

Keith Briggs: Seven wells - Journal of the English Place-Name Society, 39, 7-44 (2007). Update 2008-10-15.

Corrigenda

1. Brian Rich has kindly pointed out that a more likely site for the Derbyshire *Seuwelledale* is at SK 231 579, about 500m north of Aldwark (not near Parwich as I had it). This was established by G. A. Makepeace in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* **121**, 162.
2. In the gazetteer, the section for Somerset is out of alphabetical order.
3. In all displayed quotations, the source should be given before the translation in square brackets, since the translation is mine, and not from the cited author.

Addenda

1. There is another instance of seven wells in OE charter bounds (making five). I can't understand how I missed it in the article. It is in S694 (AD 961), a charter of King Edgar concerning land at Southstoke, Somerset. The charter text reads *on þa pestran seofon pyllas*. See S. Kelly, *Charters of Bath and Wells* (OUP 2007), number **14**, page 115. The location is probably about ST 762 607.
2. W. Borée, *Die alten Ortsnamen Palästinas* (Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Hildesheim 1968) has Beersheba as "nicht die 7 Brunnen, sondern nur 'Brunnen der Sieben'" (footnote, page 82)
3. Concerning the frequency of numerals in place-names (pp. 8-9 of my article), Peter Kitson has counted the occurrences in OE charter bounds in his article *Quantifying qualifiers in Anglo-Saxon charter boundaries*, *Folia Linguistica Historica* XIV/1-2, 29-82, (1993). He observes in his Table 4: *ān* 185, *þrēo* 43, *twēgen/twā* 36, *seofon* 20, *āenlīpig* ('lone, single') 17, *fīf* 15, *fēower* 10, *twīg-* 8, *þrittig* 7, *twelf*
5. I think we can conclude that 7 occurs more often than expected.

4. Some other classical references are *Septem Aquæ* and *Septem Maria*. (See, for example, W. Hazlitt *Classical Gazetteer* (London, 1851) and K. Miller *Itineraria Romana* (Strecker und Schröder, Stuttgart 1916)).

5. Though it is not a watery example, it is interesting to note that the name of Ceuta (the Spanish enclave in Morocco), comes from *Septem Fratres*.

6. Some say that Saba Biyar, recorded in classical times near the Bitter Lakes in Egypt, means 'seven wells'. See, for example, J. Wilson, *The lands of the Bible* (Edinburgh 1847) vol. 1, page 139; and A. Calmet, *Dictionary of the Holy Bible* (1832), page 465. This might be the same place as the modern El Saba Abar in Ismailia.

7. This passage from a letter of Alcuin (no. 262 in the MGH edition) is rather interesting, since it indicates that numerological thoughts on the number 7 were associated with the hot springs at Aachen: *Ad quod tantummodo magni pisces seligentur, qui, non scisso rete, apostolica capti sunt praedicatione, erescente numero ab uno usque ad decem et septem propter decalogum et septem sancti Spiritus dona. De cuius numeri mira divisione et significatione olim me scripsisse memoro, dominoque meo David dixisse, calido caritatis corde, in fervente naturalis aquae balneo.* ("David" is of course Charlemagne.)

8. So is this, from the chronicle of Alberic de Trois-Fontaines under the year 795, following a mention of Karolus rex and Aquisgrani: *Hanc extruxit in honore beate Virginis, fecit ibi balnea calida, aqua frigida temperata, vel potius reparavit, quia iam ibi erant; et palatium iuxta ecclesiam. Ipsam vero ecclesiam depingi fecit veteris et nove legis hystoriis, palatium vero septem liberalibus disciplinis et bellis Hispanicis.* (MGH *Scriptorum XXIII Hannover MDCCCLXXIV*, page 718)