

Place of Sweethearts

It is claimed that the following ritual would improve matters of matrimony. Kneel with the right knee on the magic stone, plunge a hand into the water up to the wrist and drink from the palm of the hand. Whilst on the stone a wish is made which will be fulfilled within one year, provided it is never uttered aloud.

One Liskeard resident remembers that when working as a maid in Stuart House during WWI, some other maids would sneak off to Pipe Well via a system of underground tunnels to meet their sweethearts.

Source of the Water

The Portwrinkle Fault, formed millions of years ago, runs beneath Liskeard and increases the capacity of the underlying rock to store and transmit water. This, together with underground tributaries of the River Seaton and East Looe River, has produced an endless supply of water to Pipe Well, essential for the well building and prosperity of an expanding community. It has been estimated that 136 litres are produced every minute.

Washing and Watering

Although in use many years previously, Borough documents from the 1300s refer to this central focus of the town as either Well of Lyskiret, Well of St. Martin or Pipe Well.

In 1503 five persons appeared before the Magistrates accused of washing skins in “le trough at the Pype-well”.

Regulation 10 of the Borough Constitution of 1587 stated that “no inhabitant shall wash at the town well any pilchards, pots or any other filth; but bring some vessel and wash the same therein”.

In the mid-1800s coachmen and post boys staying at the Talbot Inn in Fore Street would attend to their morning ablutions here, while their masters were trading contraband goods which had arrived overnight from Looe or Polperro.

In 1879 the site was refurbished using granite from the nearby Cheesewring Quarry. Four new pipes were installed and the magic stone was protected by gates. (photo)

The 1881 Ordnance Survey map illustrates how the town's markets grew around this constant source of water, essential for their businesses. (photo)

The nationally renowned Sangers Circus performed "everywhere from John O'Groats to Land's End" in 1889 and watered their horses at the troughs around Pipe Well when visiting Liskeard. (photo)

Many residents can recall a sign which reminded owners of pigs that "Bellies must not be washed in the Well".

As a thriving Victorian market town souvenirs from Liskeard were very popular with the many visitors. (photo)

One of the last traders to collect water from the Pipe Well every day was barber Erwin Hicks of Fore Street. Mr. Hicks was a member of Flying Corps during WWI, he unfortunately suffered a heart attack and died during his last visit to the well. (photo)