

malvern spa association news



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PEOPLE
IN
MOTION

Issue no. 29 Autumn 2020

'Flight': Malvern Link Trough 2019

Dressed by People in Motion





malvern spa association

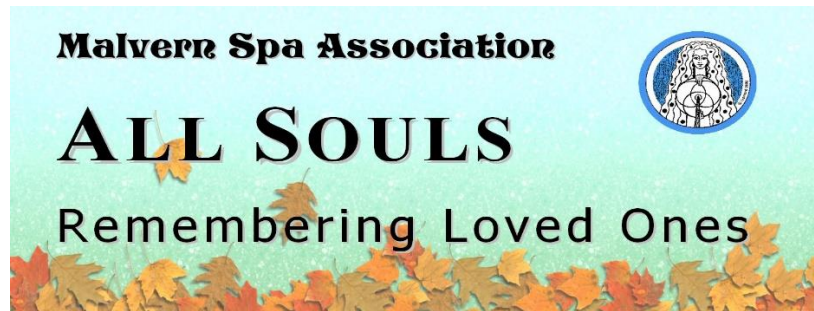
"Protecting and enhancing Malvern's water heritage"

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All Souls' Day Well-dressing & Blessing Lower Wyche Spout

Sunday 25th October & Sunday 8th November 2020



We are approaching the time of 'All Souls'. Every year, the MSA organises a well-dressing event at which people of all faiths and beliefs come to remember and cherish departed loved ones in their own personal way. This year we are dressing **Lower Wyche Spout** with 'Remembrance Trees', on which you can tie a paper leaf or star with your own written dedication.

This year, it's also an opportunity to express our experiences of and feelings about the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected so many lives in different ways, for example:

- o Thanks to those tackling it.
- o Sadness for those blighted by it.
- o Feelings for how our communication and society has changed because of it.

The **Dressing** goes up on **Sunday 25th October** and comes down on **Sunday 8th November**.

The Guardians are performing a **Wellhead Dance** on **Saturday 31st October at 4pm**.

We have a **Wellhead Blessing** by Rev Dave Bruce on **Monday 2nd November at 11.00**.

You'll find Lower Wyche Spout at the top of Malvern (aka Wells) Common, just above and visible from the 40 mph section of the A449 Wells Road. It is below the Wyche Cutting, on Old Wyche Road, just North of the Wyche School. 52.095979, -2.333379 = [Google Map](https://goo.gl/maps/BoiEc6JoScUoUi4e9) =

<https://goo.gl/maps/BoiEc6JoScUoUi4e9>

As Covid is an airborne contagion, we have new rules, so please:

- o Only one household in the well-head area at a time.
- o Maintain social distance.
- o Disinfect your hands before and after remembrance-writing.



1. Foreword

Malvern Spa Association (or "the MSA", as we're usually known) was formed on 18th September 1998. From the start, our aim has been to protect and enhance Malvern's water heritage. Our original stated purposes also included *'increasing individual and collective knowledge of Malvern's water'*, and *'preserving and maintaining historic Malvern Hills' water traditions, and celebrating the benefits of Malvern water by the annual Well Dressing Festival / other well dressing events'* (you can read more about both in this newsletter). Many of our members will recall our 'official public launch' at the Foley Arms Hotel on 8th March 1999, which was greeted with so much enthusiasm. Since then we have achieved a great deal that we can all be very proud of. In 2018 we celebrated our 20th anniversary in style, with events, parties, and a beautiful Malvhina fountain cake!



At the start of this year, our plans included organising and delivering the biggest and best May Day well-dressing event ever, and at the same time - with great fanfare - launching a new website ('frozen' in 2014 and not updated since), and publishing a special 'bumper' edition of 'MSA News' (the last edition was Summer / Autumn 2016, and a lot has happened since then). When lock-down ensued, we assumed that by this autumn, things would be 'back to normal', and that we could dress the wells and celebrate. When it became clear this wouldn't happen, we decided to publish a short newsletter anyway, to tell our members, partners and friends a bit about what's been going on, and what's planned for next year, 'subject to...', of course.

We have an address from our patron, Cynthia Palmer, and a note from our chairman, Dr John Harcup OBE. Most of the articles for the future bumper edition were written last winter, in readiness for a May 2020 launch to coincide with well-dressing, so we decided to select a few for this edition as 'tasters', to give you an idea of the breadth of water-related matters we deal with. It was very hard to choose, but we loved John Payne's 'learned' piece about the hydrogeology of the Malvern Hills, and Ced Jackson's intriguing account of Malvern's role in 'earth mysteries' and ancient technologies. We've also combined several articles about well-dressing into one. There have been so many incredible dressings over the years that the few photographs in this newsletter don't begin to do justice to them; however, if you visit our well-dressing page on Facebook you'll find photos, articles, discussions and lots more: www.facebook.com/malvernwelldressing.

Unfortunately, we haven't had time to update the website; however, the old website information has been 'reformatted' and uploaded to our new website address at www.malvernspa.org. Please have a look and let us know what you think. We're thrilled that celebrated Malvern photographer Jan Sedlacek of Digitlight Photography has been out and about with us recently to learn more about the natural and cultural history of the springs, and took the wonderful website 'banner' photo for us. Look out for his own story and more of his photos in the next newsletter.

Finally, contact and other 'official' MSA information can be found on the last page (including joining instructions if you're not already a member but would like to become one!).

With best wishes to you all,

Carly Tinkler (MSA President)

2. Notes from the Chair

Welcome to our Autumn 2020 "interim" newsletter, which aims to bring you up to date with what the MSA has been doing and will be doing pending an extended "bumper" edition. Our President, Carly Tinkler, is putting this together, as Ray Roberts, our long serving secretary and newsletter editor, sadly died earlier this year after a long illness, hence the delay in producing a newsletter. I want you to know that despite Covid-19, the MSA is still very active, though within the limits defined by the virus, of course.

We extend a warm welcome to Graham Dimmock who has filled Ray's place as MSA secretary. Also, to new committee member Sarah Carlton who is in charge of events and publicity. Her role is to help spread the word of what we do, to both the local community and visitors to Malvern; increase membership through events; and organise socials.

Our annual Well Dressing this year was going to be extended to cover the first two weekends in May in order to give more time to catch visitors and those attending the Three Counties Spring Show, and to celebrate the end of World War II. This extension will be carried over to 2021. The extra events planned for May Bank Holiday 2020, including a hilarious spoof spa film featuring Sir Anthony Hopkins as Dr Kellogg in "*The Road to Wellville*" and my talk celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale entitled "*Florence Nightingale, her life, illnesses and the Malvern Cold Water Cure*" are being transferred to 2021. Other interesting events are at the planning stage.

We are exploring other avenues of communication such as Zoom meetings and videos of the water features to put on YouTube. I am no expert on these so anyone with this experience or any other ideas, please get in touch.

We are looking at several projects for preservation and renovation. The stonework of the dried-up well on the Wells Road at Eilerslie Pitch is in urgent need of attention, and a hidden spring in West Malvern is crying out to be revealed - more details later. Our President hints at another exciting development being considered, but far be it for me to put out a spoiler! Just watch this space...

Thank you for your continued support.

Dr John Harcup OBE (MSA Chairman)

May 2019: MSA chairman Dr Harcup and wife Mary with Lucie Tenekedzi, visiting from the TIC in Jesenik in the Czech Republic, where the Cold Water Cure started before being brought to Malvern in 1842



3. Ray Roberts Obituary

Ray was Malvern born-and-bred, with many memories of Malvern past. He was especially fond of the Jacob fountain in the old Winter Gardens by the entrance to the Elgar Hall, now the Forum. It was a popular meeting place, and he was most upset when it was moved (albeit mitigated by a professional clean to its former glory, and paid for by our late Patron, Ernie Kay). He continued to press for it to be moved to a more prominent position for the rest of his life.

Ray loved the Hills. He was a long-serving Malvern Hills Conservator and a one-time chairman, as well as a popular Link Top trader. He was a Governor at the Chase High School for a while, and wrote a book about Malvern Wells where he was brought up.

Other energies, he poured into the MSA. As well as being a highly efficient secretary, he edited the newsletter, took hundreds of photos of the dressed wells for stalls at the Spring Show and for the judges for the Britain in Bloom competition. He assembled the teams of well-dressing judges and drove them to every dressed well, and then discussed those he thought best with me. Together we put together a route for the minibus tours in which he took part. He printed a visitor's map of the dressed wells. He helped everyone during the May Day festivities in Priory Park and enjoyed supervising the water-tasting competition - amongst all the other things he did.

He is greatly missed by the MSA, and Malvern is the poorer for his passing.

Dr John Harcup OBE (MSA Chairman)

Ray Roberts (photograph from Malvern Gazette website)



4. Patron's Address

Dear Members,

Welcome to our first MSA online newsletter. This year's pandemic has changed all our lives and curtailed many of our activities, including our wonderful annual Well Dressing Weekend, so we wanted to let you know what we have been doing and the exciting events we have planned for 2021.

I was honoured and excited when Dr John Harcup asked me to be the new patron of the MSA. During my three years as Mayor of Malvern I met so many lovely people and learnt about our amazing local community groups and their activities that make our beautiful town such a wonderful place to live.

Before I said yes I decided to investigate whose footsteps I would be filling and, to my horror, found that my two predecessors had been Lord Sandys and Mr Ernie Kay. These two extremely eminent gentleman had been leading citizens and generous benefactors to our town and its people. My only thought was - how am I going to live up to them?!

However, MSA started 2020 on a sad note when we learnt of the passing of one of Malvern's true gentlemen, Ray Roberts. Ray was a leading light in many local associations and especially the MSA and the well dressing weekend, that he championed wherever he went.

Now for the good news! For those of you who kindly paid your MSA membership fee this year we will be rolling that forward to cover next year as well! New members are always welcome, so please share this newsletter with your family and friends.

Our MSA website has helped to spread the history of our town, its water cure and springs around the world but it is now looking very tired and out-of-date. A lot of new information has been collected and committee members are busy populating a brand new website. However we need help in making the new version as interesting and interactive as possible, and keeping the articles up-to-date.

So please, if you are interested in websites and have a few hours to spare on this exciting new venture (or if you would like to help the MSA in other ways) please contact us at info@malvernspace.org.

I am looking forward to 2021 in the hope that our lives will be safer and happier and we will be able to decorate our springs and wells and once again welcome visitors to our beautiful town.

Cynthia Palmer (MSA Patron)

MSA patron and chairman demonstrating 'The Water Cure' in Priory Park, Malvern



5. Well Dressing: Past, Present and Future

The Malvern Hills and surrounding areas have been a hub of human activity since prehistoric times. There are records of finds in the local area dating from the Mesolithic period (or 'Middle Stone Age'), which began around 11,500 years ago. The Hills' distinctive profile is highly visible from long distances and thus useful for orientation, and the far-reaching views from the summits allow both surveillance and defence. However, the fact that the Hills were an abundant source of spring water meant they were especially attractive to hunter-gatherers and later settlers.



Today, Malvern's innumerable springs, wells and spouts (over a hundred have been identified on and around the Hills so far) are highly valuable heritage and cultural / social assets. Some are very ancient, associated with early settlements, sacred practices and healing. Many have changed their form over time, becoming shrines, chapels, statues and works of art.

Most of us recognise how fortunate we are to be able to drink 'the best water in the world' (author's opinion!) for free, and it feels natural to want to celebrate and express gratitude for this wonderful bounty in some way. So it is easy to imagine how those early travellers might have done the same, perhaps sending prayers of thanks to whatever entity they believed was responsible, and leaving offerings beside the springs. The wealthy may have brought precious stones, coins, jewellery and weapons, the poor just pebbles, flowers and fruit.

This is the origin of 'well-dressing'. Over time, the practice became more ritualised, and was carried out at certain times of year such as the equinoxes. In her book *Malvern Hill of Fountains*, artist and MSA co-founder Rose Garrard notes that "*In the 12th and 13th centuries the Holy Well was dressed annually with offerings, probably on August 5th, in thanks to St Oswald for water cures there*". In 1615 there was a national drought, but as Malvern's springs kept flowing they "*were (well) dressed as a token of gratitude for a plentiful supply of water*" (Malvern Advertiser 1870). From 1870, Royal Well was regularly dressed in gratitude for William Ryland's gift of the public spout 'for the use of the public forever'. The Wyche Spring was dressed by local residents throughout the 1900s, until 1978.

In 1993, local springs and wells expert Cora Weaver organised a Malvern 'well-decorating' event (perhaps so called to differentiate it from the then more-famous Derbyshire Well-dressing). After the MSA was formed, between 1998 and 2000 the event was held annually in September. In 2001, with Rose Garrard at the helm, the term 'well-decorating' was changed back to 'well-dressing', and the date was moved to coincide with Malvern's growing May Day celebrations (aka 'The Wet Weekend!'). 'Water-tasting' was very popular, participants having to tell the difference between spring and tap.



Every year, the number of springs, wells, fountains and troughs that were dressed grew and grew, as did the popularity of the event. In 2006 there were 28 sites, with about 85 members of the local community involved. In 2008, Lionel Shorestone took over as organiser, and his enthusiasm was infectious: he was particularly keen on recruiting schools to the venture ("get 'em young!"), which adds a wonderful innocent freshness to the festival.

The themes for the year are chosen at an open meeting in January. They have included 'Purity' (2001), 'Darwin's Earth' (2009), and 'Year of the Woman' (2018). 2019's theme of 'Flight' gave rise to some amazing dressings, including the moving tableau created by People in Motion at Malvern Link station trough, which features on the front cover of the newsletter. We will tell you more about the story behind it in the next edition.

Thanks to Rick and his amazing team, well-dressing has gone from strength to strength. In 2019, a record 60 water features were dressed by some 800 adults and children. It's a marvellous testament to the Dressers' love of Malvern: they freely and happily give large amounts of time, flowers and materials, and with considerable skill, create the most glorious creations. In fact, the event has been extended so it now lasts for up to nine days - this better honours the worthy and hard work that goes into it, and allows more time for people to appreciate the displays. And, once again it is a 'whole town' celebration, involving many of our partners and supporters such as Malvern Hills District and Town Councils, Malvern Hills Trust, and the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership. This is good for collective health and well-being, community cohesion and the local economy, and fulfils the MSA's aim of '*increasing individual and collective knowledge of Malvern's water*' (in 1996 it wasn't possible to buy Malvern water anywhere in Malvern!).

Until 2020, well-dressing had taken place every year without fail: this year, undeterred, people adopted a different approach: during the May Day weekend, water-related features in homes, gardens and streets were dressed anyway, to the chosen theme of 'Yellow'. And not just in Malvern either - we were joined by members and friends in other parts of the country too! The story was featured in the Malvern Gazette (see link below), and some of the photos have been put together as a short film on Youtube.

Despite the current situation and the uncertainties it brings, as we look to the future, well-dressing seems in fine fettle. It strikes a chord with both the artistic creators and the general public, having become not only a much-loved community event, but also one which is widely-publicised - some people travel from overseas to visit. Hopefully, it is a tradition that future generations will continue, and fresh, clean spring water keeps on flowing freely for all of us to enjoy.

We are already planning 2021's event, and hope to see you there. The dates are as follows: Friday 30th April Dressings Up, Monday 3rd May Day Bank Holiday, Sunday 9th May Dressings Down.

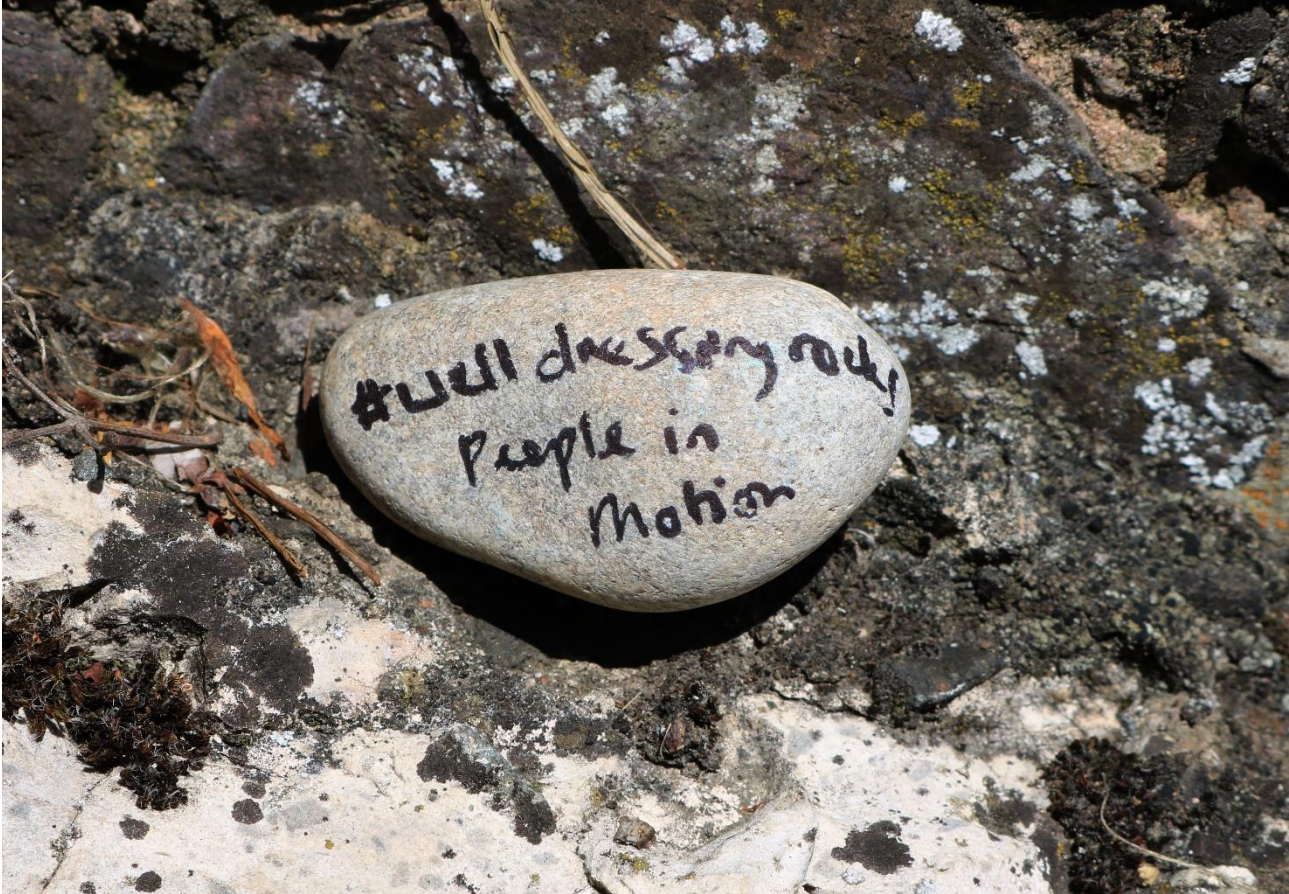
Rick Banbury and Carly Tinkler

Malvern Gazette article: <https://www.malverngazette.co.uk/news/18430584.malvern-community-celebrates-water-festival-isolation/?fbclid=IwAR24ZVwyetAaLRWYQrvM1o68p0qp9rkT0O4AGDmaUCRp2ifDnNIZf-V6YVU>. Well-dressing at Home 2020 Youtube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIRPhcxyeY>

2018 'Year of the Woman' - Weavers Well dressed by Ian and Susie Woodcock.



2019 'Flight' - Malvern Link Trough dressed by People in Motion



6. Well Dressers' Tales

Our well dressers have had some 'interesting' experiences over the years! Here, Stephanie Underwood-Webb recounts the story of *Little Red Riding Hood and The Barnard's Green Trough*, as told to MSA well-dressing organiser Rick Banbury:

Team Trough consists of a group of neighbours, from age 4 to... well, it would be impolite to ask! Each member has a skill set which contributes to the overall piece, and we also have the joy of a very specifically-shaped site which is a great springboard for creative ideas. When we heard that the 2013 theme was "Once upon a Time", the idea of using the trough for the wolf's bed in a Red Riding Hood themed piece seemed the obvious choice!

Red's striking outfit and basket of flowers were made by two of the team, with another making the wooden frame to go inside and the strong wooden stakes that would attach her firmly to the ground. We loved this dressing, getting it ready early on the Friday morning for judging the next day. The judges arrived early on the Saturday, inspecting each and every detail of the straw wolf's bed pinned with hydrangea heads, the flower arrangements surrounding the slumbering beast and, of course, Red herself, positioned a few metres away from the trough, innocently strolling towards her Granny's house. We were really pleased with how it had all turned out!



So, imagine our surprise when, on going to check on the trough early on Sunday morning, we discovered that Red had gone! Completely disappeared! We wondered if this was an elaborate joke, and looked around for a mock kidnappers' ransom poster or daft clue to her whereabouts, but none was to be found! We were absolutely baffled. We did tend to get a few merry revellers wandering past the site late on a Saturday night, but surely no-one would have uprooted Red and taken her home for an after-party?

'Later that day, I received a bizarre call to say that she had been spotted standing in the middle of the roundabout near Morrisons, so we leaped into the car to rescue her, but there was no sign! She'd already moved on! Our well dressing just didn't look the same, and the sense of mystery was turning to that of panic - where was Red?! Shoutouts went out on social media, the Malvern Gazette got in touch to run a piece on the strange vanishing act of our heroine, but no-one had seen a thing! A day passed, and still no Red, when we received word that she had been spotted again, this time in Rosebank Gardens at the top of town! Again, we rushed to the car to rescue our girl. We searched high and low, with no sign at first until finally, we found her, metres back in the tangled muddy woodland just off Rosebank Gardens, looking pretty sad and soggy, but at least in one piece.

'One thing, however, perplexed us more than anything; in the cavity of her wooden frame, there was a horse's skull. Very clean, but very... horsey skully. What on earth had our poor girl been through?! Her little face gave nothing away, and we gently took her home, cleaned her up and popped her back in her rightful place until the end of the festival. We were all twitching our curtains frequently, though, to make sure that she stayed put this time! The wolf, throughout the saga, said nothing. After five years, we are still no closer to finding out what happened to our Red, but it does make for a great story!'

7. Malvern's Springs: A Geological Perspective

The springs of the Malverns were first discussed scientifically in the 17th century, the interest lying in the curative properties of the waters. Publications in the 18th and 19th centuries showed chemical analyses of the spring waters. Only in the early 20th century was any attention paid to the geological conditions which give rise to the springs but, after Richardson's 1930s 'Wells and Springs' series for the Geological Survey, very little was forthcoming except for the writings of the MSA and books by Weaver and Osborne. An MSc project report of 2002 is the most comprehensive account of the hydrogeology of the Malvern Hills.

An account of the geology and basic hydrogeology of the Hills and their immediate surroundings appears on the MSA website. A wide variety of rock types is present locally, with ages ranging from 700 to 220 million years and with much more recent erosion products as a thin layer on the surface.

Igneous rocks consisting of interlocking crystals of various silicate minerals form the body of the Hills. These very hard rocks are quite impervious and almost insoluble in water. The Malvern rocks lie essentially as a slab of rock several hundred metres thick sloping downwards to the east at about 30° to a depth of many kilometres beneath the Severn Valley. The top edge of the slab forms the ridge of the Hills. Since their solidification from molten rock 700 million years ago, the rocks have been subjected several times to major tectonic events, essentially continental collisions. In these very slow but forceful events the rocks were broken and the resulting network of fractures allows the storage and transmission of water within the Hills. The earliest and often large fractures have since been filled with rock fragments which have been cemented into an impervious mass. The most recent breaks, since about 300 million years ago, have generally remained open and connected and form the Malvern Hills aquifer of today. This crack network extends probably throughout the whole of the rock body so that rainwater will have penetrated to large depths and now fills the aquifer to somewhat above the level of the surrounding terrain. This situation gives rise to the many springs which lie around the Hills at the surface junction of the Malvern rocks with the generally impervious clays and sandstones which border them. This junction is known as the 'spring line'.

Figure 1 below shows a map of the Hills north of the Wyche. Marked are all the recorded water sources that can reasonably be identified as springs and not spouts deriving their water through pipes from distant springs. Some of these springs are now permanently dry. Note that north is to the right. The main roads are shown. Great Malvern is at the bottom centre of the map. The Wyche Cutting is toward the left side. The many brown lines are contours. The grid is at 100m spacings.

Figure 1: The northern Malvern Hills showing positions of the known springs

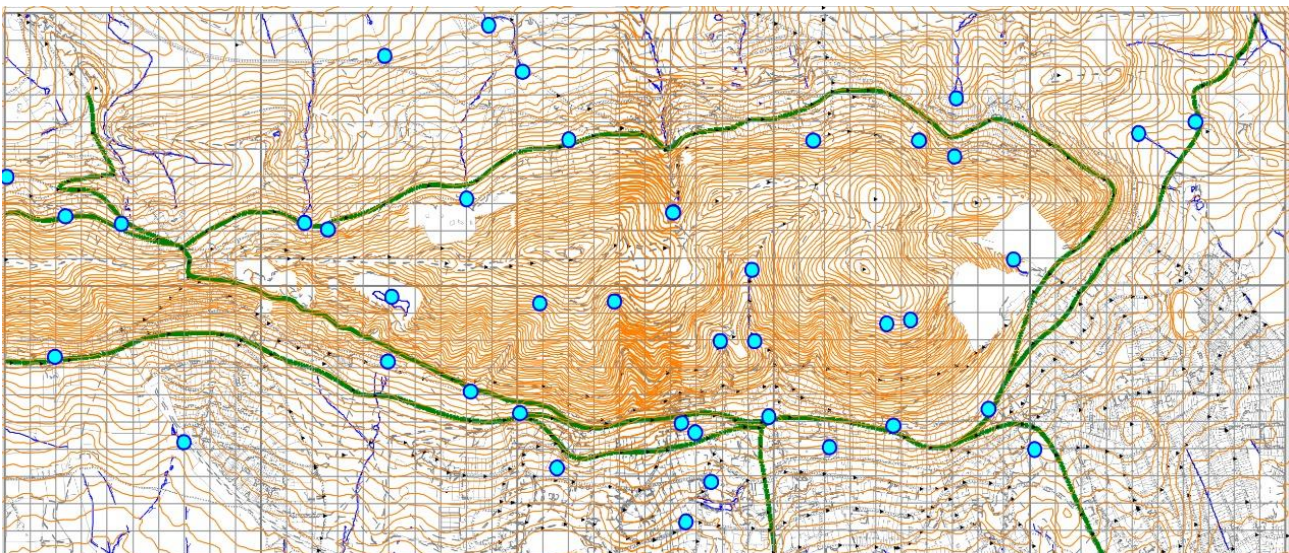
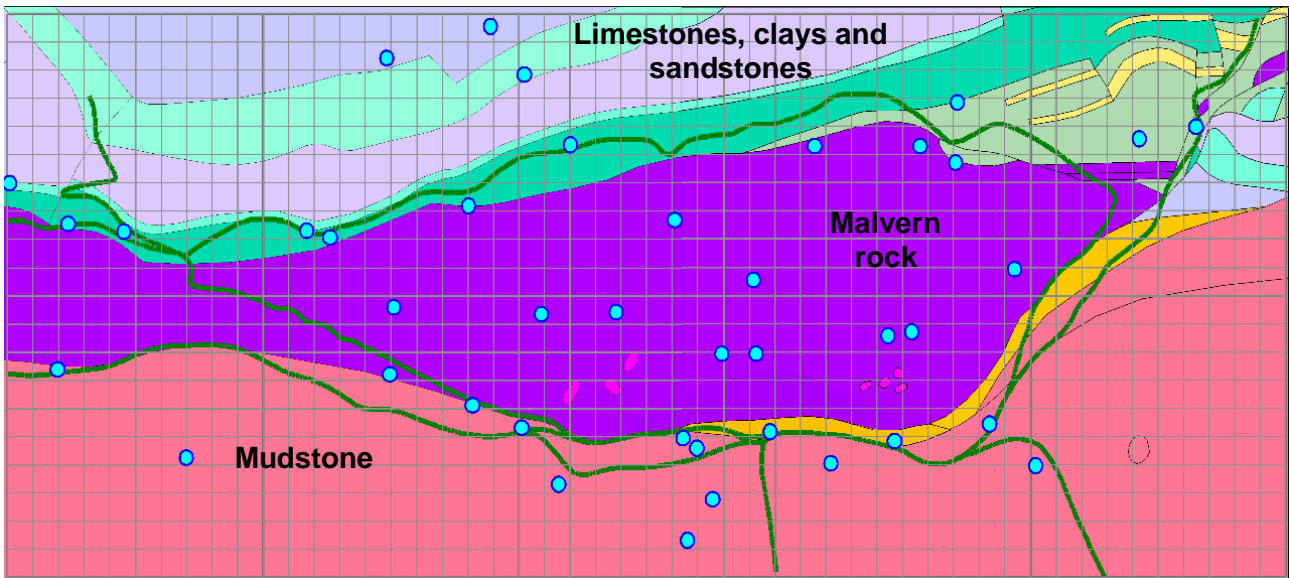


Figure 2 below shows the general geology of the area. The spring line is the boundary of the mauve area, which indicates the Malvern rocks. The main road around the northern hills generally is close to the spring line and many springs are found near it. However, it is clear from the map that a number of springs lie higher and lower on the hill.

Figure 2 The north Malvern springs in their geological settings



The sources which lie high on the hill are of two types. The first type issues on the open hillside; the second on valley floors. Examples of the first type are the Dripping Well, not far below the Worcestershire Beacon, and the spring high in the Dingle. These springs are sourced from aquifers of fractured Malvern rocks where the system of fractures is not connected to that lower in the main rock body thus forming a separate isolated aquifer. Probably any connecting cracks have been filled and blocked by eroded material over long time periods.

The valley floor type of spring is depicted in Figure 3 (overleaf) and is exemplified by the source of the stream in Green Valley, above Great Malvern, and the now-enclosed spring in Rocky Valley which fed the North Malvern tank at the clock tower. Here, rubble eroded from the hillside above has collected on the valley floor. Rain falling in the valley or issuing from the adjacent fractured rock runs in a channel at the base of the rubble to emerge where the valley floor becomes steeper so that the thick rubble layer cannot be maintained. The visible valley floor is of rock and soil; the open channel below is kept open by the flow of water.

In some places, such as in Rocky Valley, the underground flow can be heard after periods of wet weather. The large valleys on the Hills, such as Green and Rocky Valleys, are believed to have formed on the lines of major geological faults. These faults are very ancient and are assumed to be now blocked to water flow by consolidated debris.

Figure 3: Diagram of valley floor springs (left - cross section of valley; right - along valley floor)

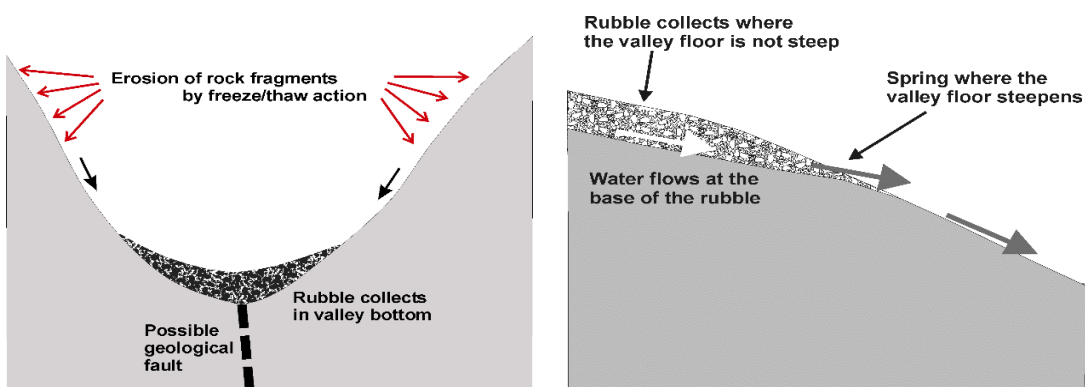


Figure 2 shows several springs on the impervious mudstone rock below the spring line. These springs have sometimes been attributed to issue from below via faults in the mudstone. It seems to this author to be more likely that these springs are similar in nature to the valley floor springs described above. Much of the land adjacent to the Hills is covered in eroded material derived from the slopes above and, probably just after the Ice Age, flow channels were established which have been maintained during the subsequent accumulation of soil and vegetation

Little is known of the details of water flow within the Hills. It is a topic difficult to investigate. Even the length of time which water spends in the aquifer between rainfall and emission at springs is not well known and of course varies with location and recent rainfall history. A typical value is about thirty days. Such aspects are the subject of some current research by the author. A second important parameter of the hydrogeology is the fraction of the rainfall which emerges from the springs. A few estimates by various authors lie between 20% and 25%. The remaining large fraction is lost by evaporation, transpiration and small-scale seepages from the aquifer in amounts not large enough to generate springs.

Dr John Payne (Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust)

8. Malvern: Water and the Landscape

Rolling in from Worcester, the A449 turns left at Link Top and runs through the heart of Malvern, following a north-south route to Little Malvern, a distance of around six kilometres.

The north-south alignment of this line is remarkable, giving the eastern side of the hills a strong sunny 'morning' flavour, and the western side catching the sun in the afternoon.

In the book by English Heritage on *The Malvern Hills: An Ancient Landscape*, the case is made that the Malverns have formed a boundary at least since the Bronze Age. This is not just a social or political phenomenon. Both in prehistory and in the medieval period, the Malverns were in effect a ritual landscape against which various religious rites were played out. The paramount importance of the numerous springs of pure water that issue from the monuments that have traditionally drawn archaeologists is well-documented, but by considering the landscape as a whole it is possible to draw legitimate inferences about the way in which the Hills might have been viewed and used by dwellers in the surrounding country.

Little Malvern is close to British Camp, and in *The Malvern Hills: An Ancient Landscape* the notion is put forward that on the morning of special days, there was a ritual procession up the eastern side of the Hills from British Camp hills to North Hill, and in the afternoon, a route back down the western side, returning to British Camp. A solar stroll.

If the A449 were to be extended south from Malvern Wells beyond Little Malvern, it would pass close to the hamlet of Whiteleaved Oak, which has its own geomantic associations.

Whiteleaved Oak is the centre of 'The Decagon' - a landscape figure which places Whiteleaved Oak almost equidistant from Glastonbury, Stonehenge and Llantwit Major, and which is otherwise known as *The Circle of Perpetual Choirs* (see figure below).

Geometric / approximate representation of southern section of Decagon / Circle of Perpetual Choirs

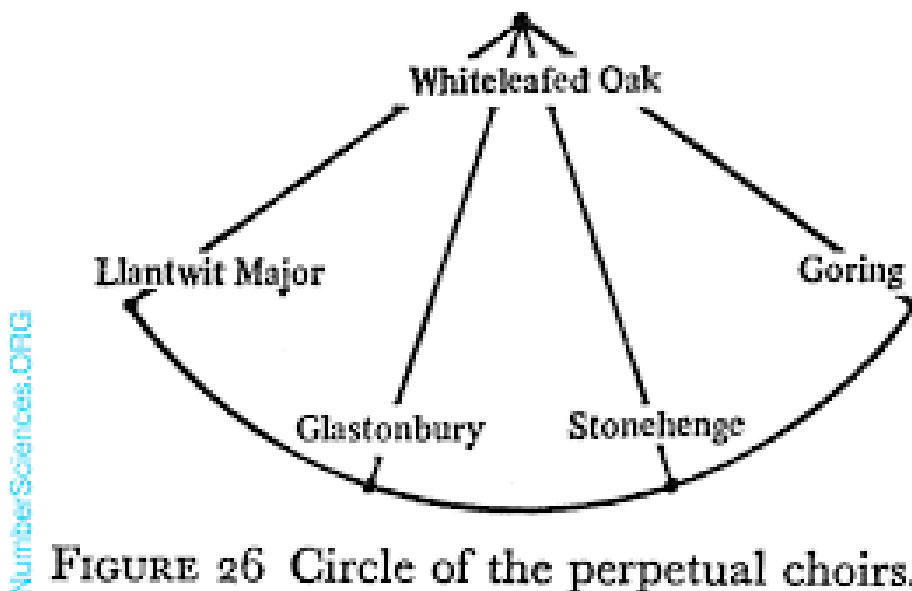


FIGURE 26 Circle of the perpetual choirs.

This idea was floated by author John Michell, and has been written up by John Gibson Forty of South Herefordshire Dowzers in his books *The Interconnectedness of All Things*, and *Forgotten Pathways* (the latter providing excellent gazetteering information). Whiteleaved Oak is situated close to the centre of a triangle made up of the Cathedrals of Worcester, Hereford and Gloucester (the residual 'Three Choirs').

If you begin to explore these 'earth mysteries' you soon come across the work of the 20th century antiquarian Alfred Watkins, author of the *Old Straight Track*, creator of the Bee Light Meter used by the RAF, and a key figure in the Hereford based Woolhope Club, which is still going strong today (see <https://www.woolhopeclub.org.uk>).

Alfred Watkins



Watkins' first book was entitled *Early British Trackways*, and identified a number of leys which the author himself had explored.

Those which run through Malvern include:

- Little Mountain (Westbrook) to St. Ann's Well and Priory Church, Malvern, via Arthur's Stone, Cross End, Moccas Church, Monnington Church, Credenhill (old) Court, Pipe and Lyde Church, and Beacon Hill.
- Pen-y-Beacon to North Hill, Malvern, via Sugwas Park, Ten Houses Pond, Burcot Pool, White Stone Chapel, Shucknell Hill, Stretton Grandison Church, Moat at Birchend, and Mathon Church.

See <https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/ebt/index.htm> p 34.

Watkins' work raises a number of questions. Why do these dead-straight lines exist, and what do the lines have to do with water, and with healing?

The myth of the founding of Malvern Priory is associated with St Wulstan, and the construction of the initial monk's hostel at Bella Squado on one of Watkins' leys, which runs down the steps and through the front of the Priory Hotel, and then along the roof line of the Priory itself.

One of the ways in which an ancient technology could have established its credentials is by proving of real use to the local population.

It may be that the benefit was a form of healing.

Malvern is closely associated with healing, from the healing powers attributed to particular wells and springs such as Eye Well, to the Water Cure.

At a larger scale, the north-south orientation of the Malverns has been looked at by some researchers in term of the vertical orientation of the Kabbalistic 'Tree of Life'. Each side of the Tree has male or female associations, and points on the two sides balance each other up, such as Mercy and Severity.

One interesting historical figure is Dr John Dee, Queen Elizabeth I's astrologer / conjurer, who was rewarded by Elizabeth after choosing a propitious day for the Accession Day Tilts. Dee chose to spend some of the money on buying the Rectorship of Upton. Dee went on to undertake undercover missions for QE1 in northern Europe, where his contacts with the protestant German states laid the intellectual underpinnings of what later became the *Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (see the book of the same name by Dr Frances Yates of the Warburg Institute). Dee is seen as the founding figure of European High Magic. His code number was 007.

Ced Jackson



malvern spa association

"Protecting and enhancing Malvern's water heritage"

www.malvernspa.org

MSA Committee Who's Who

President	Carly Tinkler
Patron	Cynthia Palmer
Chairman	Dr John Harcup OBE
Vice-chairman	Brian Iles
Treasurer	John Bibby
Secretary	Graham Dimmock
Membership Secretary	John Bibby
Well-dressing Organiser	Rick Banbury
Events & Publicity	Sarah Carlton
MSA News Editor	Carly Tinkler
Website Administrators	Carly Tinkler & Rick Banbury

Other Committee Members: Jan Bowden, Ian Fairchild

Consultant: David Armitage (Malvern Hills AONB)

Website: www.malvernspa.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/malvernwelldressing

Emails:

Membership, general inquiries & comments: info@malvernspa.org

Chairman: chair@malvernspa.org

Well-dressing: welldressing@malvernspa.org

Joining instructions: Please note that during the pandemic we are rolling membership fees already paid to cover next year as well. New members are always welcome: in the next newsletter we will be explaining more about our plans for the future, the benefits of being an MSA member, and what you can do to help. If you would like to join, please email our membership secretary John Bibby at info@malvernspa.org, or write to MSA Membership Secretary c/o 24, Assarts Lane, Malvern WR14 4JR. The annual fee is currently £10, and can be paid by standing order. Thank you.

If you no longer wish to receive the MSA newsletter by email or post, please let us know. Also, if you would like to receive a digital version, send us your email address and we will add it to the database.

Malvern Spa Association is a not-for-profit organisation