

only source of water during drought periods that the the parish could rely upon. Towards the end of the nineteenth century Dr Salmon of Penllyn Court undertook essential repair work. The springs were then named in his honour. The third well, not enclosed, was dug at the head of the dell in about 1911. With the introduction of piped water visits to the wells declined and they fell into neglect in the 1930's. The whole site became completely overgrown. However, in 2000 as a Millenium Project, the three wells were cleared of undergrowth and debris and the masonry restored.

The New Inn well-house is similar in appearance and size to Saint Mary's Well, Penrhys. It too stands in the lands of a medieval Cistercian grange. It is possible, although we cannot be certain, that the well-house stands on the site of a much earlier well.

In his book 'The Holy Wells of Wales', first published in 1954, Francis Jones lists almost 1200 wells in Wales. The author compiled his research from libraries, archives and antiquarian journals - some of the information being several years old at that time. In the 50 years since, many change have taken place in our rural landscape and several of these wells can no longer be found. The chances are that many have crumbled away, been infilled or their materials, where there was a structure, have been salvaged for another project. Some have been lost forever. Only a small proportion on that list had any structure or building associated with them.

A current record of wells, springs and spas in Wales has yet to be prepared, but it is reasonable to assume that a large percentage of the wells in Francis Jones' list will never be found.

Working from photographs taken when the building was standing, the New Inn well-house has been restored using traditional methods and materials. The penetrating roots of the overgrowth have been removed. The original building stones, fortunately retained on site, have been re-used and, with lime mortar, render and wash the well-house has been restored. The specialist contractor's mason has rebuilt the roof and front wall to its original design. The project has been overseen by a conservation architect and was completed in August 2005.



The Village Alive Trust - A Company limited by guarantee registered in Wales. Registration no. 5148543 Charity Commission no. 1107216. Registered office: Yew Tree Farm, Llangattock Lingoed, Monmouthshire NP7 8NS. The Village Alive project has been part financed and supported by the Welsh Assembly Government and managed by the Welsh Development Agency and the adventa Local Action Group through the Article 33 Rural Development Programme for Wales. Also supported by the Manifold Trust, The Alan Evans Memorial Trust, The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales, Grosmont CC and local people.

www.villagealivetrust.org.uk

Contractor: J.Sobik and Son, Bryn-y-Gwenin, Abergavenny

Architect: Morgan & Horowskyj, Architects, Abergavenny

Lime supplied by: Calch Ty-Mawr Lime - The Welsh Centre for Traditional and Ecological Building

"The Holy Wells of Wales" by Francis Jones has recently been reprinted.

Further reading: "Sacred Springs - In Search of the Holy Wells and Spas of Wales" by Paul Davis, Blorenge Books ISBN 1 872730 32 2

New Inn Well-house

Cross Ash, Monmouthshire

A restoration project by the [Village Alive Trust](http://www.villagealivetrust.org.uk)



The well-house at New Inn is an eighteenth century Grade II Listed Building. In the last 50 years, since the well-house stopped being used to supply water to the former public-house, the building had deteriorated to a fragile condition and was in danger of being lost. The front wall had collapsed and the roof had become overgrown and near to falling in. The owner had battled to preserve as much as possible, but with limited funds.

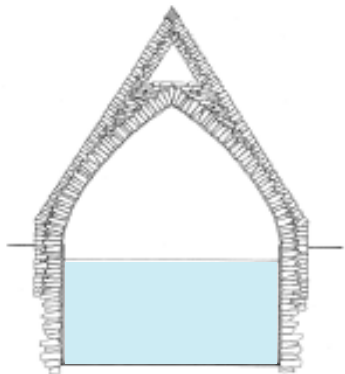
In 2004 the newly formed Village Alive Trust, as a Building Preservation Trust, took on the task of raising funds to restore the building, to make it safe and accessible, and to preserve this rare and unusual example of our rural heritage.



New Inn farmhouse was originally a coach-house, The New Inn, built about 500 years ago on the main route from Monmouth to the Abergavenny/Grosmont road. In 1954 the Graig Estate sold off its land holding in Monmouthshire as smaller parcels of farmland, the then landlord living in Australia. The New Inn, as a public house and farm, was purchased by the parents of the current owner. The well-house formed a part of that parcel and continued to be the main water supply to the public house. The following year the New Inn ceased trading as a public house and concentrated on its farming business. It still relied on the well-house for its water until the mid 1960's, when the supply became inconsistent. Other arrangements were sought until mains water was introduced in the 1970's.



The well-house, now about 200 years old, had started to fail. The fresh water was leaking away and ground water seeping back in from the surrounding soil. Without proper maintenance the structure started to deteriorate, became overgrown and eventually unstable. The front wall collapsed. However, the collapse of the front wall has provided a view of how the building was originally put together.



Internally the well-house measures 3.5m x 3.2m and is over 2m below ground level at the rear wall. The water level came to about 1.5m deep, providing a reservoir capacity of about 17 000 litres (3 700 gallons). The structure is of stone build, probably locally quarried Old Red Sandstone, the lower walls formed in 'random rubble - brought to courses' held together with a traditional lime mortar. The cistern was lime plastered to just above the maximum capacity level. The lime mortar and render would have had a water resistant additive, such as tallow. Lime is antiseptic, which would benefit the quality of the water. The ceiling was lime-washed, again the properties of the lime providing an anti-fungal finish.

The vaulted ceiling is constructed with pitched stonework, above which is a triangular void running the full length of the building. This may have been a method of reducing the amount of stone needed, or it could have been part of an ingenious method of moderating the temperature inside the building. The outer roof slopes are also of pitched stone, helping to key-in the masonry with its rubble core. The ridge is formed with a 'dressed' capping. On reconstruction a tiny cross was discovered carved into the face of the front stone.

Old photographs of the well-house taken before the front wall collapsed show the rectangular niche that has been reconstructed above the opening. We are unsure of its purpose and can only speculate at this time, but it may have housed a statuette of a local saint or possibly St. Christopher, the patron saint of travellers.

The building itself is intriguing. It was clearly built to serve the coach-house. But close to the road opposite the house is a small well, which once had a pump, and the horse troughs are still visible. This small well is independent of the well-house, fed by other springs from the hillside, suggesting the well-house water was perhaps 'different' to the horses' water supply and maybe even special. There are local tales about 'special' water connected with New Inn.



St. Mary's Well, Penrhys

The well-house at New Inn is not known to be a 'Holy Well', but is remarkably similar in its architecture to some of the few remaining holy wells in south Wales. At Penrhys, above the Rhondda Valley, is the chapel-like **Saint Mary's Well**. This is a stone building sited over a spring. It consists of a single chamber measuring 3m x 2m, with a roof constructed of overhanging slabs and a square cistern in the floor. There is an offerings niche in the upper wall. The masonry is probably late-Medieval in origin, although it has been restored several times. The well lies within a large tract of land once belonging to the Cistercian Abbey of Llantarnam who probably established a grange (farm) there. The parish church used the water for baptisms and it was considered good for rheumatism, scrofula and sore eyes.



Maen-du, Brecon

Maen-du Well, near Brecon, resembles the early Christian chapel/monastic cells that survive in Ireland and Scotland. This again is a stone constructed building with a high vaulted roof formed with overlapping slabs. It is a small building, measuring just 1.7m x 1.5m inside, with steps descending into a bubbling spring. A stone by the entrance is engraved 1754 with the initials WW. This could be the date it was built, or perhaps of a later rebuilding. The remains of an older well-building are evidenced by the ring of rough boulders in the pool.



Salmon's Well, Penllyn

At Penllyn village, not far from Cowbridge, are the three wells known as **Salmon's Well**. The wells sit very close together. The two wells nearest the road are probably pre-Reformation in origin and there is an offerings niche in the rear wall of the second well. These had been the