



WATER

In 1596, Sir John Harrington, a godson of Queen Elizabeth I, invented the water closet. He presented one to Queen Elizabeth I and, it is said, she used it throughout her life. The other one he used himself and these were the only two made because society then thought this was a ridiculous idea.⁽¹⁾

The invention of the flush toilet is widely attributed to the London plumber Thomas Crapper. He patented a U-bend siphoning system in the late 19th century. ⁽²⁾

As far as we know, flush toilets were installed in Lingfield only after 1900.

When did a mains water supply come to the Lingfield area? We know that fresh water was piped into some cottages and houses in Lingfield in the late 1890s. We have two 'Fitting Notices' by The East Surrey Water Company to 'Oregon Cottages, Station Road, Lingfield' dated 15th July 1897 and into 'Block of 3 Cottages, Mr G Batchelor, Plaistow Street', on 2nd November 1897.

East Surrey Water Company have informed us that only in 1910 a reservoir was built in Moons Lane, near Dry Hill which was operational from 1912. Kenley Water Works was operational from 1920 when pipes were being laid along the A22 and water pipes were being laid across Tilburstow Hill in 1924.

So, where did this mains water in Lingfield come from?

Surrey largely depends for its water supply on two great water-bearing strata, the Chalk and the Lower Greensand.⁽³⁾ In the Lingfield area, as evidenced by the boreholes sunk in Chartham Park and St Piers, then the 'Labour Colony', the water is extracted from the Tunbridge Wells sand layer.

The Chartham Park borehole was sunk in 1910 to a depth of 149 feet 6 inches, the St Piers borehole was sunk in 1908 to 150 feet but there is evidence of an earlier well about 50 feet away. The underground pressure forced water to within 9 feet of the surface and was then sucked up with surface pumps. ⁽⁴⁾

So, we assume that before 1900 water was brought to the surface and piped into some houses in a similar way. Otherwise, people had to get their water from wells in gardens, on farms and in the grounds of estates.

Gordon Jenner, in his book *The Lingfield I Knew* quotes: 'The house, one in a terrace of three [at the top of Newchapel Road, now 'Archway House'] ... A well near the back door provided water for all purposes and a home for little red minnows. Piped water was introduced round 1905, one outside tap between the three houses. This was an important event and I can just remember it.'

Under the heading 'water' as a utility, one also has to consider sewerage and drainage. This was not installed in Lingfield until about 1906:

From the Lingfield Parish Register:

'At a Parish Meeting held at the Lingfield School Room this day 4th October, 1900 to discuss the Scheme for the Lingfield Drainage to inspect the plans for the scheme as prepared by the Engineer.

... proposed by Mr Cobham, seconded by Mr Taylor 'that the Scheme before the Meeting be approved' or the Chairman putting it to the Meeting: 5 voted in favour, 22 against.'

Further entries:

'Minutes of the Parish Meeting 7th March, 1904: Mr Wright asked several questions as to the cost of altering the drainage scheme. Mr Birley, Mr Cobham and Mr Taylor replied.'

'Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Lingfield School Room this 29th day of March, 1906: ... proposed by Mr Wright, seconded by Mr Love, that a vote of thanks be given to the District Councillors for their services in connection with the drainage recently carried out in Lingfield.'

Sources:

- 1) Lucinda Lambton: *Temples of Convenience*.
The Daily Telegraph: 'Right Now' – 'Ideas that changed the World' - Magazine published 6th March, 2004.
- 2) The Daily Telegraph: 'Right Now' – 'Ideas that changed the World' - Magazine published 6th March, 2004.
- 3) *Surrey's Industrial Past* – edited by Glenys Crocker,
Surrey Industrial History Group.
- 4) Taken from: *The Water Supply of Surrey from Underground Sources with Records of Sinkings and Borings* by William Whitacker, BA, FRS – 1912

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