

## East Farndon Spring



The spring in East Farndon has a rich history, having provided the villagers and animals of East Farndon with water over hundreds of years. Information dates as far back as 1712, right up to 1950, when mains water was installed.

The spring sits on the west side of Main Street, set back from the road just above Spring Cottage, and is a mineral spring, formerly known as Caldwell Spring. The source is on the crest of the field to the west of Main Street, which was known as Levitt's Close. The water runs across the field and out through a small pipe, into a stone trough measuring 45 by 60 centimetres. A second stone trough to the right of it measures 90 by 510 centimetres. This trough used to be surrounded by curved coping stones, but only one of these remains today.

There are a few historical references to the spring, the main one recorded by Reverend John Morton (1671-1726), who was a naturalist and the Rector of Great Oxendon from 1707 to 1726. In 1712 he published a book called *The Natural History of Northamptonshire With Some Account Of The Antiquities (etc.)* In this, he states, "*The medicinal water at East Farndon, formerly known by the name Cald-well Spring has the same smell and taste, as have the strongest of our Acidulae\*: has the same ochrous sediment and oil as they have, and agrees with them as to the properties of refusing soap, the loss of its taste upon standing, etc. In June 1701, I boil'd away half a pint of it in an earthen vessel and at the bottom of the vessel had 3 grains of a whitish powder of a mildly saline taste...*"

\*Acidula: known as Rumex Acetosella (Sheep's Sorrel) – a small plant having pleasantly acid-tasting arrow-shaped leaves; common in dry places. The flowers, leaves, root and seed are edible raw.

Reverend Morton also mentioned, “*The water of this spring, at a due distance from its source, has been lately formed into a Cold Bath, which has been made use of with great success.*” Perhaps the larger trough was used as a bath for the villagers? Presumably it was also used to water animals.

Two other historical references mention the spring:

#### Descriptive Gazetteer Entry for **FARNDON (East)**

**FARNDON (East)**, a parish in the district of Market-Harborough and county of Northampton; on the Grand Union canal, 2 miles SSW of Market-Harborough r. station. Post town, Market-Harborough, under Rugby. Acres, 1, 070. Real property, £3, 448. Pop., 242. Houses, 57. A mineral well is here, called Caldwell spring. The living is a rectory in the diocese of Peterborough. Value, £400 \* Patron, St. John's College, Oxford. The church has a tower, and is tolerable. Charities, £31.

(John Marius Wilson, *Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* (1870-72))

#### **East Farndon, Northamptonshire**

##### **Historical Description**

Farndon, East, a parish in Northamptonshire, on the Grand Union Canal, 2 miles SSW from Market Harborough station on the L. & N.W.R. and M.R. Post town, Market Harborough; money order and telegraph office, Market Harborough. Acreage, 1538; population, 244. A mineral well is here called Caldwell Spring. The living is a rectory in the diocese of Peterborough; gross value, £520 with residence. Patron, St John's College, Oxford. The church is an ancient building of stone partly in the Decorated style.

Transcribed from *The Comprehensive Gazetteer of England & Wales, 1894-5*

According to historical records, much effort had to be put in to keep the water flowing and to keep it clean. The Parish Meeting in March 1893 recorded its thanks to the District Council surveyor for 'relaying the drain from Levitt's spring to the watering [place] at the bottom of the village'. The Parish Meeting actually held a special discussion at the spring in 1896, to consider what action was necessary to safeguard it.

While researching the spring, we chatted to Greta Hill, who has lived in East Farndon for 68 years. She told us that the village children had a saying, which was, “*You don't belong to Farndon until you've fallen in the spring!*” (For health and safety reasons, this is not recommended!).

The spring was used as the main source of water until 1950. The residents at the top of the village used the pump on the land by the church, now known as Marriott Green, and the

residents who lived in the middle and bottom of the village used the spring. Greta told us that her mother-in-law had a copper tank with a tap at the bottom of it. She would fill this with buckets of water from the spring and then heat up the water. On wash day, this involved many trips!

The pipes for mains water started being laid in 1949, and Greta's brother-in-law, Percy Hill, told the workmen that they wouldn't get them under Main Street because the road was built on concrete. There is one area of the road where they clearly struggled (opposite the spring) because two different heights of road remain.

A newspaper report dated 29<sup>th</sup> July 1949 states that Farndon now had its first ever telephone kiosk and that Postmistress Mrs Nicholls was the first to use it. "We are now waiting for mains water," she said, "and then we shall really be on the map".

This photograph of the May Day celebrations in 1949 clearly shows the spring, and what good repair it was in.



The workmen succeeded in laying the pipes and mains water was installed in the village in 1950 to great excitement.

However, the spring was back in use again in 1951 due to a power cut. The following newspaper article from the Harborough Advertiser and Midland Mail, dated December 20th 1951 explains what happened.

Transcript:

#### Power Cut Stopped Farndon's Wash-day

For part of last week-end, East Farndon had no water. The cause was a power cut, which stopped the pumps at the Sibbertoft Reservoir, finally causing air-locks in the main.

Chief upset was to Monday's washing. The supply did not return to normal until just after 5 o'clock that day, and many housewives had to put off their laundering.

Many got their water from the spring in the village.

The powercut - which the Mid-Northants Water Board said occurred without their knowledge - happened on Saturday. For a time, nothing was noticeable. Then houses in the top end of the village felt the effects of the airlocks, which occurred in the main between Farndon and Sibbertoft on the outlet side.

Supplies to houses in the lower end of Farndon were affected later the next day. One resident told the "Mail" that half the water in her boiler had boiled away before she knew what was wrong.

A spokesman of the Water Board told us that normally there was sufficient water in the reservoir to cope with such an emergency, but the snag had been that they were not aware of the cut.

In this case, the reservoir at Sibbertoft is quite small and there was a lot of out-going while the pumps were idle.

Farndon was the only village affected. Other parishes on the main - Clipston and Great and Little Oxendon - got their water through all right.

The ladies photographed drawing water from the spring were Mrs Tebbutt, Mrs Hill (Greta's future mother-in-law) and Mrs Bradley.

# Death of Wayman PURE RECORD GENERAL-BOX

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## Out On Friday

Owing to the Christmas holidays, next week's edition of the "Mail" will appear on Friday and not Thursday. We shall revert to normal publishing arrangements the following week.

## A.T.C.'s New Officer

MR. Geoffrey Heighton, staff photographer of the "Harborough Mail," has been commissioned as a Pilot Officer in the R.A.F.V.R. (Training) Branch for service with No. 1084 (Harborough) Squadron, Air Training Corps. He has been appointed training officer. During the war Mr. Heighton served in the R.A.F. and was on the personal staff of Air Vice-Marshal Frew during the Royal tour of South Africa.

Unable to attend the annual dinner of the Welland Valley Wheelers at the Peacock Hotel, Market Harborough on Saturday Wally Summers, the well known cyclist, has promised to visit the club on January 30th to show the film, taken on his recent "there and back" cycle ride to Lapland. The film will be shown at the British Legion Hall, Harborough.



Drawing water from the spring in the village is a Farndon housewife, Mrs. Tebbutt, while Mrs. Hill and Mrs. Bradley wait their turn.

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## MR. RHODES IS 'FAIR'

The condition of Mr. Jonas Rhodes, well known farmer of Manor House, Welham, near Market Harborough, who has been seriously ill in Leicester Royal Infirmary since Dec. 6th was yesterday stated to

## Too Near for Comfort!

HARBOUROUGH Urban Council has celebrated the Festival Year by placing seats in various parts of the town. One in Coventry Road, however, has caused some amusement among the more jovial of the older folk.

A pensioner who has already sat there, remarks: "We appreciate the council's efforts in providing seats, but don't you think they could have found a better spot than a site opposite an undertakers!"

## Took Great Interest in His Village

**Funeral of Mr. George Smith**  
THE funeral service of Mr. George Smith, licensee of the Crown Inn, Theddingworth, who died on December 9th, was at All Saints', Theddingworth, last Wednesday followed by cremation at Leicester.

Mr. Smith who was 66, had been at the Crown for 22 years. During his early life he was groom for Sir Charles Lowther at Thornby Hall for more than 20 years, and went into the Army during the first World War as a batman.

Later he worked for Colonel J. Lowther, of Guilsborough as stud groom. He was interested in Theddingworth's cricket club and helped form the Husbands Bosworth Bowling Club.

## Five Local Classes May be Introduced COUNTY SHOW MOVE

Prize Money Appeal Reaches £233

FIVE local classes are to be recommended to the Show Committee of the Leicestershire Agricultural Society for inclusion in next year's county show to be staged at Market Harborough in June.

The classes are:—

- (1) Most suitable riding pony for children, not exceeding 14.2 h.h., to be ridden by a local gift or boy born in 1939 or after; class to be sub-divided at judges' discretion if justified by entries.
- (2) Most suitable riding horse exceeding 14.2 h.h., to be ridden by a local person.
- (3) Pen of three cross-bred Wiltshire horn lambs.
- (4) Pen of three Border Leicester or Border Leicester cross lambs.
- (5) Pen of three lambs, any other cross.

The local limit is ten miles from Market Harborough Post Office.

Attending the meeting were Ald. J. T. Porsell and Mr. H. Harrison, chairman and secretary of the Show Council, who had brought with them a provisional lay-out for the show to be held in two fields of Mr. C. H. Moseley's on the Dingley Road. Lt.-Col. K. W. Symington (chairman) suggested that the committee should meet representatives of the Show Committee "on site" in early February.

Of the appeal launched to raise £1,000 to help in the guarantee of prize money, Mr. R. Crofts (treasurer) reported that £233 5s. had already been promised or received.

Others attending were: Mrs. C. H. Moseley, Lt.-Col. H. Phillips, Capt. S. P. Symington, Messrs. R. Hall (secretary), E. Berry, H. Chadwick, W. Chamberlain, J. Dexter, R. Eady, R. Freeman, J. Gardner, R. Holmes, W. James, K. Kirby, J. Millington, C. Moseley, C. Vecqueray and H. Webb.

Mr. Mercer, Mr. Tom Miller, Mr. Charles Miller, Mr. Fred Miller, Mr. Frank Ratcliffe, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Harding, Mr. and Mrs. Eric Hiffe.

Others present included Major Guy Paget (representing Pynchley Hunt), Mr. Davis (representing National Provincial Bank), Mr. W. Foskett (representing British Legion), Mrs. R. Thomas (representing

Greta moved from Cottingham to East Farndon in 1953 when she married Keith Hill. At that time in Cottingham, they still fetched water in buckets, and she remembers being so happy to be on mains water in East Farndon. Even though the village had had it for three years, she says that the villagers were still excited about it.

Many villagers continued to drink from the running spring water after mains water was installed, and Greta says that even after a woman appeared (presumably from the Water Board), tested the water and told them not to drink it, they all carried on. As Greta says, "No one suffered from drinking it." (Again, for health and safety reasons, this is not recommended!). Greta also told us that Fred Tebbutt, who lived in Rose Cottage, Main Street, refused to have mains water connected and he continued to use the spring water until he died in 1975, aged 84!

As well as the villagers drinking the spring water, cattle used to drink from the troughs when they were moved from one end of the village to the other. And stories passed down say that Oliver Cromwell watered his horse there after the Battle of Naseby in 1645!

Efforts have been made in recent years to clear the weeds and grass from round the spring, to show it as it used to be. This photograph shows it in 2000, after a clean-up project by the Women's Institute.



● Spring clearing....East Farndon WI and friends muck in. (Ref: 00/4/502/18)

**EAST Farndon Women's Institute started a real spring clean at the weekend.**

Members began clearing an ancient stream, known locally as The Spring, which had become overgrown and wild.

Secretary Marjorie Houlston said members of the group could remember drinking from the spring as children.

She said: "We started clearing the growth and cutting back the weeds and

you can now actually see the water coming out."

"There's a lot more work to do but we hope to have it finished by the end of May, when there's a flower festival at the church."

East Farndon Parish Council would like to renovate the spring back to its former glory, and this is currently a work-in-progress.

We would like to thank Alan Langley, who had previously researched the spring and passed all of this information on to us. We would also like to thank Greta Hill for the wonderful afternoon we spent with her, chatting about life in East Farndon in the 1950s.

Information has also been taken from *The Natural History of Northamptonshire With Some Account Of The Antiquities (etc.)* by Rev John Morton, 1712 and *A Topographical Dictionary of England* by Nicholas Carlisle, 1808.

Written by Judy Hodgetts and Donna Jones – October 2021