

SGI 16 Ladywell

London Borough of Lewisham

Lady Well plaque, 1-6 Lister House, Railway Terrace at junction with Ladywell Road

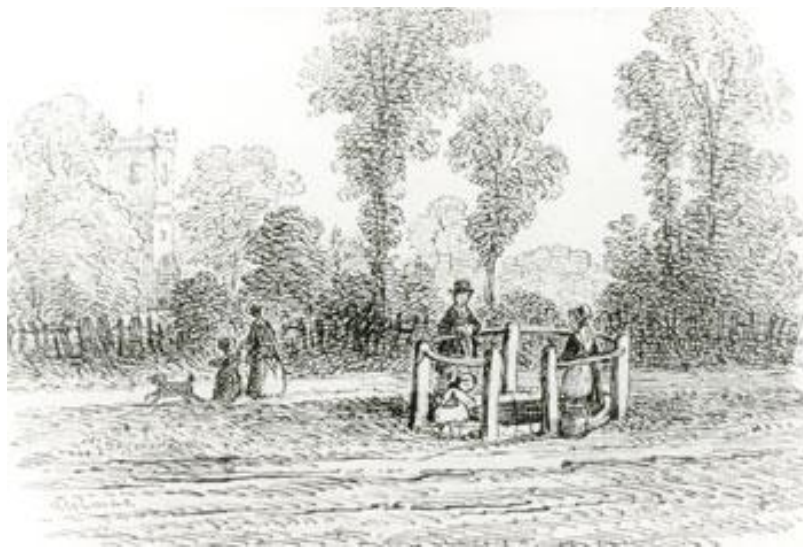
Mineral Spring plaque, 148 Ladywell Road

Grid references: 377 749 (*The Lady Well*), TQ 373 749 (*Mineral Spring*)

History of Ladywell

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Ladywell had a reputation for both the Lady Well and a Mineral Spring. The Lady Well is near St Mary's Lewisham Parish Church but a railway, including Ladywell Station, now runs between the Well and the Church. All that remains now are plaques as reminders of their former importance. The Lady Well site is marked by a white plaque on 1-6 Lister House at the junction of Railway Terrace and Ladywell Road. The site of the Mineral Spring is 370m to the west and marked by a brown plaque on the wall of 148 Ladywell Road.

A pen and ink drawing by R.W. Lucas shows the Lady Well, surrounded by a railing at the roadside, with St. Mary's Lewisham Parish Church in the background. This is exactly consistent with the position of the Lady Well marked on a detailed map of Bridge House Farm that was made in 1816. Bridge House Farm yard is marked by the number 17 on that map. Butt's 1878 "Historical Guide to Lewisham" says, "the old well was opposite Lady Well House and in what is now the road leading to the railway station (opened in 1857). It had an iron railing around it and was 6-7 ft. deep, with a small grating at the bottom where the spring rose, which used to fill the well. This well was filled up when a sewer was made there in 1866". The 1816 map also shows a Mineral Spring farther to the west. There are sufficient features marked on both the 1816 map and the 1863 to 1868 Ordnance Survey map to enable the positions of both the Lady Well and the Mineral Spring to be clearly identified on modern maps.



Butt, in 1878, goes on to say that the Mineral Spring is "situated by the south side of the road at Ladywell Cottage, before the cemetery is reached". This is the site that is now marked by the plaque on the house on 148 Ladywell Road (called Brockley Lane on the 1816 map). Butt adds "*Mrs. Bank, the present tenant of Lord Dartmouth, informs me that this well was situated in the garden above her cottage; that it was run dry by the making of the same sewer (1866) which was fatal to the old Lady Well, ... that a previous tenant named Stiles dismantled it, and sold the bottom stone. The well was railed round, and the spring reached by descending several steps..... The water was noted for its benefit to weak eyes, and a lady, now*

residing at Norwood, told the present tenant that she, when a girl, came every day to drink of the water for the benefit of her health." The Kentish Mercury of July 3 1896 quotes a Mr. Thomas in a letter "*When a boy I frequently fetched water from the mineral spring for my mother, who was a victim of rheumatism, and found relief from drinking the water.*"

Geology of the spring and well

The modern BGS map shows that the mineral spring would have emerged within the Lambeth Group. A section in Loam Pit Hill drawn by Whitaker in 1889, about 500m from the mineral spring, shows this Group here to be composed of laminated clay with partings of sand and a little gypsum, lignite and iron pyrites above brown sand and more impermeable clays and shell beds. This would account for the chalybeate character of the mineral waters. By contrast the Lady Well, some 10m lower at the bottom of the slope, is on Quaternary river gravels (Kempton Park Gravel) and alluvium of the floodplain of the Ravensbourne. Beneath the river gravels the BGS also map a faulted contact between the Chalk and the Thanet Sand. Water reaching the surface by this route would be expected to have very different chemical properties to water coming through the Lambeth Group.



The Lady Well plaque unveiled on 14th October 2015.

The plaque is on the wall with Ladywell station in the background

Photos Laurie Baker

1984 Plaque at 148 Ladywell Road

Photo: Paul. Rainey

References

Plaque Ladywell Mineral Spring: www.londonremembers.com/memorials/ladywell-mineral-spring

Pen and ink drawing of the Lady Well: *The Lady Well, Ladywell Fields, Ladywell, Lewisham, c. 1840*

www.ideal-homes.org.uk/lewisham/assets/galleries/ladywell/the-lady-well-1840

British Geological Survey. 1998. *South London. England & Wales Sheet 270. Solid & Drift Geology. 1:50,000.* (Keyworth, Nottingham).

Butt, R. 1878. *Historical Guide to Lewisham.*

Foord, A.S. 1910. *Springs, Streams & Spas of London.* T. Fisher Unwin.

Whitaker, W. 1889. *The Geology of London and part of the Thames Valley.* Memoirs of the Geological Survey of England & Wales. Vols 1 & II (HMSO, London)