

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The site of Denbury Cistern has, throughout history, been the centre of the village, both geographically and socially. It is more than likely the site of the old market cross, which the village would have had during the markets and fairs from the Middle Ages. There is even an unproven suggestion that it was the site of an ancient well, the Saxon village growing up around it with the Church in a central position.

The site may always have been connected with water, or it may have had other uses, but the building that we know has certainly existed since 1771, and probably long before, as other chapters will discuss.

The water cistern has appeared in records under many names. These include conduit, fountain, water tap, memorial and monument. The names are self-evident, and the need to collect water in the past must have meant that it was the social focus of the community. It is easy to imagine the queuing, the splashing, the clank of buckets and the chatter that went on, and the news that was constantly exchanged, as well as being reminded of how hard life actually was. But it is the central position that has made it useful for every other reason imaginable. Most recently it is familiar as a bus stop, pick-up point (for car passengers) unofficial seat and millennium light.



The cistern, possibly in the 1940's

Before the concrete cover was made, a trough, which still exists underneath, was the container from which horses and other animals were watered, the 'human' tap being on the north side. Old photographs indicate two troughs during the twentieth century; one was smaller and rounded; a later one was square and much larger. As horses were replaced, the trough became a litter bin, and was a nuisance to vehicular traffic. It was eventually broken by a passing lorry, and so covered in. The construction of the resulting 'seat' would not be allowed today, as it is dangerously close to the crossroads. This seat has witnessed, over more recent years, meetings of the elderly, for gossip, and the young, for play, then courting. It has been the site of under-age cigarette smoking and youthful high spirits. It is ugly, but a recent straw poll indicated a great fondness for this lump of concrete.

As a meeting point, it is ideal, as it gives protection from wind, sun or traffic.



Denbury Bride Annette Wakeham with her father, Eric, and attendants. May 1999

After Church on Sundays, people linger at the cistern to exchange news: brides are sprinkled with confetti next to it, and mourners stop by it for quiet reflection.

At Christmas, the cistern was, from the 1960's, dressed with lights, a tradition begun by Neville Bailey: the Carol Singers use the cistern as a focal point and, on Boxing Day, the three legged fancy-dress race begins there.

The Denbury Ramblers often begin their Sunday walks at the cistern: the beating of the bounds of the Parish set off from there in April 1924 (and probably finished there): in 1935, a service was conducted by the 'fountain' to celebrate the Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary.

As a site for the parish notice board, the cistern was first used in 1935, and this seems to have been continued until 2002, when the notices became too numerous, and a larger board became necessary. It is now sited on the church cottage wall. In 1938 the Women's Institute added their own notice board. The Parish notice board has been regularly replaced, the latest being erected in 2002.

One of the loveliest new traditions was begun by the Flower and Produce Show Committee, which arranged for prisoners from Channing's Wood to plant flower baskets and hang them round the building. Stalwart volunteers keep them watered. For many summers, villagers have enjoyed the wonderful sight of flowers cascading from these baskets until the first frosts

Denbury Cistern makes a perfect landmark. How often do we begin instructions to potential callers with 'Do you know the cistern in the centre of the village? Yes? Well.....'

Everyone will be able to add their own memories to the list, but we all accept that the cistern is the building that makes Denbury special.



Competitors waiting for the Boxing Day fancy dress race, 1986



The splendid hanging baskets, 1997, with E Mortimore, judge P Shaw & V Watson-Jackson



FUNDING THE PROJECT

In 1999, the new light was ready to be installed on top of the cistern. An attempt to prepare this event showed that the roof itself was unstable and in need of repair. Denbury and Torbryan Parish Council did not have the immediate funds for the entire job, although they were able to use some of their small reserve. With the guidance of Teignbridge District Council's Environment Department, the Parish Council was advised to look for grant aid to pay for the work, and so various bodies were approached.

The bodies who were able to help were the **Countryside Agency**, which administered the **Local Heritage Initiative** grant, the Heritage Lottery Fund, which supplies it and the **Nationwide Building Society** which supplements the LHI.

Devon County Council has contributed substantially to the building work.

The LHI grant is dependent on the involvement of the whole community in the project. This made it a suitable topic for the Denbury Archive Group, and the members have recruited and encouraged others. While the project has been spear-headed by the group, many other people have come forward to contribute specific skills, or to add stories to our collection of anecdotes. The school has involved the children as part of its 'water' studies. We continue to collect stories and photographs, and there is still much archive material to sift through. The cistern project will probably continue to run for many years to come. So far, we have uncovered more mysteries than we have solved !

The final piece of the puzzle will be to install an interpretation board nearby to inform newcomers and visitors of our little piece of history. Many thanks to our sponsors for making this project possible.

Denbury and Torbryan Parish Council

Denbury Archive Group

DENBURY'S WATER SUPPLIES

Denbury has a number of advantages as a settlement site. The most obvious is the defensive advantage of Denbury Down itself, giving the Iron-age Celts good reason to build a fort and accompanying settlement. Before them, the Bronze-age people had used the hill-top to build three round barrows, and the name of Halwell (Holy Well) suggests that there may have been a settlement there. Small irregular Celtic fields are still identifiable on the flanks of the Down.

Denbury is first documented as a manor of Tavistock Abbey before 1066 and from then on its history can be traced from documents to the present day. The medieval strip field system can still be identified from the 1839 tithe map. Between the Iron Age and the eleventh century, the village would have developed at the foot of the hill taking a Saxon formation of four roads radiating from a central cross, and a Saxon name, Deveneberie (fort of the men of Devon), which we still use. There is little doubt that Denbury has been continuously occupied for at least three and maybe four thousand years.

Water was always a key element in choosing a settlement. The hill, Halwell, Shute and Norder, as well as more distant farms, all had access to water via springs, wells or streams respectively, but the village site had a disadvantage. The underlying limestone is karstified, (moulded by water) and has a complex network of underground aquifers (water-bearing rock) and streams. These give rise to springs and wells, and in Denbury, cisterns were built to capture the spring water and make it accessible. Some of the cisterns and wells would dry up after periods of drought, leaving the occupants reliant on just a few sources of water. The pursuit of this water has featured large in Denbury's history, and leads inevitably to the village cistern itself.

Denbury Down is formed of Norder Slate, and several springs emerge near the top of the hill. These were the water supplies used by the chief homes and farms of the village. The Old Rectory (Chestern House) is fed by one such well. Denbury Manor House had a well in the grounds to the east of the house. When Pierce Joseph Taylor inherited the manor from his father in the eighteenth century, he installed a water supply, which was fed by a spring on the eastern down. This fills a cistern half way up the Hill, Higher Meadow on the tithe map. From there it is piped across fields to Shute Lane, then it skirts the village green and enters the manor grounds at the corner of South Street and the Green, where the Manor once had its entrance. A large brick cistern, an impressive feat of architecture and engineering,



Inside the circular manor cistern

was installed at the rear of the Manor and covered, except for an inspection cover, with earth and landscaping. This supply fed the Manor and any excess went on to fill the cistern in the village centre, the lead of which was installed at the same time. The villagers used this water until the twentieth century, when water was piped in from the reservoir on the hill, but it was known to fail regularly in dry weather throughout its useful life. From its beginnings in 1895, the Parish Council had the inconsistency of the water supply at the top of its agenda. The

cistern on the Down continued to be used at the Manor and the overflow still supplies water to an ornamental elephant by a pond. However, even this has a history of drying up. The supply was mentioned in the 1909 sale document of the manor, as were the drains, which led to an open drain on the opposite side of South Street, and thence to a cesspool at Shute.



springs as a consequence.

Other properties had their own wells or cisterns, and some have been identified, such as Pear Tree Farm (well) Nordern (wells) and Halwell (spring). See the map (p23) for details.

Shute farm always had its own supply from a cistern behind the farm buildings, and from a well in the courtyard, and only installed mains water in 1988. Nearby is Shute Parish Well, now in a garden in Orchard Close. This well overflows to the shute itself, which remains the only fully reliable public water supply in the village, and has never been recorded as drying up. It may still be used in emergencies, unless threatened future quarrying is allowed to change the subterranean water levels, drying up the

Overflow from the old parish well at Shute

Until the 1770's, the villagers took their water from two town wells. One was probably at the crossroads of West Street and Heathfield Terrace (Townsend), and the other may have been on the cistern site itself. There was another very reliable well at Shute. These required maintenance and were important enough for the Courts Leet and Baron to annually raise a Portreeve's rate for the purposes of repairing the two town wells, the Shute well, and for clearing the 'Shute Lake'. The archive group has identified this lake as the sewage point outside Shute House, where, until the 1960's, the sewers drained into a fissure in the rock along the Shute Lane fault line. An indent in the stone wall indicates the site. Before piped sewers, the drains would have been open from all points in the village, then covered with stone as time went by. As late as 1910, the Rectory sewage outfall was in Glebe Meadow (behind Orchard close) where it fell by gravity to Shute Lane.

The rights to use water supplies are carefully guarded and worded in detail in deeds and documents relating to land throughout the centuries. The central cistern was not reliable, and it would have been impractical to water farm animals from it. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Denbury Feoffees were contributing to the cost of maintaining the water-course at Shute. It is not clear when the first reservoir on the Down was built, but the Feoffees contributed to the Parish water supply in 1909.

From 1895, the Parish Council took over the responsibility for maintaining the supply. Water was the very first item discussed at the first meeting. The council very quickly raised a Sanitary Rate and instructed the assistant Overseer of the Poor to collect it, for which he was paid an extra £2. This was followed by the appointment of a Parochial Committee on Sanitary Matters. It seems that the sewers were still open at this time, and the committee lobbied to get them covered. In 1902 the old stone covered drain in South Street was piped and re-directed across fields to Shute.

By 1900 the village was in need of a larger water supply, and the debate continued for several years before it was finally agreed to install a second reservoir on the Down. It was proposed that the Shute well water was piped to the Green cottages, and then extended to the new property at Lowes Farm in 1911. However, this was overtaken by a decision to put these houses on the 'main' from the Down.



Inspection covers to the reservoirs on Denbury Down

In 1911, a report from the Public Health section of the local council recorded that a balance of £20 remained on the loan outstanding on the water supply. The same report records the reservoir on the Down, fed by two springs, containing about 10,000 gallons. Water was distributed to the village by means of standpipes, only one or two houses being connected to the 'main'. A Water Bailiff and Scavenger (road cleaner), Mr Charles Lark, was appointed to take charge of these standpipes and ration the water at times of drought. Meanwhile, the Rectory and two other houses depended on other adjacent springs. The water had failed in the previous Spring season, and the report continued by recommending that the winter flow was stored more efficiently. A new well was attempted on the Down in 1911. The hole was dug to 50ft but was not successful in tapping water.

The village at this time had two sewers, which united and discharged into a rock fissure below the village, at Shute. Although some houses in the village were fitted with water closets, the report states, few were flushed due to lack of water. The houses backing on to Denbury Close (the school field) tipped their sewage directly on to the field, and this practise was not stopped until the County Council took over the field in 1910, when a sewer pipe was installed from the school to Shute Lane.

The standpipes mentioned are the four taps place below the Union Inn, the corner of Greenhill Lane, in North Street and at the Townsend crossroads of Shute Lane and Woodland Road.

No more mention was made until 1919, when the Feoffees reported that the water had almost failed again, and that they would contribute to any scheme to alleviate the problem. In 1921, no such work had been planned. It was proposed again in 1928 but not pursued. The Parish Councillors during this era seemed locked in a battle between the innovators, who wanted action, and the conservatives, who believed that there was enough water, if only everyone used less. The former group had a long tough fight to get their ideas taken seriously. A long debate in 1929 to bring mains water from Yeatt Cross was eventually thrown out on grounds of cost. This debate was repeated in 1931. One of the wilder schemes proposed by the die-hards in 1931 was to purchase a petrol pump to force the water from the Shute well up to the reservoir. The proposal was carried, but never mentioned again. Did this turn into a Dibley-type fiasco?

At some time during the years 1930 to 1937, a second reservoir, which was much bigger, was constructed next to and supplementary to the first. From 1926, anxiety about fires from bombing and the need for effective fire fighting hydrants probably focused minds on taking action. These reservoirs may still be inspected (with the owner's permission) in a field behind Chestern House.

As the Rural District Council took more interest, and public health became organised, a solution had to be found. In 1937, a scheme was finally proposed by the Parochial Committee to lay a new 4-inch main from the reservoir to the village cistern and to the fire hydrants. This scheme was completed in September 1937. The hydrants were connected by standpipes, kept by the Water Bailiff, now Mr Harry Lark.

In 1938, the pump near the hall was removed and the well filled in. Mrs Mavis Gooding remembers her father, Mr Lamble, helping. Was this one of the parish wells mentioned in the eighteenth century?

This history has been compiled from old leases and documents, wills, Feoffees' records, Parish Council minutes and the tithe map of 1939. The Denbury Archive holds copies of all records examined. Anecdotal evidence supports this



The East Street tap.

chronology. We know that the water ran dry in some summers and that only the water at Shute continued to flow. The steep walk back uphill with pails of water imprinted itself on young minds. Elderly residents have told us that Mr Lark took his duties seriously, and rationed the cistern water in periods of drought. They also remember that the four taps failed, then the cistern, before it was necessary to walk down to Shute. By the time the taps were installed, however, the cistern water was considered 'not good for drinking' although the water continued to be drawn and the animal trough on the west side used. The lead content must have been at danger levels by modern standards. Even after the new supply was installed in 1937, the village cistern continued to run dry. We presume by this time that it was no longer connected to the Manor cistern. The Manor cistern was still active in 1962, when the County Fire Service retained it as an emergency fire-fighting supply.

The water supply continued to be a problem until a mains supply was finally brought in after the Second World War. The cistern was in need of repair in 1951, and in 1954 water was no longer taken from it. At one point, the Parish Council wanted it removed. Luckily two stalwarts of the village, Col Ruddick and Mr Parkinson, argued that the cistern was an historical legacy, a war memorial and (modern touch!) a deterrent to speeding traffic. So it was saved, but drained and the water supply cut off, in 1962. The village taps became redundant as all houses became connected to the mains. In 1952 the taps in West and North Streets were removed due to water being 'stolen' and removed from the village.

Anew 4inch main was laid from the village centre to the Green in 1964 but water pressure continued to be a problem until 1970, when the supply was updated with modern equipment and new pipes.

As people's expectations increased, the smells of the old drains caused offence and new sewers were installed in the 1960's. Surface water continues to drain into the Shute Lane fissure, eroding the rock below, and Shute Lane continues to flood in heavy rain, even without the help of sewage.

Research continues on this chronology, and it continues to be updated. Any first hand stories would be appreciated.

Afile holding copies of all research material is available.



Part of a 1717 record of the Denbury Manor and Burgh Court

THE CISTERN CONSTRUCTION

In an attempt to trace the history of the cistern, a thorough survey and examination has been conducted.

Denbury Cistern is a cuboid about 2½m with a four sided pyramidal roof. It is built into the natural slope from east to west. A single door in the East face is based half way up the wall, which makes access difficult. The building is aligned with the compass points and, interestingly, not with the road layout, despite being at a crossroads. The twentieth century war memorial is on the west face, where a broken stone trough used to provide water for animals. It is now concreted over and forms an unofficial seat (for which people hold great affection!) On the north face, alterations indicate that this side was changed to accommodate the outlet to a public water supply.

The building itself is constructed of limestone 390mm thick, from one of the many small local quarries within a mile of Denbury. The stone is not rubble, but is partially dressed, as may be seen from the pictures taken when the pointing was removed. The south wall is the least altered. The west wall has been repaired or altered behind the war memorial, and large unmatched stones used for filling in. On one early photograph, taken before the memorial was erected, a rectangular stain indicates a possible opening, which has been blocked in.

On the north wall, a repair has been executed, which was clearly visible when the pointing was removed. The stonework is different and the building mortar is white and hard, with a high cement content. The plinth at the bottom of this wall has been modified to create a recess, and crudely repaired on each side by chipping away some of the foundation stone and using factory-made brick. The recess was used within living memory for collecting water, which was piped from the internal cistern to an outside tap.

The door on the east wall appears to be an original opening, as the lintel above is continuous over the void, and the stonework appears not to have been tampered with. The stones are held with alime mortar, made from River Teign sand, which is still sound. This mortar

North wall unpointed, showing alterations for a tap and areas of previous repair.



has properties which are being appreciated anew. It remains porous, which is ideal in a building such as a cistern and it remains plastic, allowing some movement. It also continues to breathe, allowing excess moisture to evaporate out through the surface, unlike modern cement which may trap excess damp inside.

The roof is also of stone, split like slate. The bottom course forms a drip along the lower edge of the roof. An extra long piece above the door is cracked and allows the ingress of water, which creeps up the roof inside and finally drips onto the door outside. An observer will see that the construction is geometrically pleasing and of a high standard until the top of the roof is examined. This part has been crudely re-built

to accommodate the finial. From this evidence, it seems that the building pre-dates the alterations to the top.



The chimney-like ceiling inside, with capping stone

inside than outside.

Inside, the building is roughly corbelled, or stepped, from one metre above the lead floor, reducing to a central flat stone at its highest point. The effect is much like a bottle neck, and has the appearance inside of a chimney, sealed over. The roof is very thick, and may have been built to prevent escapes or evaporation, depending on the Figure 1 building's use. Later patchy rendering has obscured much of the inside, but there appears to be no visible evidence of windows or doors. The floor is higher

THE LEAD TANK

The cistern is lined with a lead tank to a height of 0.9m, closely fitted to the inner walls. On the south and east walls, it appears to have been installed after the stone, ie built in situ by bringing in rolls of lead and unrolling them. This conclusion is based upon the unflattened nature of the mortar behind the tank. On the other two sides, noticeably behind the

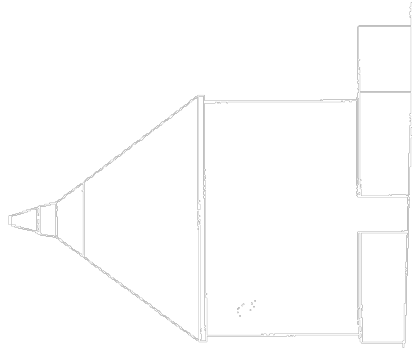


The tank inside with redundant pipe to outside

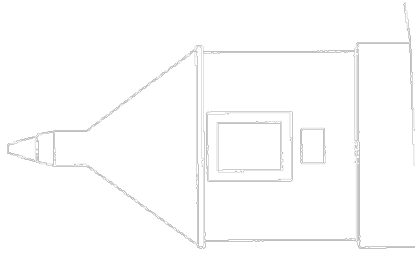
repaired sections of walls, the building mortar has flattened against the lead, indicating a repair later than the installation. The tank was constructed in three pieces, one for the floor, and two which wrap around two sides each. They are joined on two vertical seams and round the floor. The tank was then secured by iron hooks, still visible, from the wall over the top edge of lead, and the wall then rendered down to, and over, the lead rim, with a lime and sand mix, so that the vertical walls must have appeared seamless. The edge casting is still visible, but the render has long since crumbled and fallen behind the lead. A later attempt to plaster over, or stabilise, the old rendering with cement or something hard is rough and incomplete. The tank, no longer used, has shrunk away from the wall and the iron hooks have rusted and snapped.

The tank, 1.26m x 1.79m x 0.9m, has a capacity of 2.03 cu m to its rim. There is graffiti on two walls of the lead. On the south is an elaborate AP 1883 with serifs and a splayed AM, and on the north wall three repeats of the splayed AM and an IG.

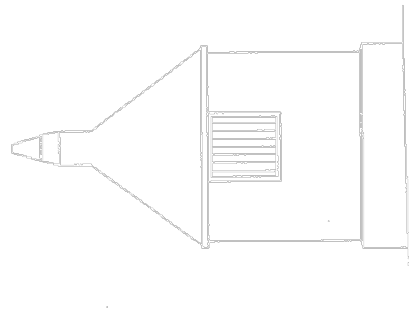
The lead walls bear several pipe-holes, which have been plotted, one in the floor, four in the lower walls, one in the upper lead wall and two above the lead in the stone.



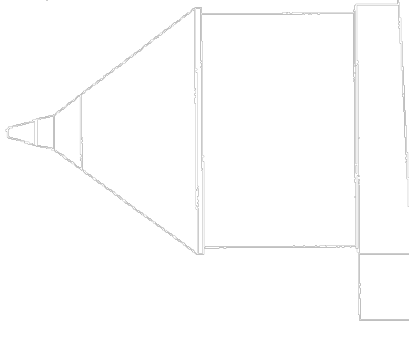
North Elevation



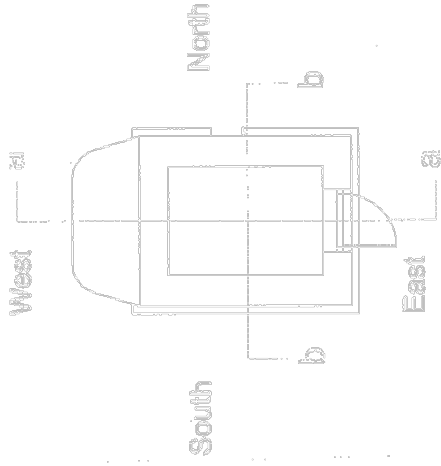
West Elevation



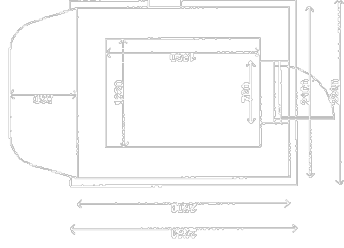
East Elevation



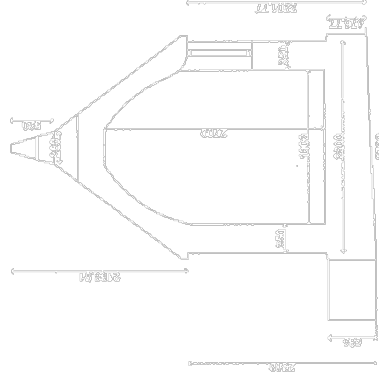
South Elevation



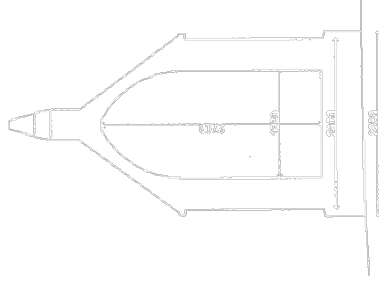
Plan



Dimensions



Section a-a



Section b-b

Denbury Cistern Elevations

Denbury Cistern Sections & Plans

THE GRANITE FINIAL

The granite capping stone on the cistern is probably not the original. The roof appears to have been altered to accommodate it, and was probably finished previously with a straightforward point or a simple embellishment such as a ball, as many 'lock-ups' are to this day.



The capping stone was removed during renovation in 2000 and re-bedded. The limestone base is visible. The iron collar was removed.

The granite is an alien stone in this limestone area. It is yellowish grey, from Dartmoor, and is possibly from Tavistock Abbey, where the same yellow granite was used. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1539), Henry VIII gave Tavistock and its lands, including the Manor of Denbury, to John Russell, soon to become the Earl of Bedford. The very fine Abbey buildings were mainly destroyed, but remained standing until 1670. Russell's ownership was tied into the King's purse by two extortionate fees, which he was soon unable to pay, and it is likely that the architectural salvage from the Abbey was plundered and sold, or taken to other manors for secular use, to help raise the fees. The link with Tavistock has been suggested by dowsing, but there is as yet no hard evidence, and any buildings from the abbey still extant in Tavistock have finned, not straight, finials.

The capping itself has been linked to the base of a shaft (of the archetypal 13th-14th century design) in the churchyard, and to the large socket stone now incorporated into a memorial to Rector Reiby and surmounted by a more recent cross. A theory was put forward that these three stones added up to the old village cross, which stood just outside or inside the churchyard, (depending on which source is read). It certainly seems likely that the socket stone and the ruins of the shaft are the remains, common all over Devon, of such a cross, at one time present in every village. These crosses, erected for many reasons, make a study of their own. They were toppled (but not removed) during the Dissolution of the 1530's, and smashed (but not removed) a century later by the Puritans. So it is mainly the cross-heads which are missing, smashed as idolatrous, or cunningly preserved in walls by the faithful. However, though hundreds have been identified, there are no other known crosses in the octagonal form of the cistern capping stone. The head also seems to be too big for the shaft. This is backed up by the existence of a matching stone at Halwell.

The Halwell stone, lying in a field, is still attached to its shaft. The scale drawing demonstrates that the two heads are roughly identical, given the nature of granite to carve clumsily. The shaft of the Halwell stone however is in proportion to its head, and very much bigger than the Denbury shaft remnant. The use to which

this stone was put must be speculative. It is on a ridge track, close to an ancient arched monument of some significance, surmounting a hill, and may have been a well cross, a preaching cross or a way-side cross. E. Masson Phillips, who spent over forty years studying such crosses, eventually concluded that the Halwell stone is not a cross at all but an architectural feature which bears a curious capital. (TDA Vol 111, 1979, p143) There is still much work to be done on the cross theory, starting with the remnants around Denbury itself, and an answer may eventually turn up.



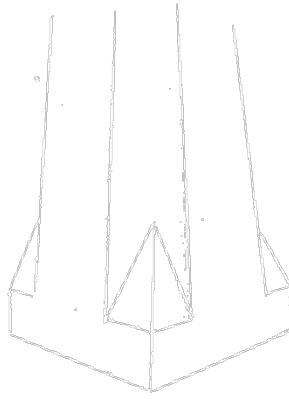
The 1771 carved on the cistern stone was engraved, common sense tells us, when the granite was erected, and quite possibly gives the date when the building was converted into a water cistern, or repaired. The stone is attached by an iron rod to a dressed square of limestone, 420mm across and 80mm thick, with a 35mm gap. During the 2000 restoration, the rod was strengthened with resin and the gap packed with mortar. The octagonal top now supports the collar of the new light.

The Halwell stone, complete with octagonal finial matching that on the cistern.



The shaft of the Denbury Market Cross, now in the churchyard. Its octagonal shape can still be identified, but is smaller than the Halwell shaft.

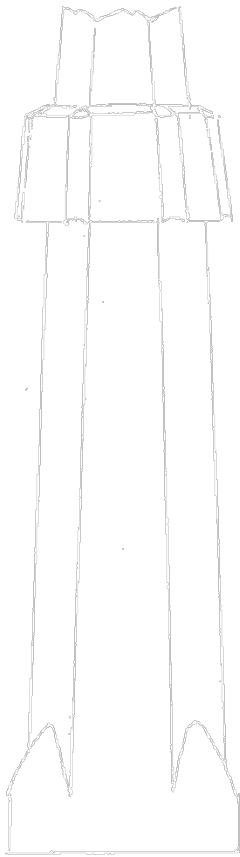
All these fragments are formed from the same yellowish granite. The stones have eight faces, and are octagonal down to the base of the pillar where they become square via four spurs.



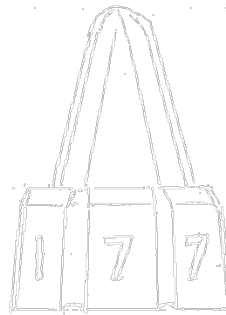
THE HALWELL AND DENBURY STONES

detail of corner spurs - not to scale.

Comparison of stones.
Scale, 1:10.



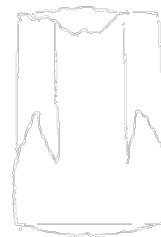
The Halwell Pillar



Flutings on concave
concave.

Caving 1771

The Denbury pinnacle,
now capping the cistern
in the village centre.



all edges weathered
and deteriorated

The Denbury Shaft Base

A LOCK-UP?

At first, the idea of the cistern as a lock-up seems surprising. A village the size of Denbury? A prison? To follow the reasoning, it is necessary to look at a brief history not only of Denbury, but also of law and order in the Middle Ages.

Denbury was given its name by the Saxons and means 'Fort of the Men of Devon'. At the Conquest of 1066, Denbury was already a thriving manor under the Abbot of Tavistock, Ealdred. It was large enough, together with Coffinswell, to sustain him after he moved on to Worcester in 1042, and he held them both until after the Domesday survey, when Denbury reverted to the Abbey. The Church chancel has evidence of a Saxon foundation. Later Manor Court records prove that Denbury had a Tithingman, that is a spokesman responsible for the communal responsibility for law and order. This system of tithings, or groups of ten men bonded for one another's good behaviour, goes back before 1066 and gives weight to the existence of a thriving Saxon town.

In 1285, King Edward 1 granted a charter, still extant, making official the weekly market and three day fair, but their origins are certain to be much earlier. Denbury became a burgh, which gave its prominent citizens or burghers some privileges and allowed trade to prosper. The 'town' was not large, but it held an important local position as a trading centre long before Newton Abbot developed. The keeping of order was a responsibility which accompanied the benefits. Law breakers could be tried at the County or Hundred Courts, but this took long months, even years, so most offences were dealt with in the Manor and Leet Courts. These were held by the Lord of the Manor, or his deputy, regularly and on the spot. This was more convenient for everyone, as it kept men from work for as short a time as possible and the costs of long remand imprisonments were avoided. Supporting the Lord, villagers were pressed into service as officers. There was a Portreeve (a sort of mayor), the Tithingman, a Constable, and two Bread Weighters and Ale Tasters. This was in addition to the Rector and Churchwardens who had responsibility for moral good behaviour and could resort to the Church Court. Some records of the Denbury Manor courts are available from the fourteenth until the end of the eighteenth centuries, when the Portreeve and his jurors still continued to hear presentments and to set fines.

In this system, there had to be a means of confining suspects and felons for brief periods, as well as for 'cooling off' after an affray or when drunk. At periods too, as laws came and went, the Parish was responsible for confining curfew breakers and vagrants. Ale houses were associated with theft, prostitution and felony, and the Denbury Church House Inn would have seen its share of bad behaviour. (The present Inn, now a house, is an eighteenth century replacement for an earlier inn.)

The usual solution was to have stocks or a lock-up in either an existing room or a custom-made building. The latter were never large, unlike county gaols, and there are many examples throughout the country of small lock-ups, round or square, with thick walls and roof. Often they were built over a well or stream in order to give the prisoner an essential water supply and allow effluent to wash away. It has been suggested that the damp made the prisoner more uncomfortable and therefore more penitent, but research indicates that the system was never designed to be intentionally inhumane. Some lock-ups even had a fireplace. Other lock-ups were 'blind houses', that is without windows. This may have been a deliberate design or in response to the window tax, bemoaned in 1771 by the reformer John Howard, which caused the blocking up of many essential apertures in gaols.

Only one picture of a medieval prison exists, and it is one such lock-up in Bristol, where it illustrates the 'Night-Walkers' Charter'. It is called a Tun, after the London, Cornhill, lock-up which was round like a barrel. The picture indicates the cramped size of the building, and the charter makes it clear that it was for temporary

or overnight confinement. Its wooden construction was probably in response to a demand by the King that all new gaols be made of wood, so that he might profit from his forests.

The Denbury cistern is typical in size of all such lock-ups, and may be a replacement for a previous building. Denbury was fortunate to be visited in March 2001 by David Viner who has been studying lock-ups and has written a book on the subject. His thorough report suggests that the current building may have been constructed between 1750 and 1850, when many stand-alone lock ups built of stone with a pyramidal roof were built, but his opinion is that the evidence for a lock-up is not conclusive. The addition of the capping stone is misleading, as the stone, bearing the date of 1771, may have been installed later, perhaps to support a lamp. However, pre-lamp photographs also show the stone installed on the top.

In the Archive Group's search for a chronology of the cistern, it has been dowsed by Heather Curtis and David Newby, who separately came to very similar conclusions. They believe that the cistern had been used as a lock-up and that the building is 500-700 years old. It had two doors, one at the east and one at the west, off-set, and two windows, one each on the north and south walls. This configuration was observed in use by John Howard in the eighteenth century at Swansea Gaol with a dividing wall so that two prisoners could be separately confined. Dowsing also indicated that the cistern is built where water lines meet, at a point where water can be found 40 feet below ground. This too has been noted at other lock-ups.

Despite exhaustive research, no hard evidence that Denbury cistern was a lock-up has yet come to light. There are still documents to translate from the Latin and others to track down. Its life story has to remain a matter of conjecture until some written or archaeological evidence can be found.



THE DENBURY NEW MILLENNIUM LIGHT

Denbury village held a competition to design a light to celebrate the New Millennium - this would be fitted on top of the War Memorial building known as the Cistern. The light is a striking new feature in the village - but you may not know of the symbolism of it's design ...

Carbon has great significance to us all, since all human life-forms are carbon-based, and many of us know that carbon comes in many different forms, most strikingly as Coal or Diamonds or Graphite, but you may not know that a few years ago another form was discovered and was given the rather unimpressive name of C60. One of the most interesting aspects is the appearance of it's molecular structure - often referred to as a BuckyBall in honour of Buckminster Fuller who discovered the shape. No doubt you will have noticed this shape on many modern footballs ! It's use is only recently being explored, but will eventually have a major impact on our lives. The promise of more efficient electrical items which will use less electricity and be cheaper to run sounds very desirable, as does better lubricants which will make our cars more efficient and will help stretch our oil reserves. We will increasingly reap the benefit of this discovery as we move further into the new Millennium.

This shape was chosen as the basis for the main structure to make reference to this discovery made in the Millennium just ended. This shape is made up of components which are very angular and yet group together to form the basis of a sphere - this symbolises the community of Denbury being made up of many parts to produce something quite unique. It also takes the sharp angles of the memorial below and evolves them into a shape that is very different to represent change.

The extension to the structure at the top of the lantern represents the forward motion to the future with an influence of religious architecture to reflect the lanterns' presence on a war memorial and it's proximity to Denbury Church.

And in it's centre glows the light that is the centre of it all - the life of Denbury.

So now you know ! Even without the symbolism it is a fresh new addition to the village. It is as excitingly new as the Millennium and provides a striking adornment to the Cistern by day and a soft blue glow at night. Well worth seeing !

MEMORIES

Written for the Dartington Rural Archive in 1962

Recalled by Mrs Irene Wilkins, born in 1890

Except for outlying farms, the village was really just four streets – crossroads with a cistern in the middle from which the cottagers used to draw the water they needed. There was a trough attached to it for the horses and here the lads used to congregate in the evenings and seemed quite happy though apparently with nothing to do. In those days of course their leisure hours were very few as they worked mostly on the farms where chores are really never finished.

Recalled by Stella Elliott (nee Easterbrook) for the above

In the 1905-1925 period most cottagers had to fetch their water from taps placed at various points in the village:

1. At the cistern in the square where the war memorial is placed
2. In East Street at the junction with Greenhill Lane
3. At Green Cottages opposite Mrs Bell's (Marley)
4. At Townsend, opposite the Parish Hall.

The above are examples of the use of the cistern for social gatherings as well as water. A later story, from the 1950's, tells of the local boys daring one another to walk round the building along the ledge a little way off the ground. The tricky part was to negotiate the gap where the tap used to be. To be able to grip the roof, a boy needed to be tall enough to work across the gap, and therefore this was a rite of passage for teenagers.

Do you have any such stories? If so please tell someone or write them down, so that we can make a collection. Names can be left out, but are more interesting if left in.

FROM THE DENBURY PRIMARY SCHOOLCHILDREN

In October 2002, Class two, with their teacher Mrs Fraser, did some work about water. As part of this, the children looked at Denbury's water supply. They visited the cistern, then did a piece of work. All the submissions were enthusiastic and imaginative, but only a selection can be included here.

Long, long ago, on Denbury Hill...

I am called Bastian. I am seven years old. I live in a forest with the rest of my tribe. The ruler of our tribe is our chief called George.

George sets us tasks each day. One day our task was to go in search of water. None of us had a drink or bath in ages. We were all very thirsty and dirty.

Before we went in search of water we had to make ourselves buckets to collect it in.. First of all we gathered sticks and mud and made it into a bucket shape, which we then left in the sun to dry and go hard. Only then were we ready to collect our water.

Our chief told us to go in different directions. I headed out of the forest towards a pile of rocks. I had a lot of rocks to climb. They were steep and very slippery and my bucket was getting heavy. I fell over the rocks. In front of me I saw a wet patch in the soil. I started to dig under the wet and muddy soil with my hands. Suddenly water sprang up in front of me. I filled my bucket up quickly and ran as fast as I could back to my camp. I found our chief and ran to him and told him I had found water. He was so delighted to see it he sent everybody to follow me to the spring. Everybody filled their buckets with

water. Then I led them back to our camp. Everybody was so proud of me that they made me an outfit of furry animal skins which I wore proudly. I had my first bath and drink in ages. Then our chief said we should celebrate where we sang songs and danced all night and had plenty to drink.

David B

My name is Amber I am seven and I live with my family in Derbyshire with the rest of the tribe. We are quite happy in Derbyshire but we do not live near a spring. We need a bucket of water each day for cooking, drinking and growing crops. Each day the men have to climb a huge hill called Derbyshire Down, collect water in animal skins and carry them back to camp. One day I was playing in the woods at the bottom of Derbyshire Down when I heard some water trickling down some rocks. I ran as fast as I could back to the camp to tell the others. We were all so pleased because I had found another spring and they didn't have to walk as far. My father was very proud of me.

James Entwistle

My tribe was walking up a steep hill when we came across some rocks to sit on.

All of us were very tired and thirsty. We needed to make camp but first we had to find water.

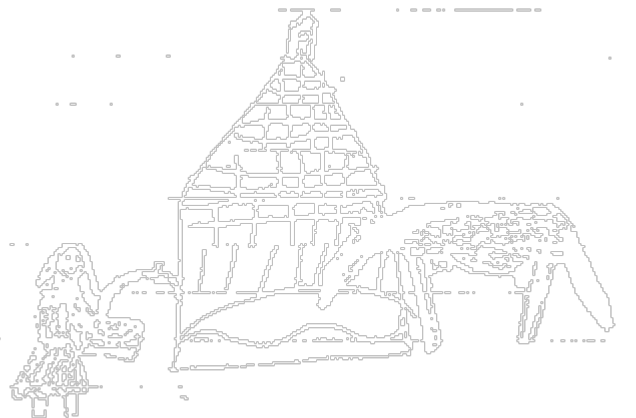
Chris and I went to search for water in the forest. It was dark and gloomy. We were scared. I could not see well and I lost my shoe in a boggy patch. As I looked for my shoe I saw a pool of fresh water.

"Mum, Dad, Chris! I've found water."

"Look everyone! See what Anne's found," Chris shouted.

Our chief was very proud of me.

Anne Womack



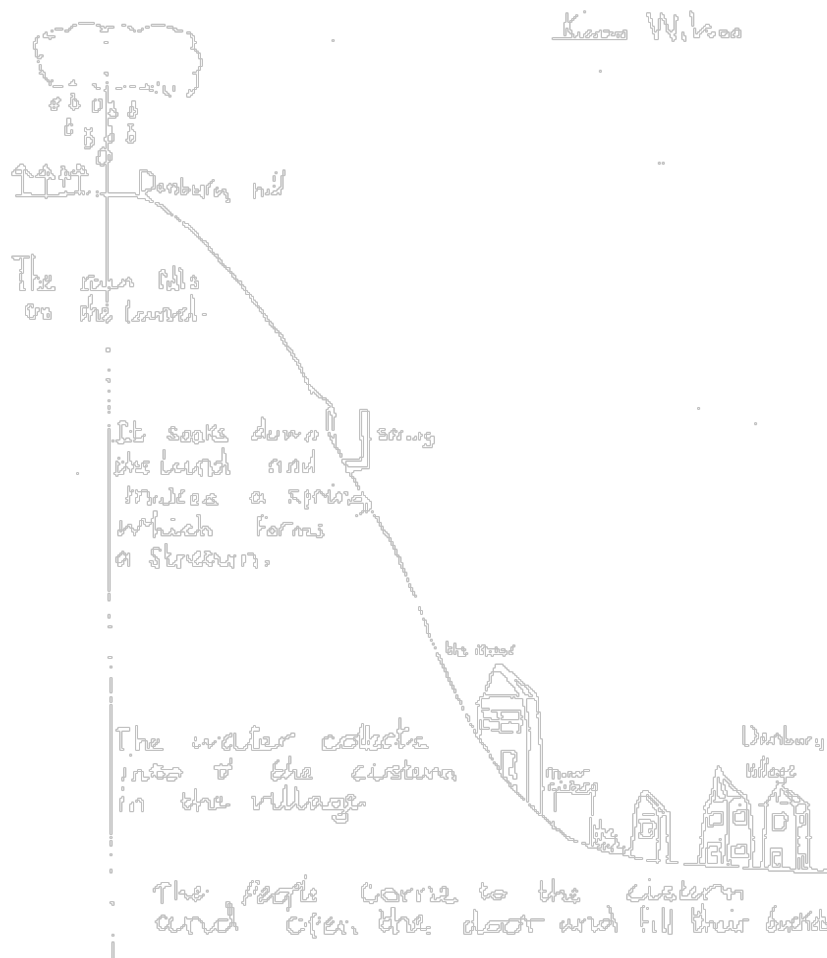
By Eleanor

There once lived some people who were driven out of their homes. They found Denbury and lived there happily.

One day two children went to get nuts and found a spring. Their parents were happy. But soon they got fed up of going and getting water. | They put a pipe down and it went to a puddle. Now they did not go so far for water.

An rich man came to the village and said "I will not go with buckets to get water." So he built a pipe that went to a tank and said "If my tank overflows it will go in a tank and you can come to get water.

Rebecca Maggs



MY GREAT FIND!

Hi my name is Adam, my friends and I are out gathering nuts and berries that are good to eat. Food is always quite easy to find, if but if only we could find water for the tribe, life would be great. We were often thirsty, I still searched for food and water for the tribe. It was a sunny day in Denbury. I knew lots of the tribe would be out looking for water, as the chief had offered a prize of animal skins, to who ever could find water for us to drink, if only I could find it, my mum would be so pleased with me. I climbed up a huge hill with my friends, and I wandered off on my own, when I reached the top. I sat down for a long rest, the birds were singing in the trees above my head. I imagined that I could find hear the bubbling noise of water. "But wait I could hear water!" But there was no water, where was it coming from? I looked left, right up and down. I was just about to give up. Then I noticed my feet were wet. The ground was soaking and there were puddles in the green grass. I jumped for joy I now knew that those animal skins were mine!. I told my friends and they told the tribe, soon the chief gave me my animal skins and I showed them my Great find, "Water"! cried the chief. And we all lived with fresh water for the rest of the time. Our long, happy lives we always knew were water was on the huge hill, on the top.

BY Andrew Corbett

THE WIDER PICTURE

It is not within the scope of this booklet to cover the water systems which drain from Denbury Down to the surrounding lower land, most of them under ground. They form another study, and research has already been done, over a long period, by Devon Karst Research.

However, mention should be made of the work done by Dave Wills on the Halwell Valley, and its historic system of sophisticated ducts, leats and sluices. This system allowed controlled flooding of the meadows running along the valley in spring, which warmed the ground and encouraged a crop of early grass for pasture. Dave has surveyed, mapped and photographed all the remaining features, and has displayed them at the Archive Days and on the Denbury website.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been distributed to the people of the parish to celebrate the renovation of the cistern and the erection of Jeff Belringer's millennium light. It has been produced with material researched and supplied by the Denbury Archive Group, and funded by the Parish Council and the bodies named on page four.

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Jean Duggan provided photographs, old and new; Derek Groves and Simon Groves provided the surveys and drawings; Heather Curtis and David Newby spent an afternoon dowsing at the cistern and at Halwell; and Peter Head kept information circulating via the Denbury Diary. He also agreed to 'serialise' this booklet so that it may reach every house in the village and beyond.

Maralin Fraser and Class Two at Denbury Primary School allowed me into their classroom for a very exciting afternoon; Sally Brooks drew the lovely picture for the cover; and countless people from the village have offered valuable help, anecdotes, cuttings and photographs. I cannot name them all.

From outside the village, David Viner, a lock-up enthusiast, made a special trip to assess the lock-up potential, and wrote a report; Adam Knowles, ex-villager, sent an assessment of his own research; and Peter Child, Devon County Historic Buildings Advisor, lent us his informed opinion.

At the Countryside Agency, Chris Burke and Rob Leek have been endlessly patient and supportive.

Finally, the Archive Group agreed to spearhead the research, and members gave up time to put on a superb exhibition of the resulting material in February 2002. Copies of all the research materials are held by the Denbury Archive in a folder, which may be studied on request.

Lesley Groves, January 2003

PRIVACY OF LANDOWNERS

Many sites referred to in this collection are on private land. The mention of these sites in no way implies that approval has been given to visit them. Anyone wishing to visit or cross private land must, of course, seek permission from the owners.

