

**A ROYAL CONNECTION
TO ONE OF GRIFFYDAM'S ANCIENT
NATURAL SPRINGS**



MARY Queen of Scots

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - FEBRUARY 2021

PREFACE

There were two natural springs in the hamlet of Griffydam in NW Leics, one being a “Chalybeate” mineral spring which are noted for their health giving qualities, and the other known colloquially as “Griffy Well” was a natural spring / well where the village people obtained their drinking water up to the 1950s/60s.

This publication has been written to try and bring some clarity to the various fragmented records that exist which in their description do not clearly differentiate between the properties of the two.

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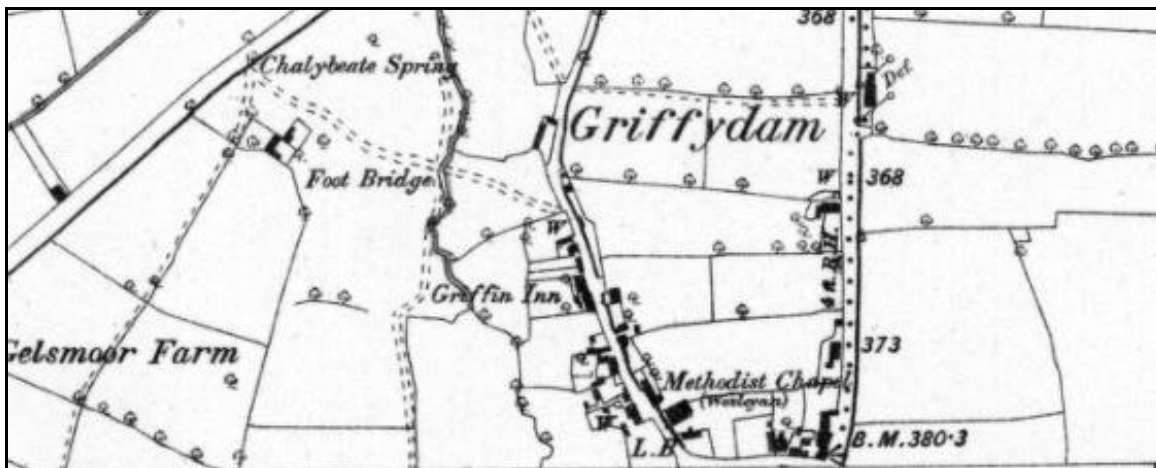
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PART 1

GRIFFYDAM'S - CHALYBEATE SPRING

There is a Chalybeate Spring in the area of the “Cunneries” at the end of a former footpath. The Cunneries was an area where rabbits were bred in medieval times, and was roughly in the triangle formed in the fields between Elder Lane and the Rempstone Road. At one time, this was an area of natural beauty where an abundance of “Lady Smocks” grew, and it was used by Griffydam Infant School for their nature walks when the author and his wife attended the school.



1885 published O/S map showing the location of the Chalybeate Spring

The location of this “chalybeate” spring is shown in the upper part of the map on the LH side at the end of a path near to the brook. Unlike “Griffy Well spring” which features in Part 2, this comes up from the coal measures. The word “chalybeate” is basically derived from the Latin word for iron, “chalybs”, and indicates a mineral water containing iron salts which tends to colour anything it comes into contact with orange (see the later photograph). This spring still rises to this day, but the original site has been destroyed by tipping in the area by a previous owner. The water emitted from it which flows into the brook is now orange, and clearly unfit to drink. The brook is referred to as “Cart Brook”, both in the deeds of a house on Elder Lane fronting the land through which it runs and also in early census records.

Early in the 17th century, chalybeate water was said to have health-giving properties, and many people have promoted its qualities. Dudley North, the 3rd Baron North, discovered the chalybeate spring at Tunbridge Wells in 1606. This was a fortuitous find by the young nobleman, who noticed the reddish brown waters of the spring foaming slightly from the ground. Lord North had spent several days at the Abergavenny Estate at nearby Eridge recuperating and was returning on horseback to London. Feeling a bit the worse for wear from heavy drinking and merrymaking, Lord North drank the water to quench his thirst.

Feeling much rejuvenated from drinking the cool iron-rich spring water, he declared it to be health-giving to all his friends and acquaintances.

The news of the spring and its exceptional properties circulated, and noble visitors from London and elsewhere flocked to the resulting hamlet which quickly grew up alongside the natural spa. Since it wasn't far from Tonbridge (originally spelled Tunbridge), already a town, it later became known as Tunbridge Wells.

Dudley North's physician Thomas Sydenham claimed that the waters contained 'vitriol' and the waters of Tunbridge Wells could cure – *“the colic, the melancholy, and the vapours; it made the lean fat, the fat lean; it killed flat worms in the belly, loosened the clammy humours of the body, and dried the over-moist brain.”*

He also apparently said, in verse:

These waters youth in age renew
Strength to the weak and sickly add
Give the pale cheek a rosy hue
And cheerful spirits to the sad

An analysis in 1967 showed the chalybeate spring to contain the following (parts per million):

- Iron(II) carbonate, FeCO_3 25.3
- Manganese(II) carbonate, MnCO_3 4.6
- Calcium sulphate, CaSO_4 60.9
- Magnesium sulphate, MgSO_4 13.4
- Magnesium chloride, MgCl_2 7.8
- Sodium chloride, NaCl 57.2
- Potassium chloride, KCl 7.3

The waters from the chalybeate spring at Griffydam also found fame throughout the country, and references are made to it in several historical records.

In a list of notable chalybeate springs in the world on Wikipedia and other records, Griffydam is included under the 30 “English” springs listed.

Edward Gibbon's revised 1722 edition of William Camden's Britannia stated the following, although the wording of the paragraph is somewhat convoluted and the “*seat of H. de Bellomontor Beaumont.....*” is not recognized by the author:-

.....Colorton - the seat of *H. de Bellomontor Beaumont*, descended from the same famous Family with the Viscounts de *Bellomont*, but this family is lately extinct by the death of Thomas Lord *Beaumont*, who bequeathed his Estate to Sir George Beaumont Baronet, of Stoughton-Grange, near Leicester. **In this Parish of Cole-Overton (became Coleorton) is a noted mineral water call'd Griffy-dam.** (as others also have been lately discover'd in this County, at *Dunton* and *Cadeby*.) The place (*Coleorton*) hath the name of distinction, from *Pit-Coles*. being a bituminous earth harden'd by nature,

and here (to the great profit of the Lord of the Manour) dug-up in such plenty, as to supply the neighbouring Country, all about, with firing. Not far from whence, is *Osgathorp*, where Thomas Harley, Citizen of London, built very convenient Houses for six poor Ministers Widows, with the allowance of 10 *l. per Ann.* to each; and also a Free-school, with a 40 *l. per ann.* good Stipend.....

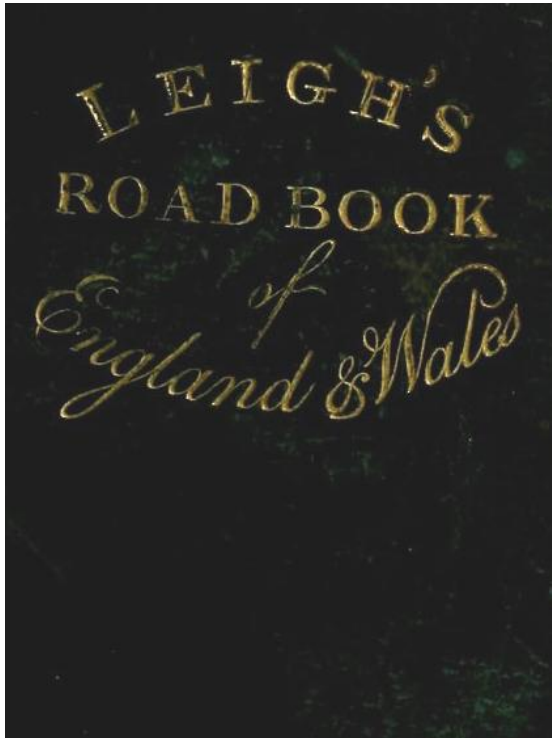
“The Post Office Directory of Leics & Rutland 1855”, is thought to be actually making reference to the Chalybeate Spring. It states that “*Griffy Well at Griffydam is worthy of some attention*”.

Whites 1846 Trade Directory below refers to the Chalybeate Spring at Griffydam

HISTORY,
GAZETTEER, AND DIRECTORY
OF
LEICESTERSHIRE,
AND THE SMALL
COUNTY OF RUTLAND;
TOGETHER WITH THE ADJACENT
TOWNS OF GRANTHAM & STAMFORD;
COMPRISING
General Surveys of both Counties,
AND SEPARATE
HISTORICAL, STATISTICAL, & TOPOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTIONS
OF ALL THEIR
HUNDREDS, TOWNS, PARISHES,
TOWNSHIPS, CHAPELRIES, VILLAGES, HAMLETS,
MANORS, LIBERTIES, AND UNIONS;
SHEWING
Their Extent and Population; their Agricultural and Mineral Productions;
Trade and Commerce; Markets and Fairs; Charities and Public Institutions;
Churches and Chapels; the Value, and the Patrons and Incumbents,
of the Benefices; the Lords of the Manors and Owners of the Soil and
Tithes; the Addresses of the Inhabitants, the Public Conveyances; the
Seats of Nobility and Gentry;
MAGISTRATES AND PUBLIC OFFICERS;
And a Variety of other
AGRICULTURAL, STATISTICAL, & BIOGRAPHICAL
INFORMATION.
IN ONE VOLUME, WITH A MAP OF THE COUNTIES.
BY WILLIAM WHITE,
AUTHOR OF SIMILAR WORKS FOR LINCOLNSHIRE, YORKSHIRE, NORFOLK, SUFFOLK,
AND OTHER COUNTIES.
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,
BY ROBT. LEADER, INDEPENDENT OFFICE, SHEFFIELD
And Sold by WM. WHITE, 200, Brook Hill, Sheffield;
BY HIS AGENTS, AND THE BOOKSELLERS.
Price to Subscribers, 12s. in Boards, or 13s. 6d. in Calf, with the Map.
[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]
1846.

WORTHINGTON, in the parish of Breedon on the Hill, is a village of 802 inhabitants, with a colliery railway connected with the Ashby and the Leicester and Swannington lines. It is distant nearly 5 miles N.E. of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and its township and chapelry comprises also the small hamlet of GRIFFYDAM, and NEWBOLD LIBERTY, which have 341 souls, and are situated about 1½ mile S. of the village, and 3½ miles E.N.E. of Ashby. The whole chapelry has about 1600 acres, and 1143 souls. There is a chalybeate spring at Griffydam, Newbold contains about 500 acres, and has a *colliery*. It belongs to Earl Ferrers and Sir G. H. Beaumont, Bart. Griffydam (about 200A.) belongs to the Earl of Stamford and J. Curzon, Esq. Earl Ferrers is lord of the *manor*, and owner of a great part of *Worthington*, and the rest belongs to J. Curzon, Esq., W. A. Pochin, Esq., E. Dawson, Esq., Mr. J. Bulstrode, and a few smaller owners. The chapelry was enclosed in 1802, when the tithes were commuted. The *Church* is an old structure of brick and stone, with two bells, but no tower. The living is a *perpetual curacy*, valued in 1831 at £100, and augmented from 1747 to 1812 with £1600 in lots of Queen Anne's Bounty and Parliamentary Grants. Lord Scarsdale is patron, and the Rev. James Deane, M.A., is the incumbent, for whom the Rev. H. C. Close, of Breedon, officiates. Here is a small *Wesleyan Chapel*, built in 1820. *Henry Pilkington*, in 1698, charged a farm of 150A., now belonging to Mr. Bulstrode, with the weekly distribution of six penny loaves among the poor. As noticed with Coleorton, this chapelry is one of the four places entitled to have a poor boy apprenticed from *Lady Beaumont's Charity*. In the following Directory, those marked * are in *Newbold Liberty*.

References also appear in several travel and geographical books as a place to visit. For example, Leigh's Pocket Road book of England and Wales 1840 (eighth edition) and the new Universal Gazetteer / Geographical Dictionary dated 1823 (held in Toronto University) both refer to it.



ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH (Leicester), so called from Alan La Zouch, the possessor of the manor in the times of Henry III. The Church (St. Helen) contains a curious ancient finger-pillory, and numerous monuments, some of which are in memory of the Huntingdon family. The celebrated Lady Huntingdon, the founder of numerous chapels, was buried here. The Ivanhoe baths, recently erected, are amongst the most splendid in Europe. The mineral spring which supplies them takes its rise at Moira Colliery, three miles distant, where there are also modern baths. The water is very efficacious in rheumatic complaints. The traveller should notice the ruins of the Castle, erected in the reign of Edward IV. by Sir W. Hastings: it was visited by two queens, Mary Queen of Scots, and Anne the wife of James I., as well as that monarch himself. This town has also a Theatre, a Grammar-school, Meeting-houses, and manufactories of ribands. Near this place is a mineral spring, called Griffidam. Bishop Hall was a native of this town. *Par. Pop. 4400. Inns; Queen's Head, Hastings' Hotel.*

From Leigh's Pocket road Book 1840

As many of the references found are associated with the Spa Baths at Ashby, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Griffydam Chalybeate waters were bottled and sold there as a supplement to bathing in the Moira mineral water as described by Leigh. As the spring at Moira would have risen through the coal measures also, it would probably have been made up of similar compounds to the Griffydam Chalybeate spring water, although no reference has been found to it being recommended for drinking to cure various ailments. Alternatively, it is likely that visitors staying at the Ashby Spa (Royal Hotel) would have been taken by pony and trap using the turnpike roads to sample the waters at Griffydam

The London General Gazetteer of 1825 also makes mention of Griffydam mineral waters and in the "Beauties of England 1791" by Philip Luckombe he states that "*near the town of Ashby de la Zouch is a noted mineral water called Griffydam*".

5814

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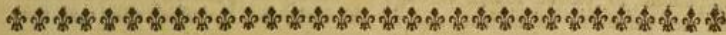
Price Six Pence.



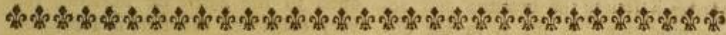
THE Universal Magazine OF Knowledge and Pleasure:

FOR

JANUARY, 1752.



VOL. X.



REFLECTIONS *on the Value of HUMAN REASON,*
improved by the Study of the ARTS and SCIENCES.

For JANUARY, 1752.

23

those of most other country-towns. They treat one another splendidly in the Christmas holidays, and have a good bowling green, the only one in those parts, where the neighbouring Nobility and Gentry resort on Mondays, during the summer season, to dine. By the ruins, and what is left standing of the walls of the Earl of Huntingdon's castle, it must have been one of the principal in England.

Near this town lies Cole-Orton, famous for its coal-pits, which, Mr. Burton says, burned for many years together in the reign of Henry VIII, and could not be quenched, till the matter was quite consumed that fed the fire. There is a noted mineral water here, called Griffydam.

[To be continued.]

OCCASIONAL LETTERS. LETTER XXXIV.

On the monstrous Practice of subduing INNOCENCE by Authority.

L E I C E S T E R S H I R E.

borough, and Waltham on the Wold; the chief rivers are the Stour, Welland, Wreck, Avon, Anker, Swift, Senca, and the Eye; the most noted places are Mount Sorrel, Chamwood and Leicester Forests, Dalby Wood, and several Parks, with the Vale of Belvoir. It sends four Members to Parliament, pays nine parts of the land-tax, and provides 560 men to the national militia. Its product, &c. is corn, beans, cattle, hogs, few sheep, large horses, rich pastures, long wool, and pit coals. The air is gentle, mild, and temperate. At Segs-hill, or Six-hill, seven miles from Leicester, is a Roman tunnel, the boundary of six parishes, on which are their boundary stones or marks. There is a mineral water near Allby de la Zouch, called Griffydan.

The only Roman, Saxon, or Danish encampments in this county are, one near Hurrow Hill, Erdburrow, and near Highcross, on the borders of Warwickshire.

The Roman Military Ways in this county are few; Highcross is said to stand on a Vicinal Way, not the Watling-Street, as by many imagined. Near it is a tumulus, called Claudbury Bolls, supposed the burial place of one Claudius. The Watling-Street

THE Antiquities OF ENGLAND AND Wales.

By Francis Grose Esq^r F. A. S.

VOL. III. New Edition.



*True bliss in Woods, and solitary Caves
The solitary Hermits find, but they find happy
And in their quiet contemplations found*

*More real comforts than Society's
Of Men could yield than they could give
Or all the Lustres that a Court could give*

LONDON Printed for S. WOODS, N^o 212. HIGH HOLBORN.

Dated 1784

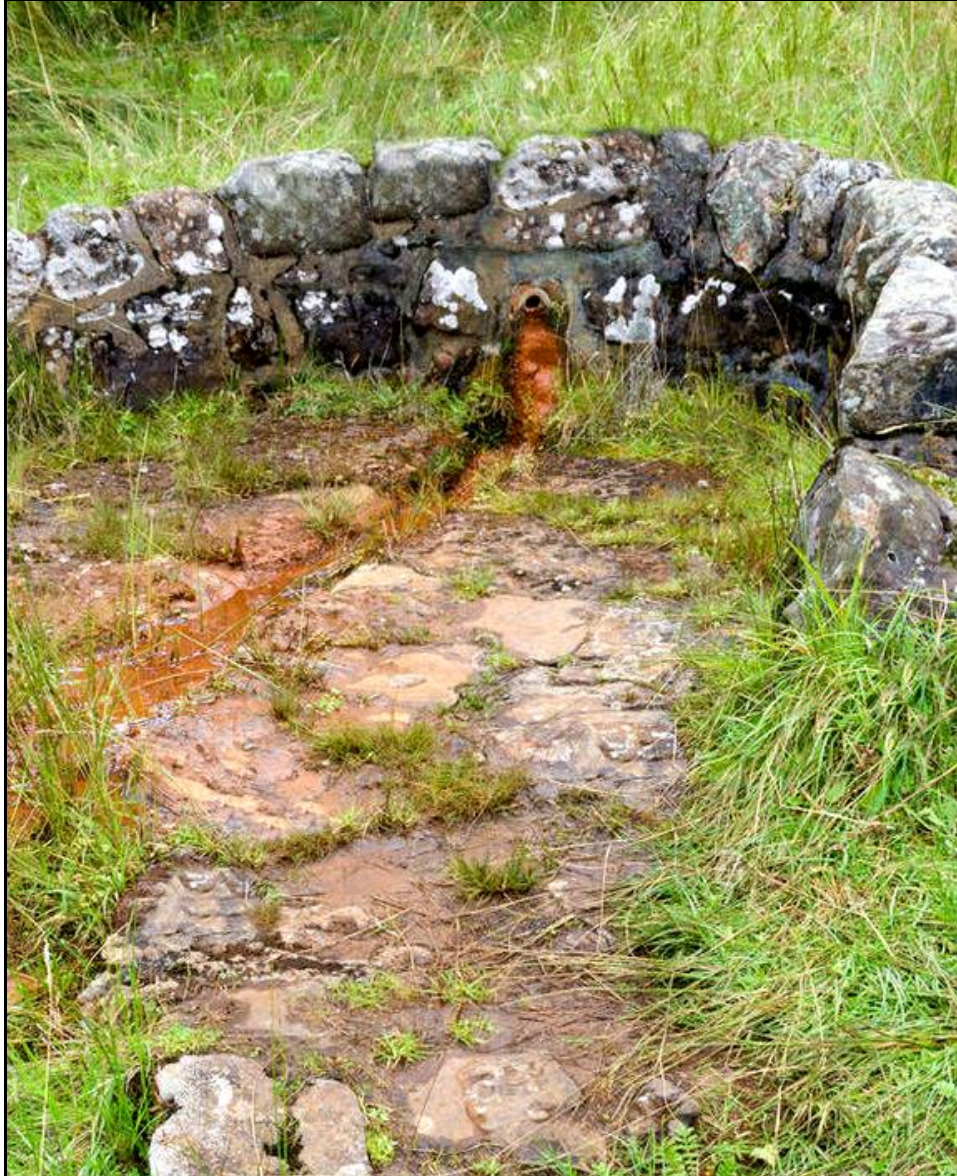
However, perhaps the most historically interesting and earliest reference found to the Chalybeate spring at Griffydham, has to be the following:-

As the readers will probably know, Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned and held for two nights in Ashby Castle in 1569 by Henry Hastings after she was accused of plotting against Elizabeth 1. The following is an extract from an account in the Telegraph in 1891:-

Daily Telegraph & Courier (London) – July 6th 1891

This is an extract from a five column article headed “A general history in the United Kingdom”.

.....Ashby de la Zouch in Leicestershire. It is only 115 miles from London and in the year of her majesty’s accession it was deriving prestige and profit from the visitors who flocked to its recently-constructed “Ivanhoe” Baths – a splendid building in the Doris style – and dispensing water strongly impregnated with muriate of soda, containing by ten or twelve degrees a greater proportion of salt than sea water, and considered to be exceptionally efficacious in alleviating the agonies of rheumatism. **Then in the immediate vicinity of Ashby de la Zouch, there is a small but historic mineral spring called the Griffydham, the water of which was served at the table of MARY Queen of Scots when she was in the custody of the Earl of HUNTINGDON at Ashby Castle.** Mary, Queen of Scots is also recorded as visiting Buxton to partake of the waters there.



An impression of what the chalybeate spring may have looked like in times gone by with the mineral water flowing into the nearby Cart Brook

WILLIAM WALES

William Wales was clearly an entrepreneurial gentleman. Having run a successful Framework Knitting business on Elder lane, Griffydam in the first half of the 1800's, the 1861 census gave him as a "druggist" also, and by 1871 at the age of 55, he is given in the census as being a "Druggist and Licensed Pharmaceutical". We can see from the newspaper report below that he was described as a druggist in 1867.

This prompts the thought, and it is only a thought, with no evidence to support it, that William could well have been bottling the chalybeate mineral water and supplying it as cure for his customers ailments, and this may well have been the catalyst to establishing his new profession. The powders themselves were most likely processed from the chalybeate mineral waters (see the following Dr. Mott's chalybeate pills advertisement).

Leicester Mail – March 23rd 1867

SWANNINGTON

SUDDEN DEATH. – An inquest was held at Swannington, on the 18th inst., before the Coroner, J. Gregory, Esq., on the body of Frances Morley, deceased. – Sarah Morley said deceased was the child of her daughter, Mary Ann Morley, a single woman. It was a healthy child until about a week ago, when it appeared to take cold. On Friday she seemed in her usual health, but as her chest seemed affected, her mother went to Mr. Wale, druggist, Griffydam, for something to relieve her. She brought some powders, a little of which was given to the deceased without appearing to do her any good. When brought down stairs she seemed worse, and while she was being nursed by her grandmother, she died suddenly in her lap. – Mary Ann Morley said the child which was hers was three years of age. She awoke about 3 o'clock on Friday morning and complained of being stifled at the chest, and asked for some water, which was given her. She lay quietly till between 6 and 7 o'clock, when she seemed worse.. – Mr. Henry Toone, surgeon of Whitwick, was of the opinion that deceased died from congestion of the lungs. He examined the powders obtained from Mr. Wale, the principle ingredients of which were calomel, and could have no effect in causing death. The severity of the weather was quite sufficient to occasion the attack from which the child died. – Mr. W. Wale having given evidence as to the composition of the powders, and his telling the mother of the child that she had better get a doctor, as from the symptoms he did not think that it would live. – The jury returned a verdict of Natural Causes.

Leicester Journal – May 4th 1883

DEATH OF TWO CHILDREN AT WHITWICK. – On Saturday, Mr. Coroner Deane held an inquest at Pegg's Green, as to the deaths of two children. Thomas and Mary Ann Shakespear, aged four years and nearly two years respectively, who had died on Thursday night and Friday morning without having medical attendance, but both having been given some powders, obtained from Mr. Wale of Griffydam, It appeared from the evidence that both had been ill occasionally since they had measles two months ago, and Mr. Donovan stated that the boy had died from inflammation of the kidneys and pericardium, and the girl from inflammation of both lungs ; and that both probably might have been saved had they had proper medical attendance, but that the powders given had nothing to do with the fateful result.

William Wales died on July 29th 1888 aged 73 and this was recorded in the obituaries of the "Chemist and Druggist" magazine


HEALTH RESTORED!



DR. MOTT'S
Chalybeate Pills.

An aperient and stomachic preparation of IRON purified of Oxygen and Carbon by combustion in Hydrogen, of high medical authority and extraordinary efficacy in each of the following complaints, viz.:

DEBILITY, NERVOUS AFFECTIONS, EMACIATION, DYSPEPSIA, DIARRHEA, CONSTIPATION, SCROFULA, SALT RHEUM, SCURVY, JAUNDICE, LIVER COMPLAINTS, RHEUMATISM, MERCURIAL CONSEQUENCES, INTERMITTENT FEVERS, NEURALGIA, CHRONIC HEADACHES, FEMALE WEAKNESS, MIS-MENSTRUATION, WHITES, CHLOROSIS, etc., PIMPLES ON THE FACE, ROUGHNESS OF THE SKIN, etc.

The IRON being absorbed by the blood, and thus circulating through the whole system, no part of the body can escape their truly wonderful influence.

The experience of thousands daily proves that no preparation of Iron can for a moment be compared with it. Impurities of the blood, depression of vital energy, pale and otherwise sickly complexions indicate its necessity in almost every conceivable case. In all cases of female debility (fluor albus, chlorosis, etc.), its effects are delightfully renovating. No remedy has ever been discovered, in the whole history of medicine, which exerts such prompt, happy, and fully restorative effects. Good appetite, complete digestion, rapid acquisition of strength, with an unusual disposition for active and cheerful exercise, immediately follow its use. As a grand stomachic and general restorative it has no superior and no substitute.

Put up in neat flat metal boxes containing 50 pills, price 50 cents per box; six boxes, \$2 50; one dozen boxes, \$4 00. For sale by Druggists generally. Will be sent free to any address on receipt of the price. All letters, orders, etc., should be addressed to

R. B. LOCKE & CO.,
General Agents.

339 BROADWAY, N. Y.

N. B.—The above is a fac-simile of the label on each box.

PART 2

“GRIFFY WELL” – A NATURAL SPRING

Many fanciful stories have been written about “Griffy Well”, none more so than those based on the mythical “Griffin Dragon” who has been described in many fictional writings as making his home there.

This renowned natural spring was situated at the junction of where the steep pathway which descends from the Top Road (now Nottingham road) meets with Bottom Road, and is marked **W** (*Well*) in the centre of the 1885 map below. This natural spring provided drinking water for the hamlet until the 1950's / 60s, when mains water came to the village. It rose from the sand stone that runs along the Thringstone Fault. This particular pathway no doubt developed to allow easy access to the well for the residents on the Pegg's Green side of the village, but also acted as a short cut to the Methodist chapels, the Griffin Inn, the Waggon & Horses and to Worthington etc.



1885 issued O/S Map

The spring rose from the sand stone that runs along the Thringstone Fault. Unlike the Chalybeate spring, this water would have been potable, containing sufficiently low levels of dissolved salts and microbes to make it safe for regular drinking and cooking uses. The spring dried up some years ago. The well would have been a focal point in the hamlet in days gone by where men and women would have met when fetching their water to pass on the local gossip and news.

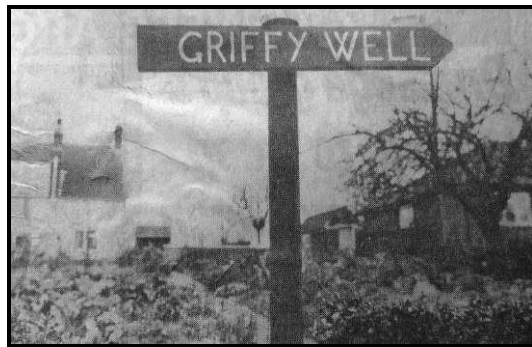
A recent photograph of where the spring / well head was located is shown in the centre of the photograph below.



The spring / well head



The well head in 2006



An old finger post

It must have been quite an ordeal for residents to carry buckets of water from the well along to their houses, particularly for those living on the Top Road.

A yoke which had been used for that purpose was found in a bedroom of a house on the Top road occupied by Jack Hall, following his death. Mrs. Mason, the granddaughter of James Hall of Griffydam, related that her mother used to go down to Griffy Well to fetch buckets of water. The yoke, shown in the upper photograph on the following page was restored by Mr. Mason including the damaged end pieces. The bottom photograph is of a similar yoke with the chains and hooks for the buckets attached.

