

# ZGORNJA ŠTIRNA

The village of Nova vas is situated on a part of the Bloška planota plateau that lacks surface water courses; because the ground is limestone, any precipitation sinks into the karst underground almost immediately. To cover the distance to the nearest spring, a wooden water pipeline was built in 1863 to carry water from the Sušica spring to the centre of the village. The water was used for everyday needs, watering the cattle and fire safety.

The Sušica spring under the Volčjanski hrib hill is situated some 600 m from the oldest preserved well on the Bloška planota plateau. Thanks to the difference in altitude between the spring and the village, the force of gravity brings the water into the Zgornja štirna well, which is constructed from hewn stone blocks bound together with an iron ring ("šina"). The well is distinguished by a unique layout – a large oblong pool and flow trough – a type found only on high-altitude karst plateaus with high annual precipitation. The beautifully shaped cast iron tap allows a constant, uninterrupted flow of water at the rate of 0.2 l/s.

## PINE WOOD PIPELINE

Experts used pine wood to construct the wooden pipeline as it is known to have a long service life in wet environments. The wooden pipes were made from straight, unpeeled trunks around 20 cm in diameter. The trunks were hand-drilled and linked together by hammering the sharpened, narrower end into the wider end of the next pipe, or with purpose-built metal couplings, known as "prstani" (rings). Before linking the pipes, the joint surfaces were coated in clay for better sealing. *The pipe in front of you is an original pine wood pipe from 1863.*



To ensure that everyone had equal access to good quality drinking water, two unwritten rules were established, namely: each house had a specific time of day to water its cattle at the small trough; no washing was allowed at the well, but villagers could draw water and take it home. To maintain the water source and the wooden pipeline, the villagers would clean the Sušica spring once a year. This involved women and children scraping silt out of the spring with wooden bowls ("latvica"). To monitor the quality of the water, the villagers used a population of fish and observed the rate at which green algae accumulated in the well.

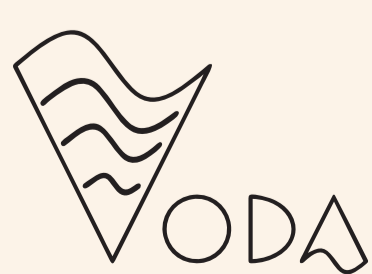
The wooden buildings, thatched roofs and open fire kitchens of the mid-19th century posed a considerable fire hazard in cluster villages. To prevent disaster, night watches were organised: two watchmen stood guard from dusk till dawn, protecting the village from fires. The well was designed to serve as a water reservoir in the event of a fire and played an important role in the preservation of the village. Quick access to water and good organisation could prevent fires or at least reduce the risk of a fire spreading to other houses.

The construction of the Zgornja štirna well in the village centre brought a source of drinking water much closer to the villagers, which meant that they could enjoy more leisure time to educate themselves, read books, learn a trade and socialise. Running drinking water attracts visitors, which led to the development of inns, trade and crafts in the local area. With the development of these activities, Zgornja štirna played a significant role in Nova vas becoming the economic and administrative centre of the Bloška planota plateau.

One thing remains a mystery: the identity of the person whose creativity and visionary thinking made this progressive water facility possible, thus improving the quality of life for villagers of all social classes.

Since the area around the well was becoming increasingly deserted and oral sources were gradually disappearing, Društvo Voda stepped in to renovate the area and collect the oral history of the well's origin and role in the society. The only material source of the well's origin is the year of completion, carved on the well's rim. The well is entered in the Cultural Heritage Register under the number 14326.

Nova vas, October 2013



DRUŠTVO VODA



OBČINA BLOKE