upon this is closely packed a layer of stones. If all has been well and truly done, if the straw is properly covered with the clay, the pond will, slowly at first, but ever more rapidly, be filled

with water, even though no rain should fall. It seems^a miracle, but like all miracles of the kind is to be explained by natural laws, it seems. For it is obvious that in the long summer sunshine the earth stores up much heat, but the pond in its lap does not receive it owing to the layer of straw beneath it, for straw is a non-conductor of heat. The puddled clay therefore remains cool by process of evaporation, and therefore at night the moisture of the air condenses on the surface of the clay, and as this nightly condensation is in excess of the daily evaporation the pond becomes gradually full of water. Should the straw become wet, as it will do if the least rivulet run into the pond, the clay will become of the same temperature as the down about it, and all will so be spoiled."

We have tried to illustrate the digging of a dewpond which was undoubtedly man made as far as the digging went, and if anyone who reads this article happens to have a copy of The Farmers Weekly for April 8th 1938, they will find a fine set of illustrations of the making of dewponds by the wellknown Smith method. Unfortunately we were unable to acquire a copy and so have made our own sketch (Fig. i).

There is also a fascinating and much earlier description of dewponds in "The Natural History of Selborne" by Gilbert White, the celebrated naturalist, which he wrote in 1776. We are doing more research into these fascinating phenomena and have yet to discover how to distinguish them from the many old clay or chalk pits that are dotted over our local downland.

The underground tanks mentioned earlier were galvanised and varied in size and capacity. As the collecting of the rain water into these tanks was the only means of supply the larger houses on the big estates had several tanks. Mr. Alf Nash remembers that when the Fowle family lived at Forest House water had to be pumped twice - first filtered in from the pond outside the house to supplement the rain water in the underground tanks, and then up into the elevated tanks in the roof. He would go as a boy after school to help with pumping the water and he remembers standing on a box in a shed in the dark and pumping the water for the entire household. On one occasion during a drought the two underground tanks ran completely dry and he was offered half a crown to fill the smaller tank and five shillings if he could fill the larger one. Luckily for Mr. Nash the elements came to his rescue as there was a

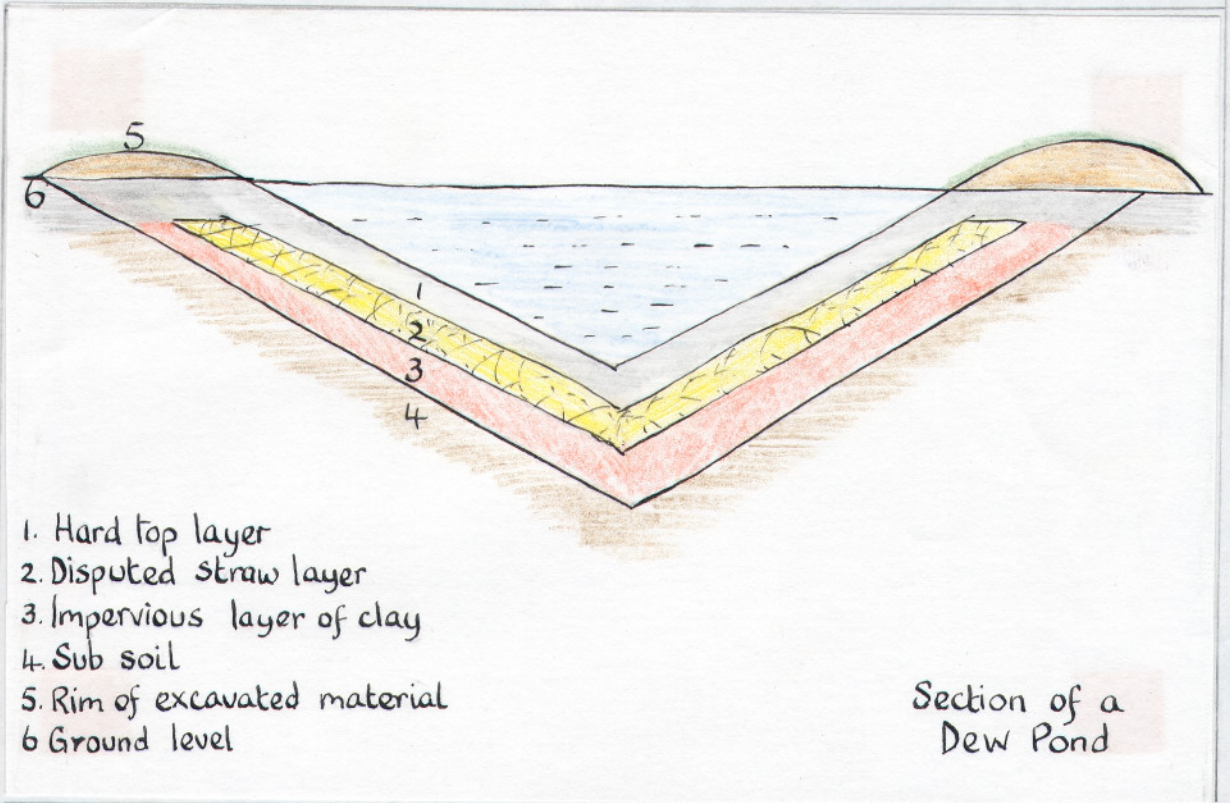


Fig. i.



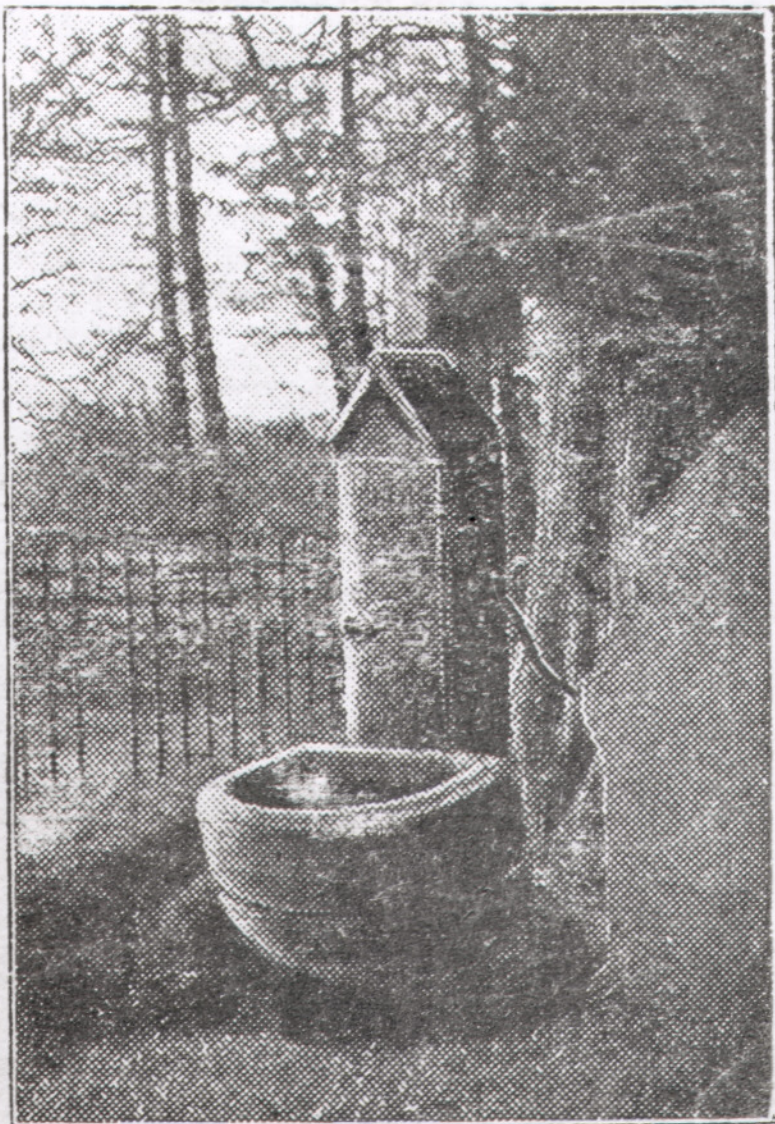
Have YOU got roses
in YOUR reservoir?

severe thunderstorm, which automatically filled those tanks. Master Nash, however, still received his money!

When Mrs. Page's bungalow was built in 1927 there were two big tanks installed under the ground outside her back door. There is a pump in her kitchen which she still uses today, and as she preferred not to be connected to the mains she collects her drinking water in a jug from a stand pipe which is in her front garden near the road.

Sometimes, during a very dry summer, there would be a drought and the wells became very low or even dried up altogether, as did the underground tanks. In 1921 there was a very serious drought, the worst in living memory, and the horses from The Manor went to Ludgershall for water twice a day, including Sundays, for twelve weeks. There were two horses to each cart, which brought back one or two barrels of water for the whole of Chute. During the drought villagers would sell their water, either that collected from Ludgershall or if any well owner had any to spare. The price varied from 1d. to 2d. per bucket, and if the drought was very bad the household was limited to one bucket irrespective of the size of the family. There was a thatched wellhouse - now, alas, demolished - at the cottage of Mr. Horne, the local carpenter and undertaker, and several people remember buying buckets of water from his well for 1d.

In 1868 the Rev. Samuel Cosway, the local incumbent at that time, presented a pump and underground tank for the exclusive use of the poor cottagers of Chute. They were allowed to use this pump as an emergency measure but as it was kept locked they had first to obtain the key from the Vicarage. During a drought they were allowed free water twice a week, which they pumped from the vast 10,000 gallon tank beneath the main church pathway. The pump, when in use, was attached to the big chestnut tree at the gate of the church (Fig. j) and the villagers found that if they picked off a chestnut leaf and put it on top of their buckets after filling them this would stop the water from spilling over. There is a commemorative brass plaque (Fig. k) at the back of St. Nicolas Church, but unfortunately the pump is now broken. It is possibly still connected to the tank which was cleaned out by the local fire brigade a few years ago, and local residents were amazed at the quantity of water that could be collected off the church roof.



Churchyard Pump at Chute.

Fig. j.

This Pump with the Tank
annexed, have been given for the exclusive
benefit of the poor Cottagers of
Chute, and more especially during
the months of a very dry summer
the key always to be kept at the Vicarage
Nov '25 1868

Fig. k.

Before mains water was laid on in Chute for the residents several local farmers had water piped to their dairies. In fact it was more important in the years between the two world wars that the cattle should have constant water and because of the lack of this commodity there was only one herd of cattle and that was at The Manor. However in the early 1930s Mr. Wootton remembers digging trenches with Mr. Harry Braxton for pipes which were to bring water from Wexcombe to Green's Farm. This was quite a distance, and whilst laying the pipes they unearthed some ancient graves at Scott's Poor, which may have been as early as Stone Age or Iron Age days. A Mr. Patterson seems to have been the instigator in bringing this piped water from Wexcombe and presumably it was connected up to the various cattle troughs in the fields near to Chute Causeway.

In days gone by the local village school had an underground tank for cleaning, etc. but the school drinking water came from a stand pipe in the back drive of Standen House, and every day two or three children would take two buckets down to this tap and carry them back full to the school. Standen House has its own water supply from a reservoir which is situated on the right-hand side of Dummer Lane going up towards the Causeway.

One of the prime factors for installing mains water to Chute was when the Home Office had an approved school at Chute Lodge and the water supply was obviously very inadequate. It is interesting to note from the auction catalogue in 1950 that before the mains came the water supply for the estate was obtained in several different ways. There was a 268 feet well in a pump house at the rear of the chauffeur's cottage (Fig. l) and the booster fitted in the pump house raised the water from a reservoir (now filled in) to an elevated tank of a capacity of about 8,000 gallons, and also to a smaller tank on the roof of a cottage (Fig. m). The larger tank has been demolished but in fact there were several pumps which supplied the big house and the rest of the estate which have become obsolete since the mains were connected.

It seems appropriate that from its earliest days the Chute and Chute Forest Women's Institute campaigned for the provision of a mains water supply for the village. Letters were written as far back as 1934 to the local M.P., to the Ministry of Education and to the Pewsey District



Fig. 1.



Fig. m.



Fig. 12.



Fig. 0.

Council, as it was then. Whether the Institute's demands had any bearing we do not know but, in the year 1949, just over 25 years ago, mains water was brought to Chute.

In 1951 the school had its first washbasin complete with taps, and in 1953 the old earth closets were replaced by indoor lavatories!

Our present water supply in Chute comes from elevated green galvanised tanks in Faberstown, near Ludgershall, and is pumped to Chute by electric booster pumps situated in a pump house at Long Bottom (Figs. n and o). A reservoir was built at the back of Mr. Withers' farm in Upper Chute within the last ten years and the water level is noted by a local inhabitant, who contacts the Water Board if he thinks the supply is getting low, and more water is then pumped into it. We noticed that in the year 1974, when there were several fires at Jolly's Farm, many houses in Upper and Lower Chute could not obtain any cold water. This apparently was because all the pressure was taken by the fire brigade from the junction in the main pipes outside Forest House. In the olden days if there was a fire in Chute then the cottages which were mainly thatched had to be left to burn as the horse-drawn pumps could not reach them in time.

Our project has attempted to show the progress from the far off days of tumblers and buckets, through pumps and underground tanks to our present mains supply through pipes and taps.



ILLUSTRATIONS:- FIG A

LADY SPEAKING

MRS HOPTON (SENIOR)

CHOTE MANOR

ILLUSTRATION FIG B

GENTLEMAN SPEAKING

UNIDENTIFIED



With special thanks
to:

T. Hamilton Reed, Esq.
for reproduction of
old prints

A. R. Harvey, Esq.
Photography