

The '*Fountains*'  
of  
Long Compton, Warwickshire  
or a  
Short History of Long Compton's Water

All about GR SP287 330 or 52° 0' N, 1° 35' W



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## Preface.

Long Compton has several Drinking Water Fountains and my research was intended to uncover their story – who built them and where the water came from. In this I have not been altogether successful and thus this report has many shortcomings. In the text I have endeavoured to avoid unjustified speculation and to employ appropriate wording where there may be uncertainty.

Two cautions:

The description of these monuments as *Fountains* is Victorian and may, or may not, indicate the continuous flow of water from a spout. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century they have been called both 'Stand Posts' and 'Water Taps' (WT).

'Crockle Street' has a new name 'Crockwell Street'.

## The Records.

With but a single, and not very enlightening, exception the earliest records of water about the village date from the 1880's – how the village got its water in earlier times is unknown but there is no shortage of easily accessible, and apparently permanent, water about the village and wells were also used. Additionally it may also be confidently assumed that rain water was also collected for although not always clean rain water was soft and therefore very sought after for laundry work.

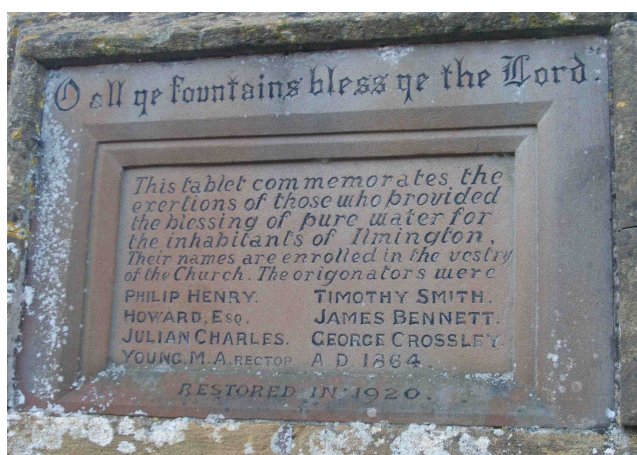
## The *Fountains* of Long Compton.

About the village of Long Compton can be seen eight *Fountains*. In past times these provided the villagers with clean water. They fell into disuse with the coming of proper mains water in the 1950's. Although probably repaired, or even rebuilt at some time, these almost certainly date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century for it was then that the benefits of pure water became clear to all. Often these improvements were promoted by the local Landowners but there are examples where the Clergy e.g. at Fenny Compton or a long established Local Charity e.g. at Northend took the lead. In Long Compton it was the Marquess of Northampton.

Unfortunately I have discovered nothing about the original work – nothing earlier than that which was recorded by the first large scale government survey of these parts undertaken in 1883 and 1884. The maps subsequently produced show seven *Fountains* and one (*Horse*) *Trough* about the village. It seems very likely that the *Trough* used the same water as the *Fountains* – certainly there was such a *Trough* before 1930 and I see no reason to doubt that this was it. Of the original seven *Fountains* only six survive and the *Trough* is long gone. The fountain at the cross deserves special attention for it stands within a recess in the plinth that supports the remains of a medieval cross. The whole thing is very curious for the base probably dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was clearly built to accommodate the *Fountain*. This is not to say that the Fountain and base are contemporary for the base may have been built around the *Fountain*. Now it was not unusual for the principal fountain in a village to be something special and for it to include a dedication to the benefactor as can be seen in *Fountains* in Mickleton and Ilmington, but in Long Compton there is none. At the top of the village are two additional *Fountains* (in Crockle Street and by the Old Compton Garage) – *Fountains* that have never, so far as I can see, been shown on any mapping. It is likely that these were later improvements a view supported by some fragmentary references in later

council minutes.

### *Ilmington Fountain*



Almost all of the further information on water matters comes from council minutes – councils established after the Local Government reforms of the 1890's. These set up both Civil Parishes and Rural District Councils. Henceforth there would be records. About here it was Long Compton Parish Council and Brailes Rural District Council (RDC) with Brailes RDC also the Rural Sanitary Authority and thus responsible for ensuring that everyone had access to an adequate supply of pure water. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Brailes RDC was combined with Shipston on Stour RDC.

The Marquess of Northampton was a considerable landowner about Long Compton and there can be little doubt that it was he who provided *Fountains* for the benefit of his tenants some time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and certainly before 1884. However he was not the only landowner. Principal amongst the others was Eton College who held land that subsequently passed to the Western Estate. Their landholding almost sliced through the village just to the north of Broad Street. Thus all of the original *Fountains* served the Marquess's tenants south of Broad Street whilst those of Eton College, and those of the Marquess about Crockwell Street, had none. This was at least partly corrected in 1897 when a spring on Harrow Hill was exploited to supply water to Crockle Street. From the first much of this water was taken directly into the houses and so there was little need for new public water *Fountains*. As to the fountain by Compton Garage I am unable to say whether this was fed from Harrow Hill or otherwise – it may have been an extension of the original supply.

In 1919 the Marquess's estate about Long Compton was being sold. The council was clearly concerned to secure their continued rights to the spring water and entered into a correspondence with the estate about this. Although the final outcome is lost it is from these records that we have some of the few insights into the ownership and operation of the waters. It appears that at some time previously the council (probably the RDC) had gained control of the springs, tanks etc. by payment of a small Quit Rent to the estate. The choice of description is intriguing for Quit Rents were a medieval arrangement regarding exemption from servitude. Why it should re-appear in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is a mystery and the details are unfortunately lost.

A few years later the Geological Survey took an interest in Warwickshire's water sources which resulted in the publication of a report in 1928. About Long Compton the record is less than satisfactory but it includes the statement:

*“The source of the Council's Supply is Coombe Spring from the Oolite from which it is thrown out by the Upper Lias Clay at a mile and a quarter south from Long Compton Church. The water is piped to stand posts in the village.”*

No mention of Harrow Hill or of any properties directly connected to the mains. However about a mile and a quarter south of the church is a spring in a field named “The Coombe” on the 1813 estate map.. This is thus almost certainly the original spring used to supply Long Compton's *Fountains* but where the tank was I can not say.

This is almost the end of this story. In 1919 there was said to be 107 taps of various kinds. Then in 1933 the council arranged for a plan of the water to be prepared but this has not been found. Additionally there is at least one reference to a Spring at The Hollows whilst there is also reference to a New Tank after WW2.

Finally the 1950's saw the arrival of mains water – even so not everyone was best pleased for henceforth they must all pay for their water.



## Appendix 1

### The Springs, the *Fountains* and the *Trough*.



1.  
A

*fountain* in 1885 and photographed in 2014. On the East Side of Old Road (Old Hill) SP2901 3190



2.  
A

*fountain* in 1885 and photographed in 2014. On the Old Road (Old Hill) corner. SP2901 3207.



3. A *fountain* in 1885 but now lost. On the East Side of Main Street and South of Clarks Lane. About SP2899 3218.

4. A *fountain* in 1885 and photographed in 2014. On the East Side of Main Street North of Clarks Lane. SP2896 3225.







5. A fountain in 1885 and photographed in 2014. On the South Side of East Street and outside 'Cotswold'. SP2893 3264.



6. A fountain in 1885 and photographed in 2014. On the north side of Broad street and outside 'Stoneleigh'. SP2898 3274.



10. The site of a *trough* (horse trough) now lost. On the west side of Main Street and almost opposite East Street. SP2881 3266.

7. The Medieval Cross and a *fountain* in 1885. Photographed in 2014 this stands to the West of Main Street and close by the shop. SP2878 3280.





8. The *Fountain* by Compton Garage and photographed in 2014. Apparently never shown on any map and probably dating to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the East side of Main Street just to the south of Malthouse Lane. SP2878 3296.



9. A *fountain* in Crockwell Street photographed in 2014. Apparently not shown on any map and probably dating from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the garden wall to NO. 20. SP2858 3325.





Harrow Hill Spring. Not seen but probably about the gully just to the east of Harrow Hill Farm about SP285 335. *An interesting site where once were Hydraulic Ram Pumps, Tanks and a Sheepwash. Additionally the 1813 Estate Map shows something very odd about here but what this was is unknown.*

The Coombe Spring. Not seen but probably east of South Hill Farm at about SP287 312.

## Appendix 2.

### Sources

1. Long Compton Parish Council Minutes. WCRO CR4152.
2. Brailes and Shipston-on-Stour Rural District Council's Minutes WCRO CR1102.
3. "Wells and Springs of Warwickshire" Richardson, Linsdall. 1928.
4. "Through the Lych Gate" Rainsberry, Edward. 1969.

WCRO = Warwickshire Record Office.