

## PAST TIMES

### The Lady Well Seaton Ross

Places where water wells from the ground have always been venerated as sources of life, hence their almost invariable female dedication. The Neolithic practice of casting precious and sacrificial offerings into rivers and meres was, in some cultures, maintained long into the Iron Age and is even echoed in Arthurian legends.

With the gradual introduction of Christianity into Britain, the worshiping of pagan water gods was repeatedly forbidden and numerous sacred wells were rededicated to Christian saints. The most common name was Lady Well. The Lady Well in Seaton Ross is situated south of the village in the corner of a field and is approached by public footpath from the village. It is clearly marked on the 1851 and 1909 (revised) Ordnance Survey maps for Seaton Ross. The well is fed by an unseen source and is surrounded by a thicket of willows and tall weeds. There is no obvious source of water for the water in the pool. On the north side of the pond is located a field drain piping murky water into a drainage ditch, while a few yards to the east of this pipe there is a strong flow of clean water entering the ditch from some unknown source. This could perhaps be the original Lady Well spring with its stream now used as a field drain.

The Revd. William Smith, from his 'Ancient Springs and Streams of the East Riding of Yorkshire in 1923 states from chapter 16 the following: -

*"In England, of the Holy Wells dedicated to the Saints of Christianity, the wells of Our Lady greatly exceed in number those of any other saint. Water throughout the ages has ever been regarded as the symbol of purity. Its presence is seen too in the tenets of Pagan mythology. The Norsemen had a Goddess eminent as the embodiment of purity and known to them as the Queen of Heaven. She was Freya, and her name is constantly on our lips in Freya's Day, or Friday. Freya the pure was associated in the minds of our forefathers with clear water as the special spirit of the springs and streams, and as such was worshiped by them. Some shadowy remains of her may be met with still in the White Lady so often supposed to haunt the neighbourhood of springs. Freya was represented by the Lady-Bird one of the most pretty of our insects and this, long before 'Our Lady the Virgin, Mother of Christ' was known".*

The origins of the Lady Well at Seaton Ross are unknown. The village had for many years a very prominent Roman Catholic presence and it is possible this could be the reason for its existence "Our Lady the Virgin Mary" – however, for how long it has been known as a Lady Well remains a mystery, as there are no known traditions connected with the site. The Lady Well is part of the history of Seaton Ross and is worth preserving. Anyone wishing to visit the site should refer to the local Ordnance Survey map for directions.

**Malcolm Young**