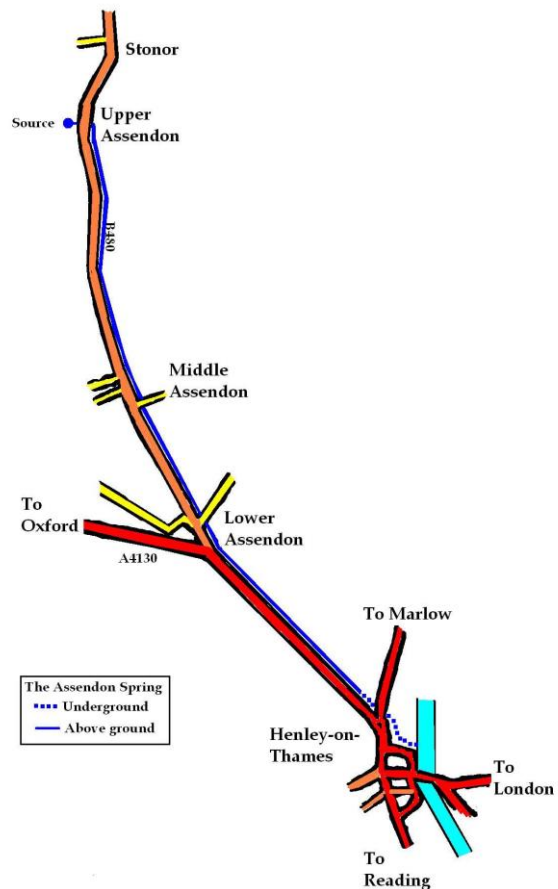


# The Assendon Spring

The Assendon Spring is so called because it flows, in the main part, down the Assendon valley. Its source is beside an oak tree in Upper Assendon (now known as Stonor). It then flows in ditches alongside the B480 road through Middle Assendon to Lower Assendon.

From Lower Assendon it flows in a further ditch alongside The Fair Mile (A4130) to Northfield End, where it disappears underground. The pipes containing the Assendon spring in Henley-on-Thames traverse along New Street to the River Thames.

Houses built along the Assendon valley have small bridges crossing the ditch. The grassy ditch continues on the east side of the Fair Mile.



The Assendon Spring flowed in great volume in the winter of 2000-2001. This caused road closures in Lower Assendon and along the Fair Mile.

In the 1960s a council worker, who travelled by bicycle, regularly dug out the ditch. The field in which the spring rose contained a wide trench about two metres deep. This was later filled in. The spring's ditch had also not been properly maintained in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and so the roads along the Assendon valley quickly flooded. On several occasions this flooding froze over and at least one car travelling near Stonor skidded and ended upside down in the ditch. Emergency work was carried out to deepen the ditch and install underground pipes for the spring in Assendon and in Northfield End, Henley.

Prior to this, the Assendon Spring flowed in 1960. It took several weeks for the water to reach Henley and the River Thames and the flow was fully contained in the trench and ditch, with no flooding.

There are other recorded occurrences of the Assendon Spring. In 1676 Dr. Robert Plot (*A Natural History of Oxfordshire*) wrote that the flow in 1674 produced a stream that could have driven several mills.

The Assendon Spring is also recorded in 1853. by J.S.Burn (*History of Henley*). His account states that some years before a small girl who had been playing beside the stream in a Henley street fell in and was swept away by the strong current. She was then carried underground along the length of New Street and rescued, as she emerged at the river, by

workmen who had seen the accident and run down to the river. He also recorded that she sustained little injury and grew up to become the mother of a family.

Old photographs also show the spring in flow in the 1890s and 1916.

The latest flowing of the Assendon Spring was in 2014. Water flowed across the road once again because the natural sump had been filled in and the ditches north of Middle Assendon had become full of weeds.

In his book *Gone Rustic*, Cecil Roberts refers to an omen associated with The Assendon Spring. Local people believed that the flowing of the spring was an omen of an ensuing war.

### The Assendon Spring in 2001



The source of the Assendon Spring at Stonor.



Flooding at Middle Assendon.



Digging out the ditch in Lower Assendon.



Flooding and road closure at Lower Assendon



The flow of the Spring along the Fair Mile



The flow of the Spring in the Fair Mile and Northfield End.



### The Assendon Spring in 2014



The source of the Assendon Spring at Stonor and flooding on the valley road.



Flowing in the ditch at Middle Assendon.



Flowing along the Fair Mile