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Venetian well-heads in nineteenth-century taste

Venetian well-heads may not strike the modern researcher as objects of any special importance, rooted as they are in everyday life as basic parts in the water-system. Instead, these works of art are mostly displayed in museums or can be found in public and private collections from the United States to Russia. Many well-heads have been destroyed or lost. Surviving examples are, in many cases, deprived of their original function, and are used for decorative purposes, for example as flowerpots in private gardens or parks. This loss of function poses several problems for the researcher that render the actual historical investigation all the more difficult.

The aim of this article is to show how the growing cult of Venice contributed to the emergence of well-heads in Anglo-American literature, and to the development and re-animation of the related branch of the art trade in the nineteenth century. After a review of travel journals and other literary works, copies, forgeries, and the activity of collectors and dealers in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art trade, three newly identified well-heads will be presented as examples. These were previously thought to have been lost and have not been analysed in the context of Venetian carvings.

At first, interest in well-heads was often connected to commercial activities. During the nineteenth century, those who studied well-heads were mostly sculptors and art dealers, as well as art historians sent to Venice from foreign countries as agents for various museums. They wrote short specialized articles and reports on the artefacts, considering their origin, typology, or stylistic changes.¹ John Charles Robinson (1824–1913), the reporter and purchasing agent of the South Kensington collection, was soon to realize the importance of the study of Venetian well-heads. In his 1883 report, Robinson emphasized the abundance of these items:

Everybody who has visited Venice must have taken note of the ornamental well-heads which abound on all hands. The famous bronze wells in the court yard of the Ducal Palace will, of course, be in everyone's recollection, but every piazza, the courtyard of every palace, and, in short, almost every house in Venice, has its 'vera da pozzo' of stone or marble, and the collective series forms in itself a veritable school of ornamental sculpture of all ages, from the earliest days of the Republic down to the last century.²



1. Well-head once in the Poultry Yard, Holmhurst St Mary House, Sussex. Steel plate engraving from A. J. C. Hare, *The Story of My Life*, vol. V, p. 31

serves as invaluable documentation of well-heads that have since disappeared.⁶

Long before it was deprived of its independence, Venice became part of the Grand Tour, a form of tourism that appeared during the first half of the seventeenth century. Members of the English nobility sojourned in the city for longer or shorter periods, and returned with a couple of Canalettos or other typical works of art.⁷ While it was mainly young men of the British upper class and their companions who made the Grand Tour, older people, women and entire families also undertook the journey, even if a somewhat shortened version.⁸ Myriads of published travel journals were prompted by their experiences. The main destination was Rome, where travellers might stay for two or three years. The stay in Venice often coincided with festivities: the Carnival of Venice or Ascension Day, on which the doge celebrated the symbolic marriage of Venice and the sea to commemorate the conquest of Dalmatia.⁹ But at whichever time of the year travellers arrived in the city, they rarely stayed for more than a week.¹⁰

2. Well-head in the Renaissance garden, Holmhurst St Mary House, Sussex. Steel plate engraving from A. J. C. Hare, *The Story of My Life*, London, George Allen, 1900, vol. VI, p. 255



Considering written sources in chronological order is an efficient method of tracing the main stages of the cult of Venice. It was some time in the first half of the seventeenth century that the cult appeared, specifically among English travellers. Regarding literary works in the strict sense, Venice inspired a large

In the twentieth century, after the publication of Ferdinando Ongania's collection of photographs of well-heads in 1889,³ more and more researchers turned to these Venetian artefacts.⁴ Many monographs dedicated to the Venetian plastic arts published during the last decades also include well-heads.⁵ While interest in well-heads has not abated and new pieces are regularly discovered, a comprehensive analysis of medieval and Romanesque well-heads in the context of Venetian masonry, which would also take into account Byzantine and Western European specimens, still waits to be compiled. The Ongania collection, which was republished in an abbreviated form in 1911, still

number of writers, for example Lord Byron, Thomas Otway and Ann Radcliff, who chose the city as a setting for their works.¹¹ In these the main Venetian motifs that appear are the Bucentaur, the carnival, the gondolas, the Bridge of Sighs, the Doge's Palace, the four horse statues of St Mark's Basilica, the Lido, the palaces, the prisons, the churches and the doges. Well-heads make few appearances.

Travelogues, on the other hand, offer more information for the researcher. One of the notable early English participants in the Grand Tour was John Evelyn (1620–1706), who did stop at Venice. He provided a detailed description of his experiences



3. Well-head in the cloister of the Monastery of S. Gregorio. Steel plate engraving from A. J. C. Hare, *Venice*, London, George Allen, 1896, p. 72

there between June 1645 and May 1646. Evelyn, who later studied anatomy at the University of Padua, relates his admiration for the city built on water and its water supply on the very first page of his description of his arrival in Venice from Rome:

And this Citty, for being one of the most miraculously plac'd of any of the whole World, built on so many hundred Islands . . . deser[v]d our admiration: It has neither fresh, nor any other but salt Water, save what is reserved in Cisterns, of the raine, & such as is daily brought them from Terra firma in boates.¹²

He mentions the two well-heads in the court when describing the Doge's Palace:

'[W]e were carried to see the private Armorie of the Palace, and so to the same Court we first Enter'd, nobly built of polish'd white Marble, part of which being the Dukes Court pro Tempore, there are two Wells, adorn'd with incomparable Work in Copper.'¹³

Describing the Venetian Arsenal, he mentions a peculiar well-head:

Another hall is for the meeting of the Senat: passing a Graft, are the Smiths forges, where they are continually at work on Ankers & Iron work: Neere it a Well of fresh Water which they impute to two Rhinoceros's hornes which they say lie in it, & will preserve it from even being empoison'd.¹⁴

Although there are no English sources from the eighteenth century, there is a large number of descriptions of Venetian well-heads in nineteenth-century writings. The works of the critic, writer and scholar John Ruskin (1819–1900) had an enormous influence on the poets, writers and tourists of the nineteenth century. In *The Stones of Venice*, first published from 1851 to 1853 in three volumes, Ruskin mentions two well-heads. In the chapter on San Marco he touches upon a now unidentifiable well-head standing near the Campo San Moisè, decorated with a pointed coat of arms:

4. Well-head on the Campo Santa Margherita. Steel plate engraving from A. J. C. Hare, *Venice*, p. 193



A yard or two farther, we pass the hostelry of the Black Eagle, and, glancing as we pass through the square door of marble, deeply moulded, in the outer wall, we see the shadows of its pergola of vines resting on an ancient well, with a pointed shield carved on its side; and so presently emerge on the bridge and Campo San Moisè, whence to the entrance into St. Mark's Place, called the Bocca di Piazza, (mouth of the square), the Venetian character is nearly destroyed, first by the frightful



5. Well-head of the Corte Corner, San Samuele 3365. Steel plate engraving from A. J. C. Hare, *Venice*, p. 219

façade of San Moisè, which we will pause at another time to examine, and then by the modernizing of the shops as they near the piazza, and the mingling with the lower Venetian populace of lounging groups of English and Austrians.¹⁵

The second mention of well-heads can be found in the chapter on the Doge's Palace, where Ruskin alludes to the two bronze well-heads in the courtyard:

The long and narrow range of building, of which the roof is seen in perspective behind this angle, is the part of the palace fronting the Piazzetta; and the angle under the pinnacle most to the left of the two which terminate it will be called, for a reason presently to be stated, the Judgment angle. Within the square formed by the building is seen its interior

court (with one of its wells), terminated by small and fantastic buildings of the Renaissance period, which face the Giant's Stair, of which the extremity is seen sloping down on the left.¹⁶

To further exemplify Ruskin's interest in Venetian well-heads one can refer to a drawing loaned to him by Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830–96), and used at Ruskin's drawing school at Oxford.¹⁷

Well-heads and Venice also played an important role in the life and work of the English writer Augustus Hare (1834–1903), who wrote a guidebook to the city and often referred to these artefacts.¹⁸ He was fond of

St Jacob's well in the cloisters of St John's Basilica in Rome,¹⁹ and of St Olaf's well at Trondjem in Norway.²⁰ He bought two well-heads for the garden of Holmhurst St Mary House, Sussex, which he had had remodelled. One of them was in the poultry yard (fig. 1),²¹ while the other one was placed in the Renaissance garden specifically designed for this well-head (fig. 2).²² In his guidebook entitled *Venice* (1884), Hare dwells on well-heads several times. In the introductory chapter he calls attention to the antiquarian Della Rovere in Venice, where everything it appeared was for sale: 'Antiquities. At the famous establishment of Della Rovere, formerly Marcato, 2277 S. Fosca, everything Venetian, from the largest *pozzo* to the smallest lamp, may be obtained. Church-builders will do well to look here for their altars and ornaments.'²³

After the description of the foundation of Venice and of the traveller's arrival in the city, Hare



6. Well-head in the cloister of the Franciscan monastery of San Francesco del Deserto. Steel plate engraving from A. J. C. Hare, *Venice*, p. 257



7. Well-head in the courtyard of the house, Holmhurst St Mary House, Sussex
(photo: Revd Kenneth Clinch)

mentions well-heads again. Their number had diminished, according to him, because of reconstruction work and the increasing art trade from the second quarter of the nineteenth century:

‘[S]till, in 1814 there were 5000 well-heads in Venice; in 1856 only 2000. Now only 17 of the earliest or Italo-Byzantine period remain, and nearly half of these are in the hands of antiquity dealers. Venice is always wishing to sell its birthright of art-treasures.’²⁴ When describing the Doge’s Palace he does not fail to mention the two bronze well-heads: ‘in the court are two magnificent well-heads (puteali) of bronze, one by *Niccolò de’ Conti*, Director of the Foundries of the Republic (1556), the other by *Alfonso Alberghetti* (1559)’.²⁵

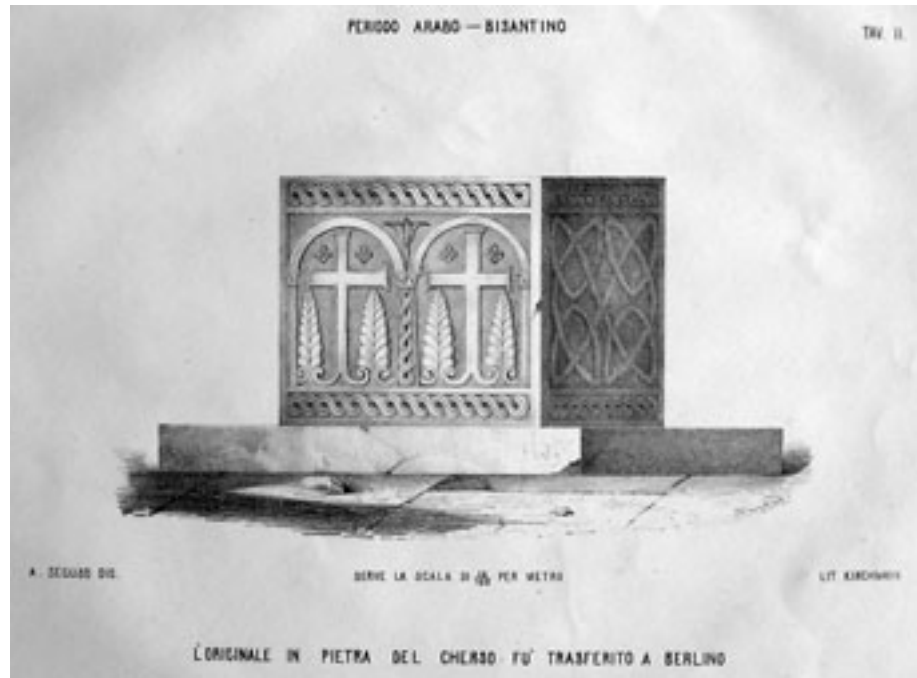
Hare also refers to the well-heads in the collection of the Museo Correr standing in the court of the Fondaco dei Turchi. Among the latter he describes in detail the piece brought from Corte Bressana to the

museum in 1883, which he also mentions later in connection with the well-head standing on the square in front of the Scuola di S. Marco: ‘The rich gothic doorway in the low wall beyond admits to the courtyard of the *Abbazia di S. Gregorio* (founded in 1342 by monks of S. Ilario, successors of those who had fled from the persecution of Ezzelino in 1247), now let in tenements, but indescribably picturesque, with its ancient central well of red marble’.²⁶ And again: ‘a cloister opening upon the courtyard contains several old Venetian well-heads of extreme beauty – one dating from the ninth century. At the upper end is the glorious well-head from the Corte Bressana.’²⁷ Then again: ‘In the adjoining Campo is a beautiful renaissance well of the sixteenth century with sporting amorini. Another much finer specimen of a well-head is an exquisite work, attributed to Bartolommeo Bon, recently moved from the adjoining Corte Bressana to the Museo Civico.’²⁸

Hare makes further reference to the well-head standing in the middle of the Campo dell’Angelo Raffaele near the church of S. Sebastiano: ‘The well of S. Sebastiano was sculptured by Marco Arian, 1349; it is the only known work of the sculptor, who has left his name upon it’.²⁹ Today it is well known that Marco Arian was not the carver of the piece, but rather the patron who left instructions in his will for it to be made.³⁰ Among the carvings on the islands of the lagoon, Hare refers to the well-head in the cloister of the Franciscan monastery of S. Francesco del Deserto near Torcello: ‘There are two cloisters, one with a beautiful arcade and well’.³¹

Almost half of Hare’s guidebook is quotation. His main sources are Ruskin’s *The Stones of Venice* and *Voyage en Italie* (1852) by Théophile Gautier (1811–72). The latter work includes several chapters containing detailed descriptions of Venice. With these passages Gautier aimed at drawing a more accurate and realistic picture of the city than was the case with earlier writings.³² Hare refers four times

8. Well-head once in Venice, today in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Steel plate engraving from A. and L. Seguso, *Delle sponde marmoree o vere dei pozzi e degli antichi edifizii della Venezia marittima: Periodo arabo-bizantino*. Sec. IX–XII, Venezia, 1859, fig. II



to well-heads using quotations from other authors. He quotes the text cited above that mentions the carving near Campo San Moisè from Ruskin's book.³³ He also quotes passages on well-heads in general from the second volume of *Voyage en Italie*, entitled *Florence et Venise* (1866), by the French critic and historian Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (1828–93). This contains a description of the two bronze well-heads standing in the court of the Doge's Palace. Hare also took notice of the decorative patterns of other well-heads and referred to ones featuring lions and putti.³⁴ An unnamed work of the English art critic and historian Julia Cartwright (1851–1924) is also referred to:³⁵

Each of these squares is now a little centre of life, and has its farmacia and grocery and fruiterer's shop, perhaps a palazzo with the upper stories to let, sometimes a tree or two swaying leafy boughs against the balconies. Each has its well, generally raised on steps, round which the gossips of the place collect, and where you may glean many a characteristic and amusing incident of Venetian life. Every morning at eight o'clock the iron lid which closes its mouth is unlocked, and then there is a clanking of heels on the stone pavement and a brisk chattering of tongues, as the water-carriers, stout-built peasant maidens from Friuli, each wearing the same high-crowned hat and short skirt, come to fill their copper buckets at the well.³⁶

Hare presents the cubic well-head decorated with a Greek cross on each side that stands on the grassy square between the Church of Santa Fosca and the Palazzo del Consiglio on Torcello, quoting a passage from *Sketches of the History of Christian Art* (1847) by Lord Lindsay:³⁷

The two churches, the baptistery and steeple, an isolated marble column, an ancient well, sculptured with the Greek cross, the Archivio and Tribunal (such no longer) – these, and one or two dilapidated buildings, all closely

adjacent, are the sole remains of the ancient town, and form now the centre of a wilderness.³⁸

Of the illustrations in Hare's guidebook, four represent well-heads: the carving of the cloister of the Monastery of San Gregorio's (fig. 3), that of the Campo Santa Margherita (fig. 4), the cylindrical well-head of the Corte Corner, San Samuele (fig. 5), and the piece in the cloister of the Franciscan monastery San Francesco del Deserto near Torcello (fig. 6).³⁹

Hare bought two well-heads in Venice. One is known only from the engraving in his autobiography *The Story of My Life*; the other was made of white marble and illustrated in the same book, and he wrote in detail about its origin and its placing in his garden. He rescued the well-head from the demolition of several houses between San Moisè and San Marco for the construction of a new street. Originally, the piece had been standing in the court of one of the demolished houses. Hare had it transported to England, and it was this well-head that he placed in the middle of his Renaissance garden.⁴⁰ On 15 August 1889 he wrote:

The little pathlet at the side winds with enticing shadows under the beech-trees, whilst the white marble Venetian well, covered with delicate sculpture of vines and pomegranates, standing on the little grassy platform, makes a point of refinement which accentuates the whole ... In the centre is an early Venetian font or well head which came from one of the houses pulled down when the new street was made from S. Moise to S. Marco. It is not later than 12th century. The steps on which it stands were made with the terrace and they were not finished before I began to plant secums, veronicas, etc., in their interstices.⁴¹

9. A copy or faked limestone Venetian well-head in the garden of the palace housing the Hungarian Customs and Finance Guard, 17 Munkácsy Street, Budapest, turn of the nineteenth/beginning of the twentieth century, artificial stone, h: 95 cm, diam: 82 cm (photo: the author)



This well-head still stands in the court of the house (fig. 7), which was decorated with carvings and copies bought by Hare from many parts of Europe. The other well-head that stood in the middle of the poultry yard has disappeared. According to its engraving (fig. 1), it belonged to a small group of Venetian cylindrical well-heads decorated with ogee arches. Heraldic motifs and ornaments appeared between the columns, while under the arches small flowers could be found. Hare's well-head was the subject of a watercolour by Jan Grevembroch for his manuscript of 1761, now in the Biblioteca Correr, Venice.⁴²

The journalist William Dean Howells (1837–1920), who was the United States Consul in Venice from 1861 to 1865, provides a detailed description of Venetian everyday life in his book *Venetian Life* (1866). The book contains frequent references to well-heads. He describes the rules of the use of well-heads, the work of the water-carrier girls, and the workings of wells installed in public places:

But there were some things which must be brought to the house by the dealers, such as



10. Page from the catalogue of
J. P. White, *Garden Furniture and
Ornament*, London, 1906, p. 155

water for drinking and cooking, which is drawn from public cisterns in the squares, and carried by stout young girls to all the houses. These 'bigolanti' all come from the mountains of Friuli; they all have rosy cheeks, white teeth, bright eyes, and no waists whatever (in the fashionable sense), but abundance of back. The cisterns are opened about eight o'clock in the morning, and then their day's work begins with chatter, and splashing, and drawing up buckets from the wells; and each sturdy little maiden in turn trots off under a burden of two buckets, one appended from either end of a bow resting upon the right shoulder. The water is very good, for it is the rain which falls on the shelving surface of the campo, and soaks through a bed of sea-sand around the cisterns into the cool depths below. The bigolante comes every morning and empties

her brazen buckets into the great picturesque jars of porous earthenware which ornament Venetian kitchens; and the daily supply of water costs a moderate family about a florin a month.⁴³

Howells also mentions the well-heads in the two courts of a Gothic palace along the Grand Canal:

[A] hall . . . gave through Gothic windows of vari-colored glass, upon a small court below, a green-mouldy little court, further dampened by a cistern, which had the usual curb of a single carven block of marble . . . Between the two kitchens was another court, with another cistern, from which the painter's family drew water with a bucket on a long rope, which, when let down from the fourth story, appeared to be dropped from the clouds, and descended with a noise little less alarming than thunder.⁴⁴

In *The Golden Book of Venice* (1900), a historical novel set in the sixteenth century written by the American Mrs Lawrence Turnbull, one finds reference to the two bronze well-heads standing in the court of the Doge's Palace:

The great courtyard, under the wonderful blue of the sky, was aglow with color; the palace facades, broken into irregular carvings, seemed to hold the sunshine in their creamy surfaces; the superb wells of green bronze, magnificently wrought and dimmed as yet by little weather-staining, offered a treasury of luminous points. Here, in the early morning, the women of the neighborhood gathered with their water-jars, but now the court was filled with those who had business in the Ducal Palace – red-robed senators and members of the Consiglio talking in knots.⁴⁵

In sum, we can conclude that Venetian well-heads are not among the chief motifs of the city as represented in travel journals and literary works. When they are mentioned, reference is usually made to the bronze well-heads of the court of the Doge's Palace. The motif appears most often in written sources from the



11. Well-head, Casa Barozzi, Santa Maria Formosa, Venice, from F. Ongania, *Raccolta delle vere da pozzo in Venezia*, Venezia, 1911, fig. 45

12. Well-head from Casa Barozzi, Santa Maria Formosa, Venice, date? marble?, h: ?. Cleveland Museum of Art (photo: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978)



nineteenth century, which may have contributed to the growing interest in well-heads during this period, and to the trade in these artefacts that consequently emerged.

There was a strong demand for Venetian well-heads during the nineteenth century from the newly established public collections in Europe and the USA, and from private collectors. According to two articles by Lorenzo Seguso written in 1859 and 1866, it was between 1840 and 1848 that the pillaging of Venetian gardens, courts and public places reached its apogee (fig. 8).⁴⁶ Seguso, who relates that he drew many well-heads that were later transported to Prussia, Russia and England, attributes the mania for well-heads to an unidentifiable English nobleman, who discovered that they served as excellent flowerpots in his London park. Up to 1866 the immediate destination of most of the trade in well-heads was the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where they were re-sold to Russia,

and to the states that were later to form the German Empire.⁴⁷ However, after Venice had become part of Italy, the British Isles, France and the United States became the primary destinations.

An investigation of the provenance of Venetian well-heads produced eight art dealers directly engaged in their sale. Among these were Giovanni Marcato, whose warehouse served as a basis for the founding of the Venice Art Company, and Michelangelo Guggenheim (1837–1914), the founder and the first director of the first school of arts and crafts in Venice. Other dealers were Francesco Pajaro, the sculptors Angelo and Lorenzo Seguso, father and son, and Luigi Resimini. Researching their activities, however, has not yet yielded substantial results.

Demand for well-heads persisted even after patricians, forced by economic decline, had sold their collections during the nineteenth century. This demand, having drained the collections of the nobility, encouraged the making of copies and forgeries and contributed to a strong connection between dealers and forgers and manufacturers of copies. Indeed, from the first half of the nineteenth century to the present day, Venice could be considered a city of forgers, and the forgery of artworks had become a widespread and regular activity.⁴⁸ Alberto Rizzi was the first to call attention to the unusually large number of forgeries and exact replicas of Venetian well-heads, which often bore motifs from other Venetian carvings as well as from

13. Well-head in the park of the Villa Cimbrone, Ravello, date ?, marble or limestone ?, height? (photo: © Marburger Fotoindex Neg. Nr. 1.296.258, 1950–70)



well-heads of various periods (fig. 9).⁴⁹ The motifs of inhabited plant scrolls and two animals on either side of a tree are common on early medieval Italian reliefs. On the other hand, octagonal bases and the use of arcades are typical of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

This demand was satisfied in England by John P. White, an art dealer and the owner of a factory producing garden furniture and ornament in Bedford. His catalogue, published in 1906, contains ample information regarding the material, shape and size of the well-heads available (fig. 10).⁵⁰ Pyghte Works, which was in operation between 1898 and 1939, offered copies of well-heads made of Istrian limestone and a red marble, Rosso di Verona, the name indicating the location of the original.

The identification of forgeries of well-heads can be based on six features. The first is material. Until the thirteenth century, well-heads in Venice were largely made of Greek marble or Aurisina limestone. It was only later that carvers started to use Istrian limestone or Rosso di Verona. Secondly, there is size. Medieval Venetian units of measurement were no longer known in the nineteenth century. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century well-heads are often significantly larger or smaller than medieval pieces. However, one cannot determine the authenticity of carvings solely on size, but must take into consideration other features. The condition of a piece is indicative, for its history is reflected in the wear on the surface and the regularity of the marks. Present-day location and placement provide clues, while style and motifs can also be a give-away. Carvers in the nineteenth century based their work on known and often published examples, which may have since been lost. It is worth examining motifs from other carvings of the same period, for a miscellany of styles and motifs is apparent in the work of



14. Well-head in the court of San Andrea, Venice, from F. Ongania, *Raccolta delle vere da pozzo in Venezia, Venezia, 1911, fig. 118*

masters inspired by varying sources of type and period.

Many Venetian well-heads made their way into English and American private and public collections at the beginning of the last century. Rather than presenting the well-heads listed in the catalogue of the Victoria and Albert Museum,⁵¹ in the papers of Paul Hetherington,⁵² or in the books of Barbara Israel,⁵³ Terence Hodgkinson⁵⁴ and George Plumptre,⁵⁵ I have three rediscoveries to add to the corpus of known well-heads. One was thought to have been lost for centuries and two other fragments have not been analysed in the context of Venetian well-heads yet bear motifs characteristic of their respective ages.

Based on the work of Ongania⁵⁶ I was able to determine the provenance of a well-head that could not be traced after 1889 (fig. 11).⁵⁷ This cubic well-head

thought to have been lost since the publication of Ongania's collection was presented as a gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art by the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust in 1916 (fig. 12).⁵⁸ One of the sides of this early medieval well-head is ornamented with a Latin cross with widening ends embedded in an arcade. On either side of the cross are placed two trees below the arms and two rosettes above. The arch, which connects the two columns with smooth shanks, is decorated with a motif of Vitruvian scrolls. The space above the arch is filled with two three-cusped leaves. On the other side of the well-head is the motif of a diamond set between a larger and a smaller circle of a one-stranded band connected with twisted bands. A button appears within the smaller circle. The remaining space is filled with lanceolated leaves and three-cusped leaves in the corners and outside the circles. While the motif of the so-called tree of life, the Latin cross between trees and rosettes, appears on several ninth- and eleventh-century well-heads, the motif that appears on the other side, characteristic of the ninth century, can be found on only one other piece, which was the property of the art dealer Giovanni Marcato, seen and photographed for the last time by Ongania.

The gothic well-head in the park of the Villa Cimbrone in Ravello is cylindrical with an octagonal top decorated with lancet arches with three cusps (fig. 13). Its nearest parallel is the fourteenth-century well-head in the court of St Andrea in Venice (fig. 14).⁵⁹ The well-head in Ravello was bought by the connoisseur Ernst William Beckett, Lord Grimethorpe, after he had bought and renovated the villa and enlarged its park. He placed the well-head between copies of the four columns of the ciborium of San Marco, Venice.⁶⁰

The parterre in the Queen's Garden in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, is completed by a Venetian well-head in Renaissance style (fig. 15). It was presented to the garden as a gift by the enthusiastic gardener Sir John Ramsden (1877–1958) in 1958. The owner of Muncaster Castle, Cumbria, probably bought it in the 1910s



15. Well-head in the Queen's Garden, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, fifteenth century, marble, h: ?
(photo: Kew Library, 2008; reproduced with the kind permission of the Director and the Board of Trustees, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew)

meet the growing demand from museums and collectors, which in turn gave rise to efforts by contemporary sculptors and forgers to meet continued demand. The three well-heads presented here are newly discovered Venetian relics hitherto thought to have been lost, but now rediscovered in English and American collections.

to decorate the castle park. The modern iron structure of the well-head was made by Mr L. S. Grundy and Mr Holland.⁶¹ The well-head itself bears the stylistic marks of fifteenth-century examples: it has a round base and an octagonal top with large leaves on its corners bending backwards. Between the leaves, on its sides, coats of arms and animal heads can be found.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the fame and appeal of Venice stimulated the literary and commercial interest in well-heads. By the middle of the nineteenth century it had become the habit of the British upper classes to travel to Venice and purchase well-heads to decorate their gardens. Most of the original relics of Venetian sculpture and later carvings made to order were sold in an attempt to

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1 A. Diedo, 'Sulle così dette Vere o sponde dei pozzi', *Esercitazioni scientifiche e letterarie dell'Ateneo di Venezia*, IV, 1841, pp. 281–94; G. Fontana, 'Sulla singolarità delle cisterne di Venezia, riguardata in quanto alla loror storia, anche d'arte, alle leggi antiche, per la gelosa conservazione, alle ideate risorse, all'attuale e alle secolari provvidenze d'ogni genere antiche e recenti', *L'Omnibus*, 1854, pp. 257–61; R. v. Eitelberger, 'Die Einfassungen der Cisternen (puteali, vere) in Venedig', in G. Heider, R. v. Eitelberger and J. Hieser (eds), *Mittelalterliche Kunstdenkmale des Österreichischen Kaiserstaates*, Stuttgart, 1858–60, vol. II, pp. 173–76; A. and L. Seguso, *Delle sponde marmoree o vere dei pozzi e degli antichi edifizi della Venezia marittima: Periodo arabo-bizantino. Sec. IX–XII*, Venezia, 1859; L. Seguso, 'Dell'importanza delle vere dei pozzi per la storia dell'arte veneziana', *Raccolta Veneta*, ser. I. tom. I. disp. II., Venezia, 1866, pp. 115–22; G. Tassini, 'Tre celebri vere da pozzo in Venezia', *Archivio Veneto*, III, 1871, pp. 442–47; L. Seguso, 'Dispersione di oggetti d'arte e storici ricordi', *Il Tempo*, 30 and 31 October 1874; V. Zanetti, 'Di una vera o

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24 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 71–72.

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29 *Ibid.*, p. 195.

30 Rizzi, as at note 4, pp. 54, 250, 265.

31 Hare, as at note 18 (1896), p. 259.

32 Quotations from *The Stones of Venice* by Ruskin: Hare, as at note 18 (1896), pp. 4–6, 18–20, 31, 36–38,

40–43, etc. Quotations from *Voyage en Italie* by Gautier: Hare, as at note 18 (1896), pp. 51, 53, 77–79, 85, 87–88, etc.

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40 Augustus Hare initially had the terrace well-head in another place in his garden, building the Italian Renaissance terrace and steps for it later. He placed it upside down as the top was worn from use, so the grape cluster falls upwards. I would like

to express my gratitude to Julia Bolton Holloway for sharing this information.

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61 I would like to express my gratitude to Dave Davies, member of the Hardy Display team, for sharing this information with me.

Tuskes queries

Fig 12, date, medium and dimensions required

Fig 13, date, dimensions and medium required

Fig 15 dimensions required

Page 49, para 2, check that edit is OK

Page 50, para 1, 'published during the last decades'. Can this be made more specific?

Page 56, last para, check edit

Note 1, Archivio Veneto XXXI, XVI, why are there two volume numbers for one year? Compare AV 1871 above.

Note 9, is Ingamells the editor or the author?

Note 30, Rizzi as at note 4. Which work is referred to?

Note 46, I have assumed that 31 and 121 are page numbers

Note 47, Rizzi as at note 4. Which work is referred to?

Note 49, Rizzi as at note 4. Which work is referred to?

Note 57, Rizzi as at note 4. Which work is referred to?

Note 59, Rizzi as at note 4. Which work is referred to?

Note 60, check references. Not clear whether 1 and 2 are page numbers or issue numbers (i.e. I beni culturali 11.1, Le dimore storiche 18.2)