Peter Browne recounts how he and colleagues went about restoring the Highbrook Churchyard Pump.

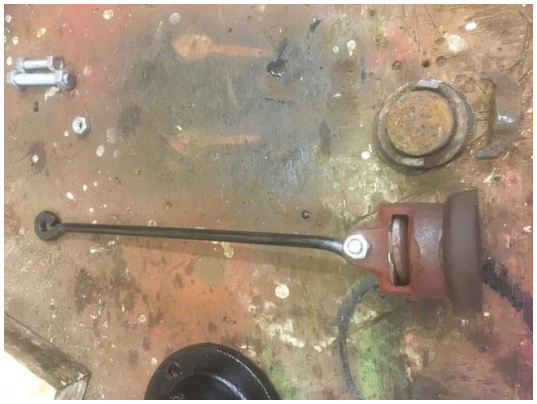
For the past 30 years I had looked at the rusty pump and thought I must restore that one day; well, one sunny day in June I finally had the time to start. The pump was made by Lee Howl which was one of the largest manufactures of village pumps and installed sometime after the Church was built in 1884.

We removed the pump from a 4ft sq slab of stone with a help from an angle grinder to cut off the rusty bolts (what did we do before angle grinders!).

The pump had an 8ft downpipe connected to it, and from the rust level we could see that it normally had sat in 5ft of water.

We lifted the slab and found it was not a well but a cistern, fed by water from the Church gutters. The cistern was 8ft deep and 7ft in diameter, capable of holding 1600 gallons. But there was only 9 inches of water in the cistern and even after heavy rain it has remained at 9 inches, which indicates it must have a large leak somewhere.

I took the pump back to my workshop and took it apart. The main lift valve was completely rusted away but amazingly you can still buy a replacement valve from W. Robinson & Sons in Hainault, Essex.



I cleaned up the bore of the pump as well as I could and replaced the bottom flap valve which I made from a piece of 5mm thick leather kindly given to me by our local saddlery company, Penfolds in Cuckfield. After soaking the leather seal in olive oil for two days to soften it, I painted the pump with Hammerite and reassembled it with the new lift valve.

I decided to use modern 43mm plastic waste pipe for the delivery pipe and therefore Araldited a short length of pipe into the end of the pump to make it easy to do the connection. I also bought a standard 43mm non-return valve to fit at the bottom of the pipe to hopefully hold the water in the delivery pipe to make it easy to self-start.

I refitted the pump with the delivery pipe sitting almost at the bottom of the cistern; although there was only 9 inches of water, over a 7ft diameter it is still enough water for casual use.

After priming the pump it worked very well and brought up lots of very dirty water, After trying again after 1hr it still worked but if you leave it more than a day you have to prime it with a hose pipe, give it about six pumps and away it goes again, I assume that the bore of the pump is no longer smooth enough to make a good seal to draw the water up 8ft when the pipe is empty.

Apart from anything the pump now looks very nice!