

Water under Settle – cellars, pumps, wells and reservoirs

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An article in the North Craven Heritage Trust in 2018 mainly concerned water found in cellars under buildings in Settle. Since then information on the supply of water to households in Settle by the Settle Water Works Company set up in the 1700s has been consulted.

It is not surprising that in earlier days individual and groups of properties had their own nearby sources of water and there is plenty of evidence of wells and other water features as noted below. There are no wells shown on John Lettsom's map of 1751 (see NCHT Journal 2005, p.18) but it does indicate a willow tree in front of the Folly, suggesting very wet ground. Jeffery's map of Yorkshire (1771, revised 1775) is too small scale to show water sources. There are no wells or pumps shown on the 1841 Tithe map of Settle. The 6 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1847 shows wells and pumps at various points around Settle.

There are springs emerging from the line of the limestone cliffs running north-south from Castleberg and Townhead which presumably are the main source of underground water lower down.

Water in the Cellars

It is not surprising that most commercial buildings in the central area of the town have cellars for storage. A number of properties in Settle are subject to water in these cellars at times, or have been in the past. But many premises with cellars are always dry.

During renovation work at Settle Town Hall in 2015 water was found to be coming through the walls of a cellar in the north-west corner, draining into a sump. The south-west corner also has a sump (now covered) similar to that in the north-west corner. The NatWest Bank in the Market Place (now closed, and the building owned by North Craven Heritage Trust) has water in the cellar which has had to be pumped out on occasion. Skipton Building Society has a cellar which has been wet but not in recent years. N P Sher's optician's property has a wet cellar. Car and Kitchen has no cellar (just an inspection pit from when it was a garage). The neighbouring building which was Garnett's has a dry cellar. Castleberg Outdoors on Cheapside has brick-lined vaulted dry cellars. Cave and Crag, now an antiques shop, next door to Boots, has a dry cellar.

The Royal Oak cellars are dry. The Golden Lion has water in the cellar but Ashfield House (Settle Social Club) on the opposite side of Duke St has a dry cellar. The cellar in what was Jordan solicitors' office on the corner of Chapel Street and Duke St is now dry.

There is no cellar in Well Cottage at the bottom of Well Hill but the main floor has been bitumenized, presumably to stop dampness. Next door on High Street is King William the fourth Guest House. By courtesy of the owner, it was possible to see the cellar in the front north corner where water enters through the wall, flows along an open channel about 10 cm wide and 8 cm deep, and leaves via a drain. Liverpool House nearby has a dry cellar.

The name Tarn Cottage is currently associated with the flat above Nelson's shop on Duke St. The shop has a cellar which used to flood, but not since United Utilities altered pipework. Cragdale, the old police station, has brick-lined vaulted cellars which are dry.

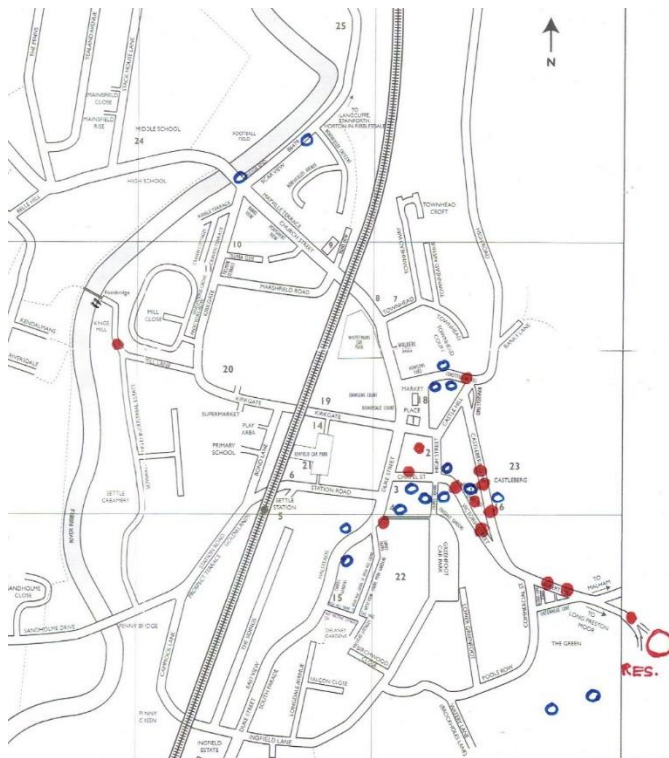
Undercliffe House has a watercourse running through its cellar, usually dry, the direction of flow being towards the road. Norlands has a watercourse in the cellar and clear water present in a sump. The water ebbs and flows according to the weather. However, the neighbouring property which was a wine shop has a brick-vaulted dry cellar. Underbergh has a spring or well in the cellar, now sealed.

Procter House has a small dry cellar. Further along Kirkgate Victoria Hall has a cellar and water in a sump which changes levels. Marshfield House nearby is dry despite its name.

Not all premises in Settle have been checked but it is clear that water flows under Settle and makes its presence felt in cellars in various places, but not everywhere.

Wells

The property deeds available from the West Yorkshire Register of Deeds have a number of references to wells in Settle (see NCHT website under Archives). From the names of prominent merchants, tradesmen and apothecaries involved we can assume that some of the properties were probably in or near the Market Place in the 1700s. For example the Birkbecks' property in Duck (*sic*) Street had a well in the yard. Benjamin Robinson and William Carr, apothecaries, had messuages with draw wells. There were many individual beer houses in Settle which presumably had their own water supply and several innkeepers with brewhouses had draw wells or well springs.



Known wells (blue circles) and pipeline access points (red dots)

The tanks at the Well Steps are now in a rather derelict condition, A photograph taken sometime in the early 20th century shows clothes washing on lines by the steps. Water may have been drawn for use in a brewery in the Folly and for use by the local blacksmith in quenching metal wheel rims.



Well steps

There is a well-head at the rear of the Folly at the south end. Well Cottage at the corner where the lane meets High Street has a well-head, now filled-in, at the back of the cottage. Number 6 Chapel Street has a capped well in the yard behind the house. Castleberg House has a well in the cellar. One of the houses in Kirkgate had a well, now with the kitchen built over it. Undercliffe Mews has a well at the front, and a permanently damp area in the back garden which may indicate a spring. Behind the shop next to the Post Office was a well, or at least a source of water according to a previous owner. Cottages (now demolished) next to the old Ellis Garage had a well underneath (courtesy J. Carr). On Constitution Hill there are properties with wells, i.e. the house next to the Co-op, Wishing Well Cottage, and behind the houses on the south side. In Upper Settle are found Well House and Ivy Well Cottage by the Green.



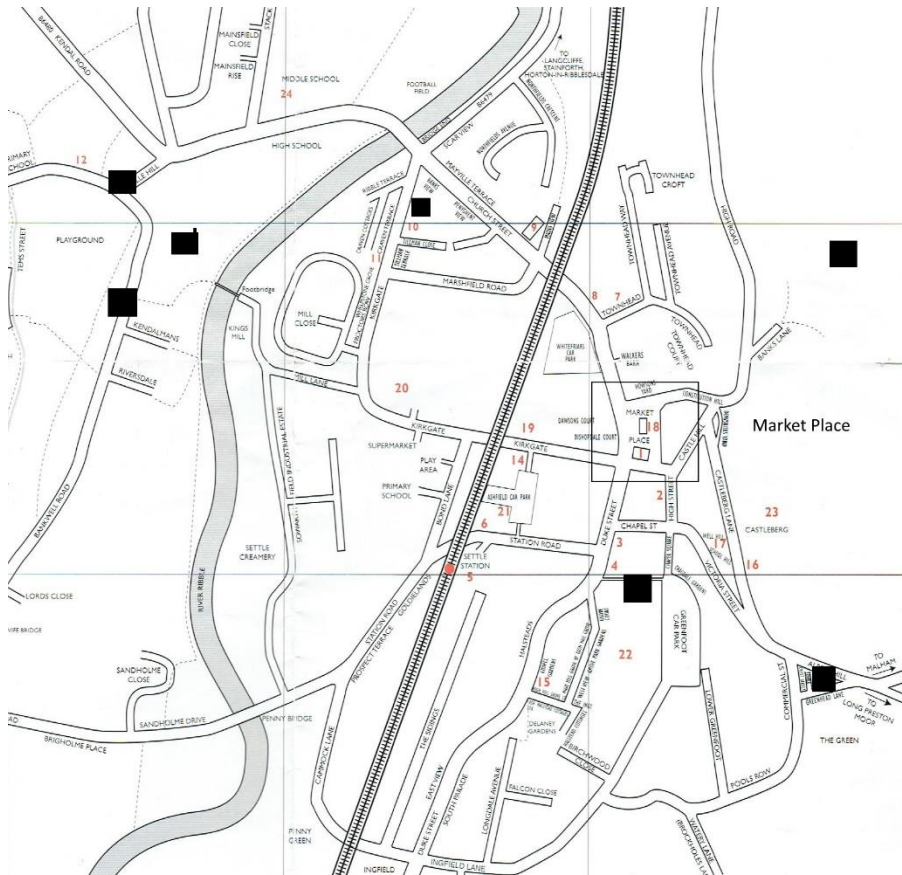
Folly garden



Well Cottage

Pumps

The 1847 6 inch OS map shows many pumps. The ground of the Rugby Club had a pump on the northern field. In Twisleton's Yard one water pump served fifteen cottages (Miller, 1973). None now exist.



Pump locations 1847 6 inch OS map (black squares)



Typical indoor pump



Outdoor pump (Feizor)

Water features

It is noteworthy that the area of Greenfoot Car Park and the northern field of the Rugby Club is probably what used to be known as Paley's Puddle, noted by Brayshaw (1932) as being shown on a map of 1774 (actually 1769, private communication D. S. Johnson), originally kept in Liverpool House (with dry cellars). The map places the Puddle between the Folly and Cragdale. This map indicated the route of the proposed canal link to the Leeds/Liverpool canal which was near completion by 1774 (see David Johnson (2007) for information on the proposed canal link). There is a culverted channel from the Rugby Club down the middle of the southern field to pass behind the bungalows - which flows strongly during wet weather. The water joins Ing Beck to flow into the Runley Bridge millpond, joining the flow from Dog Kennel Mill noted below. An 'ing' is a water-meadow. The site of Limestone View housing had to be provided with a drainage system before construction could start.

The curiously named Tarn Cottage lies opposite the Post Office on Duke Street, formerly named Duck Street! The Triangle in Settle in front of the Post Office is popularly thought to be the site of a former duck pond (but could have been confused with Paley Puddle).

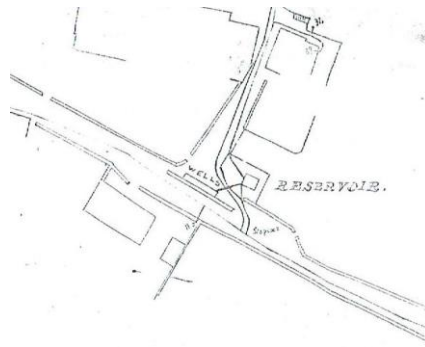
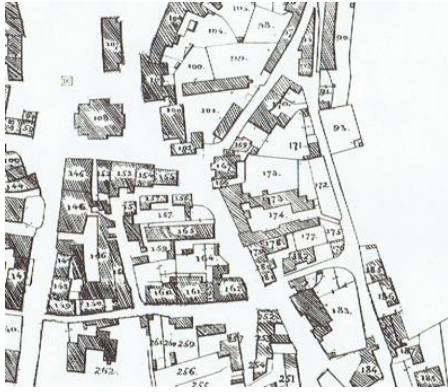
Supplies to industrial premises – mills, tannery, brewhouses and the station

Currier Cottage on Victoria St was a tannery and must have had a water supply. The old tannery on the Green with its tan-pits behind similarly needed access to water. There is a water flow through a small 'trough' in a yard of houses in Upper Settle. To the south of Settle is Pool's Row cottages (on Ingfield Lane) and the start of Brockholes Lane/Watery Lane leading past the Dog Kennel allotments. Dog Kennel Mill (Mitchell Lane) was one of Settle's early cotton spinning mills, powered by water (noted on the 1847/8 6 inch OS map). Water from Mealbank and Springfield culverted under Mitchell Lane by the cottage and pinfold was fed into a mill pond. This later became a covered reservoir just below Mitchell Lane. From the pond it was channelled along the headrace to a water wheel at the mill. From there the tailrace ran downslope, mostly culverted, to enter Brockholes Lane (A 'drain' is marked on the 1847 OS map). After flowing along the lane it is culverted to Beck Ing Plantation, then it appears on the surface for some distance, then under the old A65 to the mill pond serving Runley Mill.

The water tower at Settle station (now a private house) required to supply steam railway engines was fed by a six-inch cast iron pipeline from a reliable stream and slate-sided tank under the Winskill cliffs on the Hoffmann kiln site. The pipe ran down to the railway line, then along the line to Settle (information courtesy the late Derek Soames and Mark Rand). The height difference is about 240 feet (about 70m, 7 atmospheres pressure) to generate the pressure needed for the transfer.

The public water supply – Settle waterworks, pipelines and reservoirs

In 1769 Thomas Preston of Settle, Plumber and Glazier proposed to supply water from the well or spring called Castle Kell for seven years using 'Leaden pipes' to 19 occupants in Settle. He needed the consent of 26 Freeholders to lay pipes to any part of the town. Charges varied from 4s to 15s per year. In 1769 Thomas Preston had to buy a piece of land from Thomas Bullough at the top of his garden to make a 'bason or reservoir and to build a house over the same'.



Two years later more water was needed. In 1771 Thomas Preston proposed taking water from the stream at 80 acre bottom requiring additional rent from the original 19 customers. In 1772

‘... from the foot of the lane called Mitchel Lane ... into dwelling houses or outhouses ...’

In 1773 a joint venture of Thomas Preston with John Thompson was set up to share expenses and profits.

In 1812 James Silverwood, Plumber and Glazier, paid Elizabeth Preston £20 per year for her half share of the waterworks. In 1843 the Settle Water Works company was set up. Water taps and water closets were installed in many houses. If the rent was not paid – taps were removed! In 1881 the company was dissolved and sold to the Settle Rural Sanitary Authority.

There is an 1831 map which concerns ‘Waterworks and course of the pipes, being the property of James Silverwood, for supplying with water the town of Settle in the West Riding of the County of York, by T. Hodgson, Surveyor, Lancaster 1831’. The pipe follows the road from a reservoir in Upper Settle to the Well Steps well with its reservoir then along Chapel Street. No well heads are shown on this map. The Tithe map of 1844 shows Settle Water Works Houses (no. 176) at the northern corner of the Well Steps and a reservoir. Could there be a reservoir under the trapdoor at the Well Steps? The Medical Officer’s Report on sanitary conditions in Settle in 1897 notes the town water supply is from Settle Water Works, wells and springs. There is an intriguing reference to Lady Well Close at Barrel Sykes. The Springfield reservoir (opened in 1906) in Upper Settle has now found a new proposed use as a fish farm.

The pipeline is marked in places by access points originally thought perhaps to date from 1831 but many such covers of the similar design seen elsewhere in the district are actually dated 1906 or 1907. (See the wells and pipeline map).



Pipeline access point

The drinking fountain in the Market Place (now dry) was erected in 1863, replacing an earlier market cross. It was probably supplied by pipeline from the Upper Settle reservoir.

Where does the water go?

There is an outlet by the River Ribble road bridge which discharges water after heavy rain. It seems likely that this is one outlet from the stream flowing from the hillside above the Settle to Langcliffe High Road, down through the ends of Townhead Croft/Way/Ave., then through Settle Churchyard, along Church Street, under the railway bridge (with a trough now removed) to the river bridge at Ribblesen Terrace (courtesy J. Carr).



Water outlet, Settle Bridge



Trough site under railway bridge on Church St

Near the railway bridge is the property Crookbeck with a covered stream in the garden. Bill Mitchell reported that ‘The graveyard at Settle is so hemmed in and wet in places it was said that buried here was the next best thing to burial at sea’.

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M. J. Slater October 2024