

Leominster's Water Supply before 1867

In his book 'The Town in the Marches (A History of Leominster and its Environs)' local historian, Norman Reeves, described Leominster's water supply before 1867 in the following terms:

"Before the laying of the pipes supplying pure water ... it had been noted that the poorer people of the town who lived in the Lower March, Mill Street and Vicarage Street were less effected by typhoid than the better off who lived in the higher parts of the town (such as the families of the tradesmen of Draper's Lane and Broad Street). This was ascribed to the fact that the poorer people had no wells and drew their water from the Rivers Lugg and Pinsley which ran past their doors. In fact, water drawn from the Pinsley used to be sold in the wealthier streets of the town.

"There were 444 wells in the town and at least one public pump was to be found in every street. Unfortunately, the wells were shallow and the water which collected in them was contaminated with seepage from the many cesspools which were within a few yards of them.

The source for this description appears to be an article dated 18 November 1892 in the Leominster News under the heading: 'The Story of Leominster and its Water Supply'. This gave details of a new water supply from Midsummer Meadows and described a history of the town's water supply up to that time.

This stated article that before the Waterworks was built

'The rivers Lugg and Pinsley received most of the domestic refuse of the houses past which they flowed as there was no drainage, but the rapidity and volume of its water flows rendered these rivers comparatively harmless to public health.

'Water from the Pinsley was hawked around the town in barrels. For some time prior to the building of the waterworks this business was a monopoly in the hands of a man named George Wynde. He was described as having an anaemic face with a black bandage on both sides tied under his chin, with a battered & weathered worn top hat. He mounted his water barrel on a large sack cart with four low wheels drawn by a donkey, and he used to sell water at a half penny a bucket full.'



Caricature of George Wynde by
Museum Volunteer, Carole Franklin

Because of the quality of the river water available the merits of investing in the building of the waterworks was not universally acclaimed by the people of Leominster and it took considerable effort by the Town Council, and Cllr. Tertius Southall in particular to drive these improvements through.

