

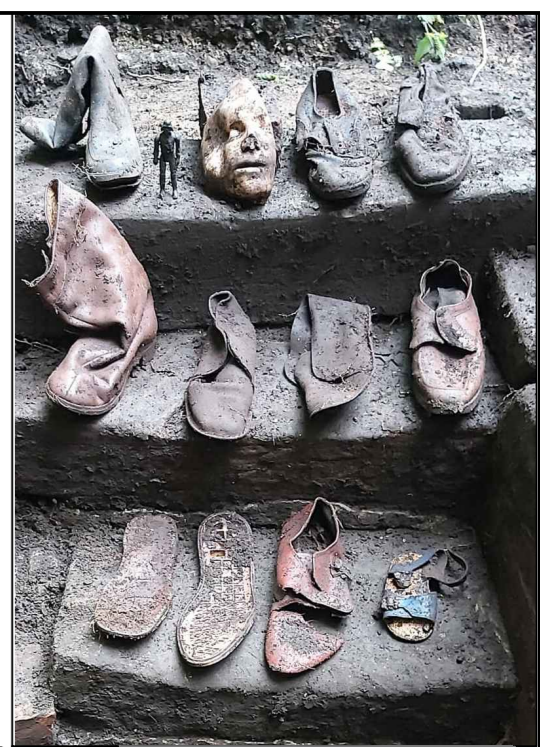


Flass Well is first shown on the 1861 Ordnance Survey map: no structure was depicted, suggesting it was a natural spring. In 1863 a drinking fountain (left) was erected on land donated by the North Eastern Railway Company beneath the viaduct on North Road: this was supplied with water from Flass Well. By the late 19th century the well was described as:
"a cavity cased with brick and looking much like a tomb... the spring which once ranked amongst the most eminent of Durham fountains... reduced to a mere dribble".

Flass Well served residents into the post-War period, but eventually fell out of use and became lost to the overgrowth.

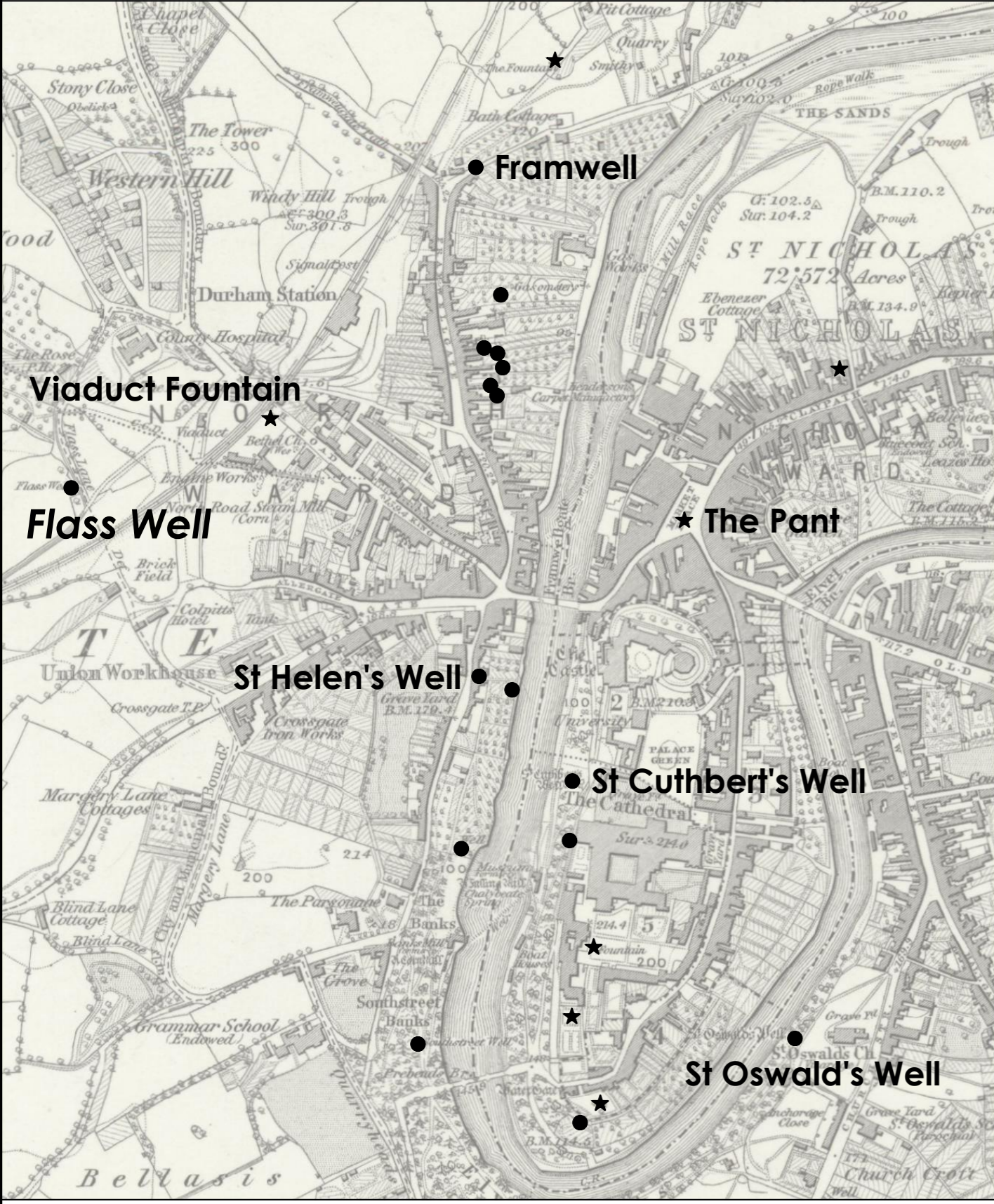


Archaeological Excavation of the well in 2023 confirmed that it was a brick and concrete structure built over the original spring. A small inlet in the floor suggests it was augmented with a pump. Steps on the north side allowed access to the well area, and a socket for a gate or fence post at the top of the steps shows the well was surrounded with railings.
 After it had gone out of use it was filled with rubbish including rubble, tyres, a Darth Vader figure, 16 shoes but...only 1 pair !!



EXCAVATIONS AT FLASS WELL, DURHAM CITY

Wells of Durham There were several wells in Durham City from the medieval period onwards, with some considered to be important holy sites. There were also communal wells, such as St Helen's Well on South Street, and a fountain (The Pant) in the Market Square, first erected in 1450.

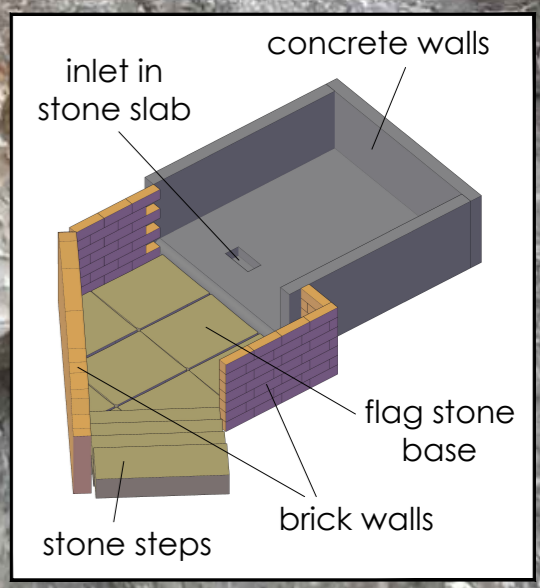


Flass Lane (Ainsley Street) dates back to the early 19th century. By 1887 the western end of the street was described as:
"not only spoiled by the jagged ends of some new streets, but [also] crossed by a large ridge of earth... surmounted by the embankment of the railway".
 The 1898 Ordnance Survey map shows it was renamed Ainsley Street. The renaming of Flass Lane illustrates the influence of mustard producers William Ainsley and Bros. who had a factory on Waddington Street.

Flass Well and Flass Lane sit on the edge of Flass Vale. This area was exploited for quarrying in the 20th century, and from the late 1960s onwards Flass Vale faced a series of development threats.

A successful campaign by local groups in 1973 led the newly formed City of Durham District Council to purchase the land in order to protect it.

The archaeological excavation of Flass Well was undertaken to mark the 50th anniversary of the preservation of Flass Vale.



The Ghost of Janet Ramshaw Ainsley's Almanac of 1887 contains a colourful account of a ghost that reputedly haunts Flass Well. Janet Ramshaw lived in Western Hill with her mother and pet parrot. She regularly walked to the well with her fiancé, but was stabbed to death by a jealous lover named Jabez Trickett, who then enlisted. The identity of Janet's murderer was revealed by the unlikely intervention of her parrot, who had witnessed the event and recounted it. Trickett was brought back to Durham, and went mad with remorse before his execution. A subsequent spate of ghostly sightings starting in 1789 described: *"a spectral form gliding along with noiseless step...uttering a strange unearthly shriek"*: this caused the well to be shunned at night...

1st Edition OS map 1861 Wells ● Fountains ★

