

🌊 Water and Waste 🌊

Good health was partly dependent on good hygiene, especially the quality of the water supply. Until the mid-nineteenth century, villagers drew water supplies from surface springs and wells, and excrement was dumped in convenient but unhealthy cesspools or on the fields. The first attempt to improve hygiene was made by Dr James Clark, who lived in Finmere House.

[James] was instrumental in effecting some much needed improvements in the sanitary condition of the village, by the removal of cesspools and other nuisances injurious to health from the doors of the cottages, and by the covering over of the brook where it ran through the village. He was also a very clever mechanic, as was evident from... the windmill for pumping water, and other ingenious contrivances, which are on the premises of his late residence. (History of Finmere, Blomfield)

A Victorian Dowser

Fifteen years later, Seymour Ashwell was concerned that villagers should drink clean water. In 1887, he employed a West Country dowser to prospect for locations for wells.

October 19th. John Mullins came from Colerne in Wiltshire and marked by means of a 'divining rod' different places on the Glebe where Wells of Water could be dug. The rod in question being a small hazel twig of this shape /\... A well at the East end of this Parish was dug at one of the places indicated and arched over with a date stone on top. At the expense of the Rector. (Rectors' Book)

The well at the east end of the parish was on Mere Road (marked [A] on the map overleaf). Builders destroyed it in the late 1970s but the date stone has been preserved.

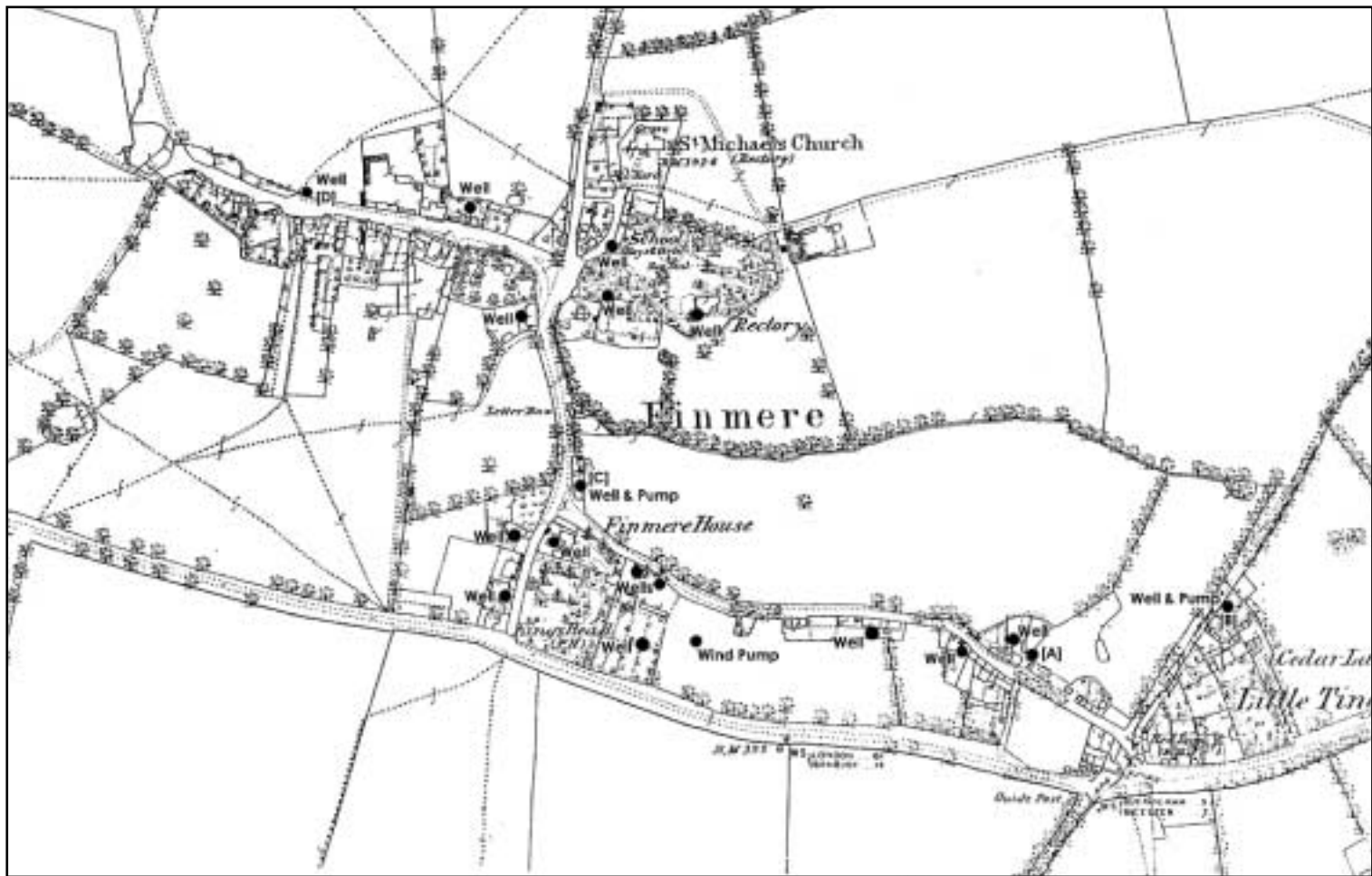
In the 1930s, the Sanitary Inspector raised concerns that the wells were being polluted with dust from traffic. The Parish Meeting in 1934 agreed that the well on Fulwell Road should be cleaned out, covered and a pump erected. The estimates for the work, £5-£6, were too expensive and a year later it was proposed that the Sanitary Inspector cover the well at a cost not exceeding £2 5s—a one penny rate. The 1935 Meeting also proposed to cover the Church Well by the school but, the next year, the Meeting heard that the Sanitary Inspector did not favour this, as the well was off the main road and not exposed to so much dust. The Fulwell Road well, however, had by then been covered by doors.

The brook ran along Fulwell Road to Valley Road and the wind pump was on the site of the present school.



**The well on Mere Road shortly before
it was destroyed**

1935	2000
£5	£190



Finmere's Wells and Pumps
 The map is based on the 1881 Ordnance Survey map

The Village Pumps

Two pumps survive in the village, both installed in Seymour Ashwell's time. One is on Mere Lane in Little Tingewick [B]. The second is in Valley Road and has been carefully restored by Tim Killeen [C]. Both pumps were manufactured by E&H Roberts at the Britannia Ironworks in Deanshanger. Edwin and Henry Roberts ran a family business founded by Edwin's grandfather, Richard, in 1821. Despite being gutted by fire in 1912, the business survived but went bankrupt in 1927.

The pump on Valley Road is the older of the two. The pump on Mere Lane was manufactured after the Roberts had established a limited company in 1890. The Roberts also made drain covers; an example can still be seen inside the Church gate.



Flood in Valley Road, 1998

Fulwell and Valley Roads flooded on 9 April 1998, the wettest April since 1818.

Frank Hitchcock remembers an old ram pump on Mere Lane. 'It thumped away all day long,' and delivered water to Finmere Grounds.

On 20 December 1899, a Parish Meeting was held to consider an application from London County Council to supply water to Finmere from Wales. There was dissention at the meeting as no plans or particulars of the proposals were available.

Sewage and Refuse

In the nineteenth century, human and animal waste was dumped on the fields and into ditches. This created health dangers. Dr James Clark of Finmere House took action in 1872, when he removed cesspools and covered over the brook. It was a century later, in 1970, that installation of a mains sewage scheme for the village began. Sewage was pumped to Tingewick, where the capacity of the station was 22,000 gallons (100,000 litres) a day, enough for about 550 people.

Refuse was initially dumped in yards and corners of fields. One dump was behind Lark Rise on Mere Road, where fragments of old bottles are still unearthed. With increased concerns about hygiene, and the more frequent use of metal cans and other slow degrading materials, it was deemed necessary to provide official dumping areas. In 1932, the Sanitary Inspector instructed the Parish Meeting to provide a location for dumping refuse and this was in place by 1933. Villagers remember refuse being taken by horse and cart to be dumped in a place known as the 'Swallow Hole' down Mere Lane beyond the pumping station. Another tip was to the west of the village behind the Poor's Plot.

Because of the scarcities of the Second World War, it was essential that rubbish was recycled rather than dumped. On 8 November 1942, Miss Ashwell and Miss Logan of Finmere attended a meeting of parish salvage organisers at Kirtlington Park. The organisers agreed that a house-to-house collection of rubbish, including paper, bones, rubber, string and rags, should be made at least monthly and Ploughley Council would remove the collection for recycling.

From 1946, refuse was collected fortnightly by the RDC and later it was collected weekly. In the year 2000, door-to-door collection of recyclable refuse has been arranged in many nearby districts. Villagers of Finmere and Little Tingewick, however, must take their papers, bottles and cans to recycling banks behind the village hall or at Buckingham.