

# The Blessed Virgin Mary Spring A Visitor's Guide



Nestled in the beautiful Shimmings Valley on the edge of Petworth lies an ancient spring dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. For generations this peaceful place has been a destination for walkers, pilgrims, and local people seeking refreshment, quiet reflection, and a deeper connection with God's creation.

## A Place of Prayer and Tradition

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Petworth, has long maintained a special connection with this spring. Each year, around the Feast of the

Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in September, parishioners walk from the church to the spring for prayers, a blessing, and fellowship. This tradition continues today and all are welcome to join.

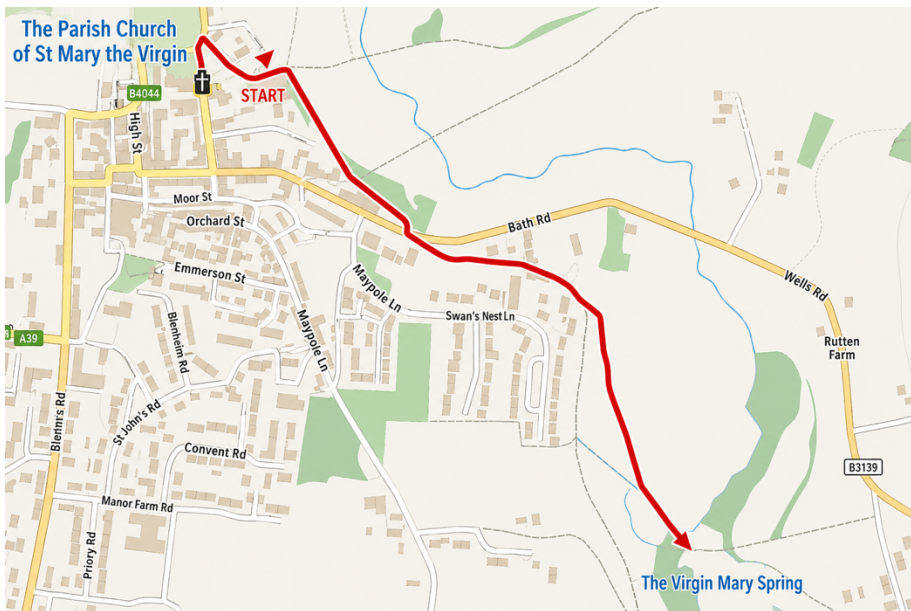
Water has always been a powerful symbol in the Christian faith. It speaks of life, renewal, healing, and baptism. The clear waters of this ancient spring remind us of God's abundant grace and sustaining love. The water of this spring is associated in healing of the eyes.

## History of the Spring

The spring appears on the first edition Ordnance Survey maps of the late nineteenth century, showing that it has been recognised for well over a century. Although little documentary evidence survives, its dedication to the Virgin Mary suggests a much older origin, possibly dating back to medieval times when holy wells and sacred springs were important places of local devotion and pilgrimage.



*Petworth. Evacuees at the Virgin Mary Spring. September 1939. Photograph by George Garland*



## **Finding the Spring**

The spring lies in the Shimmings Valley between Petworth and Byworth.

## **Walking from St Mary's Church:**

Leave the church and go down Barton Lane head north towards Byworth. Cross the road at the Sacred Heart Church, follow the footpath

leading down into the valley. The spring can be found a short distance beyond on the Petworth side of the valley.

The walk offers wonderful views across the Sussex countryside and provides an opportunity to enjoy the peace and beauty of the South Downs landscape.

## **A Place of Reflection**

Whether you come as a pilgrim, a walker, a visitor to Petworth, or simply someone seeking a quiet moment, we hope you will find here a place of refreshment for body, mind, and spirit. As Our Lady said in the Magnificat: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." May all who visit this ancient spring discover something of God's peace and blessing.

## **🙏 Devotional Actions at the Virgin Mary's Spring**

When you arrive at the Spring, you are invited to make a simple act of faith and blessing using the water that flows so gently from this ancient place.

The steps are as follows:

1. Draw water from the Spring.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross on your forehead with the water.
3. Drink a little of the water.
4. Pour some water into your hands and gently wash, allowing the water to fall back to the earth.

As you do so, pray:

"May the Lord, through the intercession of Our Lady of Petworth, grant me health and peace."

This short prayer unites your visit with the centuries-old devotion of those who have come before you, seeking renewal, healing, and the gentle protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary.