

VILLAGE PUMPS of WORTHING

The Egyptians invented the shadoof (irrigation tool) to raise water, which dates from 2000 BC. They used a long suspended rod with a bucket at one end and a weight at the other. The main village pump today dates from 200 BC invented by the Greeks. There is evidence that a pump using a plunger or piston in a barrel or cylinder existed in Greece at this period.

These village pumps are hand operating water pumps, which come in all shapes and sizes. They were built over wells and other water sources to transfer water through a pipe or spout from its source to another location or container such as a trough or bucket. Romans had wooden pumps, but most of these are now gone.

Every place would have had a pump in the town square or on the village green. Towns had one in almost every street usually at the end and several shops had one in their yard. Some were in back gardens or in homes. As well as obtaining water from streams, ponds and wells, this was the only way, which people used to get their water before mains came. A number of village pumps were used for cattle and horses along old trackways. They had a trough below them.

The main reason for the decline of the village pump was the cholera epidemics of the 1850s. The most famous case was the Broad Street pump in Soho, London. A cholera epidemic occurred in Soho in 1854 and the pump in Broad Street (now Broadwick Street) was taken out of action. Dr John Snow took the handle off the pump, which stopped the cholera. A red granite kerbstone outside the John Snow pub with a plaque marks its site. There is an information board in the pub.

The vast majority of the village pumps in Britain today are the cast iron pumps dating to the 19th century. Some of the village pumps are in their original position, but a number are not. A lot of them around today are ones, which people bought as a collector's item and some are modern, which can be bought in garden centres. The author has three old village pumps. Many are still to be seen today on village greens, under shelters, over wells, in streets, gardens and outside pubs. Good examples in Sussex are in Lewes, Newick, Birdham, South Harting and Ringmer.

A few existed in Worthing. A stone pump was erected over a well in South Street in 1809. This was removed in 1854 and the site is now outside Beales. Another was at the end of the High Street near the Colonnade and the existing village pump in Warwick Lane is not in its original position. There are a few in the Worthing area at Broadwater, West Tarring, Ferring, Findon and Lancing. The village pump photographs below were taken by author.



Worthing.



West Tarring.



Ferring.



Findon.



Broadwater.



Lancing.

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