



Winifred's Well

John A. Shaffer

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Winifred's Well explores a moment when Britain's oldest continuous pilgrimage site was threatened. A 1917 mining incident suddenly diverted the flow of water from the healing well that predates Lourdes by at least seven centuries. The journey to recover this forgotten story of the well and its protectors draws together the author, the heir of an old Welsh family, and even a contemporary Archdruidess—each seeking in a different way. The journey ends at a rarely seen underground lake that lies beneath a mountain in rural Flintshire. Extensively researched, the book interweaves the story of Lady Anna Maria Mostyn with the author's present-day search for the physical and spiritual sources of St. Winifred's Well. Lady Mostyn's crusade to save the well from powerful mining interests at the turn of the twentieth century has a contemporary ring. And the legend of St. Winifred, mingled with elements from the deep Celtic past, offers ground for exploring the primal fascination with powerful watersources that cuts across time and culture. With the resurgence of interest in Celtic spirituality, it is surprising that no book in print has the remarkable well at Holywell as its focus. Winifred's Well unfolds the evocative power of the place as the author came to experience it—through chance meetings, discoveries, recovered documents, and unexpected connections. The book is illustrated with original photographs and historical images from the author's collection.

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