

Memories of Ponds on The Village Green

By John Paddy

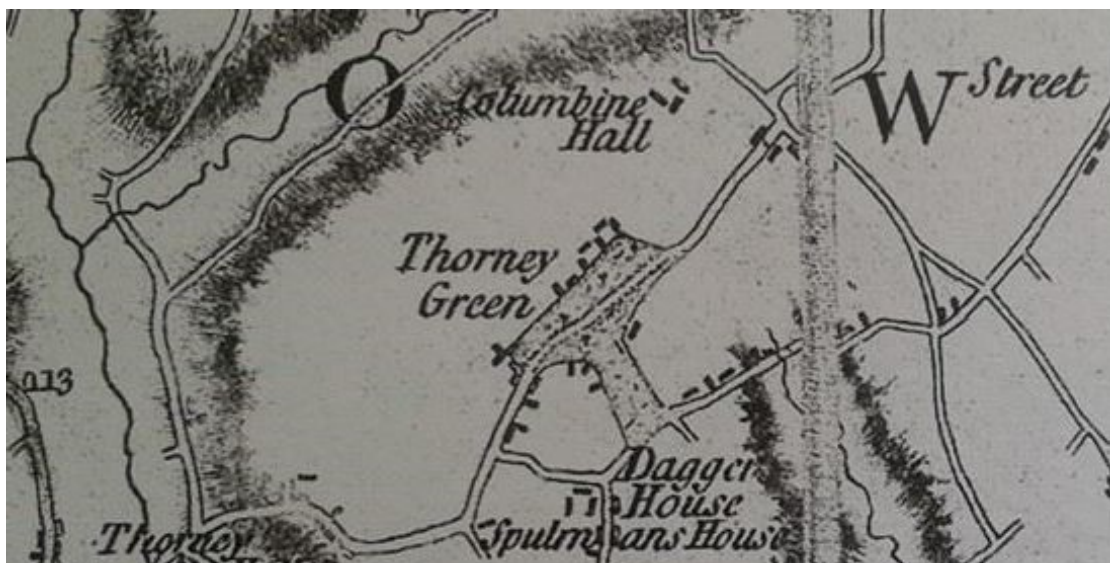
2010



The Village Green had seven ponds of various sizes which may surprise newcomers to the village, so I thought I would share some of my memories of these.

Anti-clockwise around The Village Green.

Grey Tin Pond was next to 38 Columbyne Close, the home of the Pyke family. A very large deep pond protected by a tall grey tin fence (hence the name) with barbed wire around the top to keep us out - it didn't work very well! The fence had a locked gate through which wooden steps led down to the water from where drinking water, etc. could be collected, the banks were very steep at this point. Was the pond created to produce clay lump blocks when they built the houses opposite 35 Columbyne Close? Perhaps someone knows if this was the reason. Tom Denny's house with his beautiful Romany caravan in front, Whip Pykes, Dempsy and Joan Millers houses - all long gone. Jack Dalziel's house now Jack's Cottage and St Mungo still stands and has been lovingly updated by the present owners. This pond was a great meeting place for us children. Once inside the fence we played hide and seek amongst the bushes and picked cherries from them. Many happy hours were spent tiddler or roach fishing with bent pins and worms. A lot of the time we played there dad would sit against the fence with Jeff Southgate, Bill Messenger and Bob (Dazzler) Horrex, all putting the world to rights. Jeff used to walk a herd of cows from Mr Allards (Walnut tree farm) along the road past Columbyne Close onto The Green every weekday morning and he would sit by the pond while they grazed, sometimes I got the job of closing the gate to Green Farm (now the home of Roger and Maureen Carter) to prevent the cows from entering their farm. The herd would graze on what is now the football pitch then cross Carters drive to continue grazing before crossing again to finish in front of the Retreat, all while Jeff was studying the horses in the paper. When it was time to return Jeff would just shout and the herd responded to make the journey back. Every day the roads and the green were covered in cow-pats but nobody cared, not even the lads playing football and cricket.



Hodkinson's Map of 1783 the dark marks on The Green could be some of the ponds that John remembers

Hedge Boarded Pond outside Rambler Cottage, (now the home of Keith and Cathy Welham) was possibly dug out to help build the cottage. This pond also had a gate and steps leading down to the water. In my young days David and Grace Wilden lived in this cottage with Stan Denny living next door. I spent many happy hours at the Wilden's home playing with their son Barry who had a huge collection of Meccano. David used to go to the pond for water to fill the copper situated in the backhouse ready for washing and bathing. After bathing the water was transferred to the garden. In summer months Barry and I often got a soaking when David was collecting water, lovely harmless fun. David always took pride in keeping the hedge round the pond well trimmed, he also kept nearby a long pole with a spoon attached! Yes you have guessed it! A ready breakfast courtesy of the resident moorhens.

Round 'O' Pond was opposite Willow Cottage it was more egg shaped than round and only a foot deep in the middle. This pond was a natural habitat for frogs, toads and crested newts, us boys spent a lot of time in the water collecting them in jars for recording in our nature club house which we had set up in David Wilden's shed. When the pond froze over in winter we had great fun sliding on the ice. No fear of going under there!

Second Hedge Boarded Pond was opposite Laburnham Cottages. Like the other ponds, was it built to create clay lump blocks to build these cottages and provide them with drinking and bath water? I remember this pond being very deep and with very steep banks, I cannot remember anyone fishing there. The hedge was cut by the residents of the cottages amongst whom at No 1, Mr Calthorpe, a Saddle Maker and on the other end at No 4, another Mr Calthorpe, who did Hairdressing in an outside shed.

Waterworks Red Tin Pond was situated on The Green to the left of the entrance to Birch Close. Together with its own water tower and pump house, it supplied water to many houses in the village. This pond was kept in very good condition by the Waterboard and we were discouraged from going over or through the red tin fence which was topped by barbed wire - no deterrent for us children. The pump house was later used by Stowupland Football Club as changing rooms when they had to leave the old Retreat which was later demolished to make way for the present building. The pump house is still there on land which is now privately owned.

Dents Pond is situated at the end of the Retreat Public House gardens. It was known to us youngsters as Dents Pond as on the Green opposite the pond lived Jimmy Dent where he tethered goats which drank from the water. (Jeff's cows also drank from this pond). Some of my senior friends at the Retreat tell me it was known as Mets Pond, its amazing what knowledge can be gleaned over a pint or two of real ale on Saturday lunchtime. The pond has recently been cleaned out and the banks cleared and replanted by a group of volunteers with fish being added to make it a live pond, wildlife is returning which is encouraging to see.

Unidentified Pond? This was a very shallow hollow opposite Green farm in the middle of the green. It had one single bush beside it which the late George Carter accused us boys of cutting down, John Hill still says we didn't do it. In winter when it iced over we used to skate on it. The hollow was only filled with water until it drained away down the open ditch which ran alongside the road down to Columbyne Close, the ditch has now been filled in.

I hope I have re-kindled some memories for the Stowupland people of the 1950's and that the new people of the village have enjoyed reading what the Village Green was like back then.

Happy Memories.