

Ye Olde Wishing Well

A wishing well is a term from European folklore to describe wells where it was thought that any spoken wish would be granted. The idea that a wish would be granted came from the notion that water housed deities or had been placed there as a gift from the gods. This practice is thought to have arisen because water is a source of life, and was often a scarce commodity.

The Germanic and Celtic peoples considered springs and wells sacred places. Sometimes the places were marked with wooden statues, possibly of the god associated with the pool. Germanic peoples were known to throw the armor and weapons of defeated enemies into bogs and other pools of water as offerings to their gods. Water was seen as having healing powers, and wells became popular, with many people drinking the water, bathing in it, or simply wishing over it.

Some people believed that the guardians or dwellers of the well would grant them their wish if they paid a price. After uttering the wish, one would generally drop coins in the well. That wish would then be granted by the guardian or dweller, based upon how the coin would land at the bottom of the well. If the coin landed heads up, the guardian of the well would grant the wish, but the wish of a tails up coin would be ignored. It was thus potentially lucky to throw coins in the well, but it depended on how they landed.

The Celtic Cloutie Well tradition and the English well dressing tradition appear to be related to this kind of ancient well veneration.

The tradition of dropping pennies in ponds and fountains stems from this. Coins would be placed there as gifts for the deity to show appreciation.



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wishing_well]

