

THE HIGH STREET TROUGH

A focal point of Nayland's High Street is the distinctive eighteenth century milestone and the later stone trough next to it. Most people have probably at some time stopped to read the inscription on the front of the trough which tells us that it was erected to commemorate the coronation of George V in 1911, but there is a lot more history than this attached to it.

In 1900 the Parish Council minute book recorded that Professor G.D. Living of Cambridge, who owned land to the north of the village, had provided Nayland with the generous gift of a water supply: "to provide a supply of wholesome water for the benefit of the inhabitants of Nayland". Mr. Deaves, the local builder, laid the pipes to convey the water from the spring down to the village and installed a fountain in Bear Street opposite Parkers Way. Not long after this Mr. Deaves received instructions from Professor Living to erect two more fountains, one at the Perry Farm in Birch Street and one against the "obelisk" in Court Street [High Street was earlier a continuation of Court Street]. This water supply must have been a very welcome supplement to the wells which residents at the time shared with their neighbours.



In 1906 the Professor magnanimously decided to convey to the Parish Council, "the property in the well head, settling tank and pipes, and also a right of way over my land at reasonable times and with the least possible injury to growing crops for the purpose of cleaning and repairing well head, tank and pipes". The conveyance included a map showing the position of the well, the tank and where the pipes were laid but this seems to have been lost over the years. What happened to the land conveyed to the Parish Council? I have found no record of it.

An iron trough was originally installed next to the obelisk, and it was recorded that as part of the celebrations for the coronation of King George V on the 22nd June 1911 the Council decided to replace the iron trough in Court Street with one of stone. The invoice from L.J. Watts Ltd. Of Colchester, showed that the cost of providing and engraving the stone trough was £20.11s.0d.

The Coronation Committee of the Parish Council decided to add a brass plate to the stone trough with the inscription: "The water which supplies this and other fountains in Nayland was the generous gift of Professor Living to commemorate the coronation of His Majesty Edward VII, 1902". What happened to this plaque we shall probably never know, and it is a pity that the Professor's generous act seems not to have been acknowledged in any other way and few people know of it. However, Nayland's older residents used to talk about their water coming from the "Green Hills" above the village, presumably the Professor's land. Eventually, of course, mains water was installed in Nayland in the 1930s.

These days the trough stands full of flowers throughout the year but for many years it would have been full of water and in constant use by residents and passing horses. For a time it languished in the garden of Alston Court where it had been taken for safety after being damaged in the street. It was rescued in the 1970s and put back in its rightful place. A few years ago the trough and milestone were restored by the Parish Council, and at the same time the Conservation Society paid for the trough to be moved from its earlier position in front of the milestone to the side so that it is possible to see the milestone as originally intended. It was appropriate that L.J. Watts who had supplied and erected the trough in 1911 carried out the restoration and move.

Wendy Sparrow