

Heald Well

The town's **oldest** and largest crossroads well

Heald Well is the largest of the three town wells and stands at one of the oldest and busiest road junctions in Clitheroe.

It was first recorded in documents in 1643, although it is certainly much older. Like the other wells in Clitheroe, this well sits on a natural spring line. The sunken pool was continuously filled with a valuable and reliable source of fresh water. Before there were taps or pipes, people came here every day for centuries to collect their water.

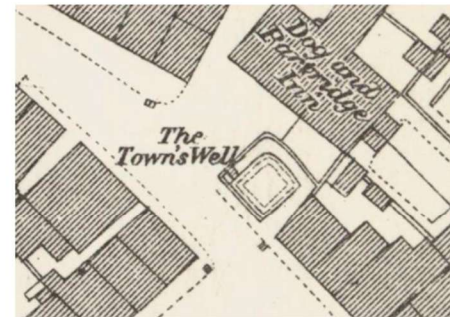
The steps to either side of the well entrance were possibly horse-mounting blocks. They have certainly seen a lot of use over the years.



The well was always more than just a water source – it was the heart of the town; acting as a meeting place and noticeboard. People met here to exchange news and gossip with their neighbours while filling their buckets and jugs.

Did you know?

The well has seen its share of drama too. In the old days, you could be fined for washing yarn, leather or rubbish in the well. One night a travelling ventriloquist fell headfirst into the well while drunk. And in living memory a ten-year-old girl fled her dentist's chair up the road and jumped in the well to cool down!



Clitheroe grew rapidly in the 19th century, and a serious Cholera outbreak in 1849 prompted action to bring clean water to the town. Piped water from Grindleton Fell arrived in Clitheroe for the first time in 1856 and Heald Well fell quiet.

The well is now grade II listed and is an irreplaceable part of Clitheroe's history.

Whats in a name?

The name 'Heald' has puzzled local historians in the past. For a long time, it was thought to mean covered, or roofed, suggesting a shelter over the well. Recent research at Clitheroe Library suggests it simply means 'well at the slope', maybe a reference to its position at the bottom of Wellgate. It was also often referred to simply as 'The Town's Well', indicating how vital it was to the people of the town.

Early origins

Pre-1066 – possible early settlement at Clitheroe, built on a rocky outcrop close to natural springs

Norman power

Early 1100s – Clitheroe Castle built by the de Lacy family to protect important trade routes through the Ribble Valley.

Medieval town growth

1200s – Clitheroe had a charter and regular markets, attracting farmers and traders from the surrounding area. They passed the wells on their way into town.

1519 – Henry VIII grants rights for additional fairs – the stone walls around the wells possibly date to this time, to cope with the extra people visiting the town.

Industry and expansion

1780s – first industrial textile mills built at Low Moor Mill and Primrose. Quarrying and lime production expand. The populations grows rapidly and diseases spread in the water.

1856 – piped water arrives in Clitheroe. The wells become redundant as a water source.