

SGI 26 Tooting artesian parish pump

London Borough of Wandsworth

Tooting Artesian parish pump, monument at the corner of Church Road and Mitcham Road

Grid reference: TQ 278 711

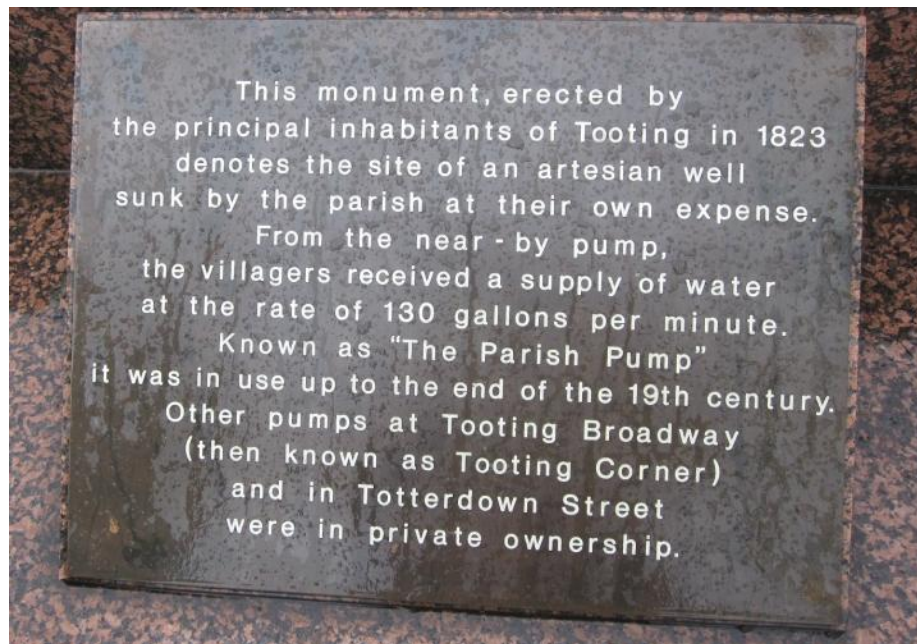
For a man to be able to dig a well he needs it to be at least about 5 ft. wide and to be kept dry at the bottom while being dug. An effective borehole, however, needs only to be a few inches in diameter and can be drilled under water. The invention of borehole tools in about 1820 thus provided a quicker, more reliable and much cheaper (perhaps 1/5 of the cost) way of obtaining water. Boring rapidly became very popular. Until then many expensive potential deep wells had collapsed or filled with sand and had had to be abandoned on penetrating the London Clay and reaching water.

The Tooting Artesian Parish Pump is on Mitcham Road in Tooting. The boring was sunk by the parishioners in 1823 through the London Clay about 130ft into the grey sand above the Chalk from which the water first rose 15ft above the ground. It formerly flowed over an iron fountain head 9ft above the ground but later it was allowed to emerge 2ft above the ground for public use. For around 60 years it produced a steady flow of 7 to 10 gallons a minute until 4 days after pumping tests, at 2.5 million gallons/day, began at the Streatham Water Works in 1884 when it dried up. After pumping finished the flow at the Artesian Well slowly returned and reached about 3 gallons a minute after 5 days. There was much local concern as many other overflowing wells in the Tooting area at this time were similarly affected. Permanent drying up followed the start of the permanent steam pumps at Streatham in 1897.

These results and more were obtained by Joseph Lucas – a pioneering British hydrogeologist, who happened to live nearby. His tombstone is in the church yard opposite (St Nicholas).

Access

The Monument is freely accessible at the corner of Church Road and Mitcham Road.



Photos: D. Clements 2015

References

Anon. 1822. Boring for Water. *Monthly Magazine* Vol. 54

Lucas, J. [Under Pseudonym 'Hydrogeologist, Tooting Graveney'], 1884. Artesian Wells in South-West London. Letters in *The Times*, 25th September & 7th October.