



PLOTTING PLYMOUTH'S PAST



Plymouth Corporation Leat and Waterworks Stones: [see PPP series LSPC](#)

Plymouth has no series of stones marking the town's leat, the open watercourse which supplied fresh water from Elizabethan times. The Plymouth leat was built 1589-91 under the provisions of an Act of 1585 which authorised the construction of a 6 or 7 foot ditch or trench from the River Meavy to the town. The work was substantial and well known (famously involving Sir Francis Drake).

One stone linked to the Plymouth leat marks where Warn's Bridge allowed the Tamerton Foliot road to cross the leat. The stone (**LSPC 1**) has been repositioned after road widening "*within feet of its original position*", according to Ray Bush in an Old Plymouth Society publication. It is on the western edge of the roundabout at the junction of Budshead Road and Budshead Way. The inscription is now faint and unreadable but archive photos show it as "J Warn's Bridge 1788". John Warn was a tenant from 1780 of the nearby Widey Mills, which used water from the leat.

Stone **LSPC 2** (shown right) is a standard Plymouth boundary stone: a limestone block with the Plymouth Coat of Arms incised, but without inscription or date. It also has a panel where the stone has been dressed back as if to receive an inscription - or, perhaps, to take one out. It is the location of the stone which could link it to the leat, namely against the building line at the junction of Houndiscombe Road with Mutley Plain. The Plymouth leat runs along the western side of Mutley Plain in a conduit below ground and then, still in the conduit, along Houndiscombe Road itself. The stone is therefore near to where there is a major change of direction of the leat.



There are other stones, not yet surveyed, but possibly connected to the town's waterworks in the vicinity of Drake's Place (the reservoir on North Hill).

A series of PCWW granite markers and cast iron posts can be found outside the City, thought to denote Plymouth Corporation Water Works land and/or the Burrator Reservoir catchment area.

Further reading

Water from the Moor: An illustrated history of the Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport Leats, by David Hawkings (Devon Books, 1987). It describes the course of the leat through the old town and gives details of the mills built upon it. There are pictures of the conduit revealed during building work in 1984.

Plymouth (Drake's) & Stonehouse Leat, by Ray Bush (Old Plymouth Society, 2000). A detailed account of the route, with a series of contemporary photographs and maps.