

**The Water Pump, Crofts Hill**  
**On entry to Flamborough – B1255, Bridlington Road**

See below for a history of the pump, written by Ron Green, author of “A View from the Headland, Volume One, Flamborough 1700-1800”



The pump preserved on a platform at the bottom of Crofts Hill is Flamborough’s last link with centuries when villagers got their supplies from private enterprise as distinct from the parish or other local government body.

The well was sunk in 1864 by a group of villagers after dissatisfaction grew with the existing well, probably the Spa Well which dated back to around 1750 and was similarly provided by local men led by a prominent Flamborian, John Ogle.

In 1864, the villagers asked the lord of the manor, Water Strickland, for permission to sink a well on his land and through his agent he said they could have it on any waste ground he owned. They were offered a site in a field on Bridlington Road in an area where water gathered naturally – there was already a pond known as the South Mere there and a stream ran through it, while a road called Water Lane was nearby. However, they preferred to put the well on the other side of the hedge in a broad grass verge near the pond on Bridlington Road, more convenient for carts and people.

About £25 was raised in subscriptions but this was not enough – so a public meeting was organized on July 4th in the Primitive Methodist schoolroom where it was agreed that anyone who took water by tub or water cart – a barrel on wheels drawn by pony or donkey – would pay 16 shillings and then a halfpenny for each load of water until expenses were covered. Men who paid this were shareholders

in the pump and had the right to sell or dispose of their share, and anyone who failed to pay the charges was banned from filling tubs or water carts. Villagers could fill their buckets free.

Fish merchant, Francis Bayes Senior, was elected Chairman, with fishmonger and grocer John Bayes, carrier John Hall and fish dealer Joseph Sampson directors. Another 10 men were on the management committee. The pump was put on a platform so that barrels on carts and water carts could easily be filled from it and old photographs show that the restored pump and its platform are on the same spot.

The well went down 24 feet and was Flamborough's only public supply, although some villagers, particularly farmers, had wells of their own. The only other public pump was near the North Mere, now filled in and part of the Village Green, but water from this pump which has also been preserved in its original position after rescue from a scrapyards, was regarded as unfit to drink. A sample was sent at the end of the century to the county analyst who found it very evidently polluted and not to be used for drinking. The Parish Council accordingly put up a sign saying "this water is unfit for drinking purposes" near the pump.

For years water sellers were a familiar sight as they went round with tubs and carts selling to villagers who usually paid a halfpenny a bucket – it was a long way to carry laden buckets from the pump on the edge of the village for the majority who lived in the centre more than half a mile away or even further on the north side, especially the elderly. Some who had water tanks under the kitchen floor connected to a pump in the sink topped up their supplies from the water sellers, and many also gathered rainwater in tubs in the yard.

There was a crisis in 1897 when the managers put a lock on the pump. Flamborough Parish Council and Bridlington Rural District Council got involved. Complaints included: "If it's a private pump, what is it doing at the roadside?" "If it's a public pump, break the lock." "It was never intended to be private and the Council should take it over." Eventually it was established that the lock was put on because people with barrels and carts who were not shareholders took water, lads threw things down the well and the water was being polluted by "acts of indecency". The shareholders promised there would always be a key available to cottagers with their buckets.

The immediate problem had gone but it was the beginning of the end for the well. The Council was advised that although the shareholders did not buy the land and did not have the right to sell it, they could not be dispossessed without compensation. When the Rural District Council got round to negotiations to take the pump over, the secretary of the owners Francis Bayes told them in January 1901 they would take £150 for it. The Council refused to pay this, but as pressure was building up for a waterworks which would make the pump redundant, the owners relented and in the end accepted £18 to cover what they had recently spent on it.

The Flamborough waterworks, which tapped an unlimited supply of clear water more than 200 feet down, was built near the road to Wold Farm in open country on the north side, and the parish pump became history.