

ASHFORD WELL DRESSINGS 2025

A message from Sarah Brocklehurst:

As Chair of the Well Dressing committee I would like to thank everyone involved in making this year's Well Dressing a truly marvellous week. The Wells seem to get better every year and this year we managed to do all six – a huge task for such a small village! We couldn't have done it without all the community pulling together. It was a lovely atmosphere in the Institute during petalling week and it was so good to see new and young faces joining in, which will ensure the future of this wonderful event. I felt both proud and humble to be part of such a clever and artistic group of people. Thank you all so much.

A BIG THANK YOU

to Sarah from the whole village for her leadership and hard work throughout this year's Well Dressings. Unfailingly cheerful, she managed to be everywhere. To mention just some of her contributions – Well Dressing planning, in the Institute encouraging the well dressers, and serving teas in Well Dressing Week, organising the parking, collection of donations, and the heavy gang for shifting the boards, on hand for the Sheep washing demonstration and the Well Dressing service and procession, and not forgetting her usual farm duties! A superhuman effort, many thanks!

THE STORY

PUDDLING

After the frames had been soaked in the river, villagers of all ages helped throw clay onto them before they were smoothed out ready for petalling.





PETALLING

The well dressers got to work on the boards in the village institute. Six wells were dressed this year. The designs were marked out on the clay, and stones, seeds, leaves and other

natural materials used to create the picture, with petals only added at the end of the week to keep them fresh.



THE WELL DRESSINGS GO UP



On Friday evening and again early on Saturday morning the 'heavy gang' collected the dressed boards and transported them to the wells, and manhandled them into place.



SHEEPWASHING DEMONSTRATION

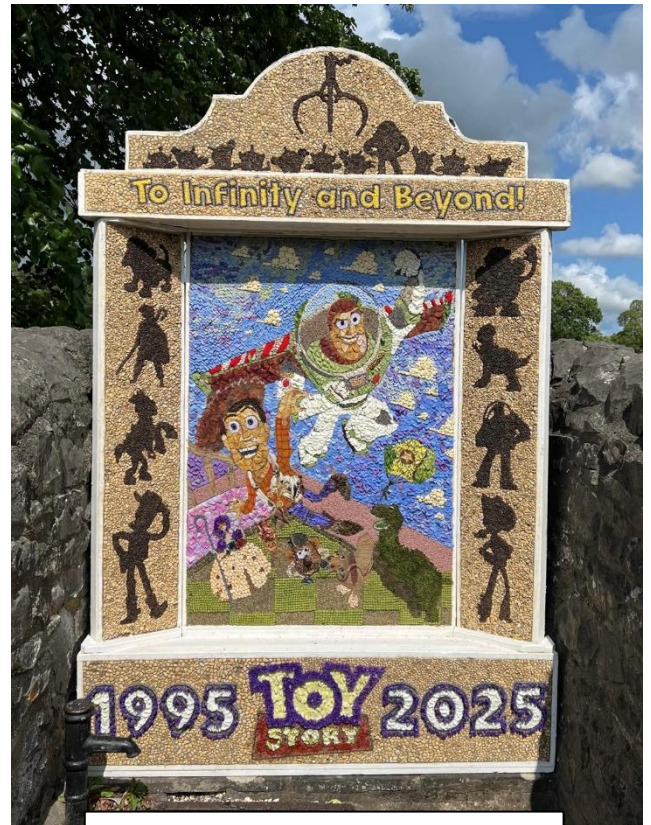
This popular annual event drew large crowds on Saturday afternoon at the Sheepwash Bridge.



THE WELLS



LITTLE WELL Greaves Lane – Celebrating 'Snoopy, Peanuts and the gang.'



GREAVES LANE WELL – Toy Story



CHURCH STREET WELL – Bees and beehives



TOP PUMP WELL – Jungle Book



CHILDREN'S WELL – Rainbows and handprints



SHEEPWASH WELL – Jane Austen

TRINITY SUNDAY - BLESSING OF THE WELLS

On Sunday afternoon a Patronal Well Blessing Service was held in Church. As the weather was fine this year, the sermon was preached from the ancient preaching cross in the churchyard, by the Rt Revd Malcolm MacNaughton, Bishop of Repton. This was followed by a procession round the wells led by the Youlgrave Silver Band, followed by the choir, the Bishop and the congregation, and visitors



to the village. The Bishop blessed each well, and everyone joined in singing a hymn.



International Contributor to 2025 Well Dressing

Back in February 2025 we heard from Lydia Breunig of Flagstaff, Arizona, who is involved in a number of local organisations concerned with the protection of springs, streams and groundwater, and had been researching English traditions that honour these critical natural resources. She is also a founding board member of the Southwest Folklife Alliance that is dedicated to cultural activities centered on traditional knowledge and heritage.



Flagstaff sits at an elevation of 7,000 feet in a mountainous area and – like Ashford – has a lot of tourists, not least because it is just 75 miles away from the Grand Canyon National Park. Its natural springs have for centuries been sources of water, and the current city was established in 1882 as a water stop for the new east–west transcontinental railway.

Lydia asked if she could “watch, take notes, and photo document the process”, and perhaps even learn a little by working on one or more of the boards herself.

After having sorted the practicalities of getting here and finding somewhere to stay, and sourcing a bicycle (thank you, Jan!) Lydia set to work!



By all accounts she had a wonderful and rewarding time, and found the well dressers and the village to be really welcoming. On Well Dressing Sunday she was presented with a gift by Sarah Brocklehurst to mark her very welcome contribution, and presence among us. As Sarah said, "Lydia fitted in seamlessly and we all loved having her with us. When I dropped her off at Chesterfield Station there were a few tears shed. We have all made a lovely new friend. Thank you Lydia for your lovely smile and quiet enthusiasm for everything we did."

Many thanks to everyone for making her stay here so productive and memorable!

Ian Pykett