

7 Midsomer Norton Audio Trail - St. Chad's Well

[Ambient sound: running water, birds/nature, war/combat, wheelchair/footsteps]

Tucked away past Island House lies a lush green space with a remarkable monument at the centre of it: an obelisk above a spring. You're looking at Saint Chad's Well. Saint Chad is the patron saint of medicinal springs, and you'll find springs all over the country bearing his name.

When you arrive at this spot today, you have to imagine passing through a dramatic arched entrance, built in Chilcompton rough stone. The arch, which you can see pictured on the information board by the well, marked the boundary of a great mansion, Norton House.

In the middle of the 1800s, Norton House was home to the Savage family. Their son, Major Frederick Stukeley Savage, fought the Russian Empire in the Crimean War and returned with injuries which would eventually kill him. While in Crimea he'd been horrified at the lack of clean water that had caused so many deaths among the soldiers, and had written home to his mother about it. Distraught by her loss, Mrs Savage decided to honour her son's memory by having a monument built at the site of the well, which she also had improved "for the benefit of the poor of this parish". Every evening, old and grieving, she would be taken in her

wheelchair, down through the grounds of Norton House, to spend time by her son's memorial.

If you have time, you might like to explore some more remnants of Norton House Estate. Turn right out of St. Chad's Avenue and walk up Silver Street, where you'll come across a pair of stone pillars marking another entrance to the grounds. Other interesting remnants can be found in the nearby Nature Reserve, which was once a wooded slope within the grounds of the estate. The springhead, now restored, was sunk into the hill by miners so that fresh running water could be piped privately down to the house.

Before you leave St. Chad's Well, sit for a while listening to the play of water in the stream, and take a moment to appreciate the value of the well as a source of safe water to the thirsty townsfolk of earlier times in this magical place.