

Chapter 11

The Well.

The well by the school seems to have been there for some considerable time. I found it marked on an ordinance survey map surveyed in 1886. Holywell was the name marked on the map at the spot. It was probably dug about the same time as the school was built about 1830 to supply the school with water. When I started school I can recall it as a well having been dug into the bank and below the footings of the bank, near two yew trees in the wooded area near the school. Not very deep just about 3ft with about 2ft of water in it. It must have been a very strong spring supplying it as it never ran dry in the summer, the overflow was always running.

Every day Mr Crick whom I mentioned was the gardener for Sir Bouchier would travel home to breakfast about 9.30am. He would bring a cloam pitcher with him and leave it by the well. On his return to Corffe he would dip up a pitcher full of water from the well and carry it up to Corffe for Sir Bouchier. This was the only cold water he would drink at home. A cloam pitcher was like a jug with a handle on the side it would hold about 1/2 gallon. In those days that pitcher could stay for a week if the need arose and it would never be broken.

Later on in the 1930's the well began to show signs of wear. The door and the frame had started to decay making it more difficult to shut therefore it was always left open. There was a lead pump just to the right of the well, and that was not working quite so well. In 1938 Sir Bouchier decided to restore the well and give it a better appearance.

As a matter of interest some while ago I found a letter in an old Western Morning News dated February 26th 1938. I think it was most likely put in by Sir Bouchier Wrey, the heading was (and I quote);

Holy Wells in Devon

"Sir. Could any reader inform me whether there is any list in existence of the holy wells in this county? There is a well here in Tawstock which has always been called the Holy Well, and has never been known to go dry, even in the hottest and driest summer. I have been wondering, therefore, whether this particular well is mentioned in any list which may exist in the county.

Also I should be grateful to know where I could obtain a picture or photo of a holy well, as I am anxious to restore the surroundings of the one here and give it a more decent appearance than it has at present."

Whether or not he did receive any replies to his letter I do not know, but he certainly restored the well. It had a stone walled construction on the front of the well, and roofed over with stone and a gate fixed to the front. The lead pump by the side of the well was repaired and boxed in with wood and a lead doom mounted on the top. Some cobble stone paving was laid in front of the well and around the pump. This made the whole area look quite smart.