

After tea, prior to a tour of the Hospital, Mr. T. Beard presented to each visitor a charming edition of the Official Guide of Barnet and East Barnet Valley; Mr. Beard, an enthusiastic advocate in the movement for the restoration of the Barnet Well, read a most interesting paper on the Barnet Physic Well, discovered about 1650, when it became a fashionable resort for Londoners, who were attracted by its medicinal properties.

After a tour of the beautiful new wards and administration block, which are the last word in labour-saving and attractive construction, from the delightful ward kitchens with their automatic dish washer, B.T.-H. electric refrigerator, to the aluminium ward furniture, a perfect operating theatre, possession of an Iron Lung, and the charming colour scheme throughout left nothing to be desired. The ingenious device to ensure the safe keeping of drugs, *i.e.*, that when the poison cupboard is unlocked a red light shows above the cupboard door, much impressed the members.

Everyone was then conducted by Mr. Beard to the Barnet Physic Well, by whose kind consent the following interesting information is published herewith:

BARNET PHYSIC WELL.

The Physic Well was discovered about 1650, and immediately became a fashionable resort for Londoners, who were attracted by its medicinal properties.

The Parish Accounts show that the water was sold and the money given to the poor of Barnet. The old and original Well House was demolished in 1840. The Well is situated on Barnet Common, adjoining that portion enclosed by the Duke of Chandos in 1729. Under a clause in the Enclosure Act (2 Geo. II, cap. 19)—

"Provided nevertheless that nothing in this Act contained shall extend to defeat, abridge, or exclude the Inhabitants or Parishioners of Chippen Barnet from the free Access and Regress to and from the Medicinal Springs or Wells on the said Waste or Common for the using of the Medicinal Waters which are upon the said Great Waste or Common, at all seasonable times of the day, for their own use and benefit only as of an ancient Time they have been accustomed to use the same."

The Well has a link with London. One Alderman John Owen, of London City, a benefactor of the Fishmongers' Company, was so convinced of the medicinal value of its waters that in the year 1676 he left to that body a capital sum of £270, from which £9 12s. 0d. was to be paid annually for educating Barnet boys at the grammar school and relieving the poor, 20s. each year being expressly reserved "for the restoration of the physick well on the common."

An Indenture, dated May 23rd, 1677, contains the following clause:—

"To the master of the said Free School £3 upon condition that he shall teach and educate in learning three poore boys of the said town of Barnet, £3 towards the repairing the said school, Twenty shillings for and towards the repairing of the Physic Well there in the Common, provided that if any Lord of the Manor or other person do or shall at any time hereafter reckon or account the said twenty shillings to be to any advantage to him in the sale thereof or shall at any time hereafter raise or exact any Taxation upon the tenants or Town more than they are willing to pay whereby any disturbance may come to the persons resorting thither to drink the waters in the said well or shall do or act anything to hinder the tenants or Town in the profits they now have or may receive thereby or that the said Physic Well be foresaken or useless and the said Town shall receive no profit thereby, then in any or every of the said cases the said 20s. shall cease and thenceforth be paid to the said schoolmaster who shall teach one other poore boy of the said town of Barnet. . . ."

Owen's money was well spent, or it would not be in such good condition to-day. A little pointing of the bricks and a clear drainage is all that is needed to restore the well to use.

The water was analysed by the County Analyst in 1907 and found to be unfit for drinking purposes and now of no medicinal value.

In 1922 the Governors had it analysed by Messrs. W. J. Dibdin & Son, analytical and consulting chemists, who reported:—

"This is a slightly ferruginous, highly saline and alum water, containing an excess of organic matter and a large number of ordinary bacteria. Doubtless this is due to the disturbance of local conditions when opening up the well, as the sample contained fragments of grass and straw, etc. There is no evidence of direct sewage contamination, Streptococci being absent and *B. Coli Communis* not being present in less than 100 cubic centimetres. It is, therefore, unsuitable for ordinary domestic use."

The suggestion was made by the Barnet U.D.C. that they should restore the Well to its former position as one of the attractions of Barnet, and the following year they opened the well and found an underground chamber and a flight of stone steps leading thereto.

The Well Chamber is perfect and undisturbed, preserved by the earth that had covered it up. It has brick-built walls, floor and barrel-shaped roof alike. The bricks are small, red, hand-pounded and burnt. The room would hold about 20 persons. Two sumps, stone-lined, are sunk a foot or so in the floor for convenience in dipping out the water, and into them the spring is led by channels and pipes penetrating the surrounding ground.

Pepys records in his Diary:

"11th July, 1664.—Betimes up this morning, and by coach to Holborne, where, at nine o'clock, they set out, and I and my man Will on horseback, by my wife, to Barnet; a very pleasant day; and there dined with her company, which was very good; a pretty gentlewoman with her, that goes but to Huntington, and a neighbour to us in towne. Here we staid two hours and then parted for all together, and my poor wife I shall soon want I am sure. Thence I and Will to see the Wells, half a mile off, and there I drank three glasses, and went and walked and came back and drunk two more; the woman would have had me drink three more, but I could not, my belly being full. And so we rode round by Kingsland, Hackney, and Mile End, and so home weary. And not being very well, I betimes to bed, and there fell into a most mighty sweat in the night, about eleven o'clock; and there, knowing what money I have in the house and hearing a noyse, I begun to sweat worse and worse, till I melted almost to water. I rung, and could not in half an houre make either of the wenches hear me, and this made me fear the more, lest they might be gag'd; and then I begun to think that there was some design in a stone being flung at the window over our stayres this evening, by which the thieffes meant to try what looking there would be after them, and know our company. These thoughts and fears I had, and do hence apprehend the fears of all rich men that are covetous and have much money by them. At last Jane rose, and then I understand it was only the dogg wants a lodging and so made a noyse. So to bed, but hardly slept; at last did, and so till morning."

"On that very cold morning, August 11th, 1667 (Lord's Day), up by 4 o'clock and ready to take coach before 5, and set out on our journey and got to the Wells at Barnet by 7 o'clock, and there found many people a-drinking."

The Well is mentioned in Fuller's "Worthies," 1662.

Very warm thanks were accorded the Hon. Secretary (Miss B. M. West), for this most enjoyable Annual Meeting.

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