

HISTORY NOTE NO.1

SHAMLEY GREEN PONDS ON THE GREEN, Patrick Mannix assisted by Michael Harding

Shamley Green used to have four ponds in the vicinity of the Green, they included the current “Duck Pond” adjacent to Woodhill Lane and the pond opposite the Bricklayers, by Pond Cottage. Previously there were two more ponds. One on the Green outside the garden wall of the Old Malt House, this pond was drained in 1948 when main drainage was installed in the vicinity. The fourth pond bordered on Hulbrook Lane to the west of the “Jubilee Trees” by the Arbuthnot Hall, and was also filled in 1948 when Hullmead was developed. Both ponds went as part of the post WWII tidy up.

Historically ponds on common land were often located close to an exit route from the inhabited area and frequently close to Inns where horses might be changed and need watering. The pond by the Bricklayers fits this pattern. The Bricklayers used to have its own stables with a hay loft above, later converted into a petrol station and garage, itself later replaced by “Green View”.

Many village ponds were important for functions such as watering horses and other livestock and other practical uses, such as for wool production and tanning. Ponds were constructed from time immemorial for breeding of fish; but there is no historical record of ponds being constructed for the use of ducks! It is possible that the desirable image of a thatched village with a pond and ducks was the product of the often fertile Victorian imagination and zeal to make things appealing and attractive, in particular in pictures and book illustrations.

There is no memory of the four ponds on the Green having any such practical function. Ducks had ducklings and children learned by collecting tadpoles and sticklebacks, watching dragonflies, playing with toy sailing boats, sliding on the ice and falling in. It would seem that the Shamley Green Duck pond has seen nothing else within living memory (Michael Harding). The 1906 photograph below, is of the Duck pond looking north east. It is interesting to note the lack of vegetation, presumably the result of grazing?



There would therefore seem to be historical justification for retaining the “Duck” pond in this form.

From my memory there have only been a couple of occasions in the last 35 years when the pond has dried up in the Summer. Critical to this is the level of the pond after the winter, which in turn is dictated in part by the soundness of the outflow dam. The pond used to be fed from a spring outside Walnut Tree Cottage. This spring started to fail in the mid 1950s, so a ditch was dug on the north side of Woodhill Lane along the edge of the Green to take water from a spring in the vicinity of The Bricklayers to the pond. This still flows at an adequate rate, as long as the outflow dam is sound.