

## "Schhh ... You Know Who"



In the first half of the twentieth century the quarry pits at the top of Beckham Wood were repurposed as rubbish pits by the villagers. Now it's rusty metal, broken glass, the odd leather boot. But we have found some miraculously pristine glass bottles, such as this tiny, beautifully embossed Schweppes bottle.

It is just 14 cm high and is dated between 1922 and 1937.

How do we know?

Firstly, on the bottom of the bottle is the bottle maker's mark: "JL & Co Ld", which was John Lumb and Company Limited, in Castleford, Yorkshire. That particular mark dates the bottle between 1905 and 1937. Before 1905 there was no "limited" and after 1937 the company was taken over and the mark changed.

Secondly, after the First World War Schweppes standardised its bottles to two sizes, six ounces and ten ounces. Then in 1922 a third size was added, two ounces, for Soda Water only. This small bottle became known as a 'Schweplet'. And that's what this bottle is.

Schweppes was always enthusiastic about advertising and there was an advertising campaign specifically for the Schweplet. There were two slogans: "Ask for a Whisky and Schweplet" and "Why not a Schweplet, it will improve your whisky".

This is an advert from 1927:



The Art Nouveau embossing on the bottle, with its trailing vines and flowers, might put the date of the bottle in the '20s because by the '30s Art Deco, with geometric lines, was more popular in glass embossing.

The fountain embossed on the bottle represents a key moment in Schweppes history.

In the late eighteenth century, Johann Jacob Schwepe, a German watchmaker and amateur scientist, developed an efficient process to manufacture carbonated mineral water. He founded the Schweppes Company in Geneva in 1783 and moved to London in 1790. In the 19th century Schweppes, which had moved out of family ownership but retained the Schweppes name, faced stiff competition. The turning point was the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851 when the contract for the supply of refreshments was granted solely to Schweppes. With that, sales, and the company, grew. Tonic water was introduced in 1870.



*London Illustrated News 24th May 1851*

Schweppes had in 1850 started producing Malvern Soda Water and the centre piece at the Great Exhibition was a spectacular tiered glass fountain flowing with Malvern Soda Water. The fountain is embossed on the Schweplet bottle.

One question remains: how did this Schweplet bottle, which you can imagine on a table in the Savoy in the 1920s or at a theatre bar in the West End in the 1930s, come to be in the rubbish pit in an East Devon wood?

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