

Ewelme Pound

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We are all familiar with the small plot of land on the right hand side of Parsons Lane. For a settlement to still have its Pound preserved is quite rare. The Pound or 'Pinfold' for stray animals seems to have been founded during the early centuries of English history, as back then there were no fenced fields and naturally the livestock strayed onto the crops. The Lord of the Manor owned the Pound and would appoint a man to look after the hay and the crops after they had been cut by building a temporary fence around the produce. This man was called the Hayward, and since he was responsible for driving the cattle, his own harvest was placed nearest to the fence. Thus, if any of the animals did get in they would eat his crops first. However, the crops were not always laying cut in the enclosure, more often they were standing ripening in the field. Obviously, this had to be safeguarded as well and so the Pound was built - which was a small paddock, usually found in the middle of the village.

The Hayward would find the trespassing animals and drive them into the Pound until the owners were discovered and had paid a fine to the Lord of the Manor, and if the village was large enough it was necessary to have another man, called the Pinder, who would look after the animals that were placed in the Pound. In the case of Ewelme, the Domesday Book states that the village belonged to four separate people so there may have been more than one Pound at that time.



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The first mention of Ewelme Pound in the Parish Council Minutes is in October 1897 when Mr H[arry?] Munday was appointed 'keeper' with a salary of ten shillings per annum. The fine for a stray horse or cow was one shilling, paid to Mr Munday. In 1902, keeping the post in the family, Mr A[lfred?] Munday was the 'keeper' at the same salary. In March 1909 this was reduced to five shillings p.a. and by that November the 'keeper's' office had lapsed! The next entry in 1930 was a decision for the Pound to be made secure, and in 1932 local handyman Frank Godden fitted two new oak gate posts, a padlock and key for £3 10s 0d. The Minutes are then silent for another 20 years.

In 1952, after an unfortunate public contretemps between Parish Councillors, the Council erected a plaque which stated - *'The Old Village Pound – Animals last Impounded about 1923'*. A date at variance with the modern green sign that states - *'last used circa 1938'*. (The late Herbie Winfield, who was born in 1917 and raised in the adjacent cottage; wrote in a 1996 issue of the News that he believed it was not used after the mid-1920's. He remembered the plot as being larger and fenced by three rails of tubular steel, held by oak posts).

The cause of the disagreement began in February 1952 when Herbie's father, Herbert J Winfield, admitted responsibility for damaging the Pound railings by cutting down a dangerous tree in his garden. Site meetings were arranged to access the damage and fellow Parish Councillor Henry Shepherd, backed by Harry Walklin and Sydney Winfield suggested that as a site of historic value, it should be restored to its original state. In June 1952 Mr H West of Benson tendered £64.10s 0d for renovation and repairs, rejected as too costly by the Council. A counter proposal was it be cleared and left tidy for a sum of £6 17s 6d, as over the years it became *'full of weeds, small trees and rubbish.'* Alternatively, any private body could carry out a more ambitious scheme with Council approval if they wished.

Dissatisfied, Mr Shepherd requested a public meeting to discuss the responsibility for payment for the damage and the future of the Pound. This was not seconded; so he called for a vote of 'no confidence' in the Council and arranged a public meeting anyway. He also wrote to the Berks & Oxon Advertiser (a cutting sadly not in the Archive). This resulted in a heated exchange of letters to the editor and prompted Philip Newby to allege Mr Shepherd was being disingenuous and misleading in his premises – even *'dramatising himself in the role of Sir Galahad'*. The Advertiser's report on the public meeting states that much of it was taken up arguing if Mr Shepherd had the right to call it in the first place. Mr R[eg?] Winfield cut to the chase and asked for the legalities to be ignored and the business discussed. Eventually two resolutions were proposed and passed – that the Meeting endorsed the Council's action to clear the Pound; and Mr Shepherd's action in calling a public meeting was not in conformity with that of a Parish Councillor and should resign. The latter point vigorously disputed in further newspaper correspondence.

Henry Shepherd did not resign. The Pound may not have been restored as he had envisaged, but evolved into the site we recognise today when subsequent work went ahead to lay a concrete base, with a border for plants and shrubs and the roadside ditch piped in. It was also agreed to affix the plaque mentioned above. Herbert J Winfield Snr was thanked at a Council meeting in May 1953 *'for his personal contribution'* as was Councillor Sir Donald Somervell, who had dipped into his own pocket to pay Mr West's bill. It would be another 13 years before the Pound was again raised at a Council meeting.

In Ewelme today we can pause and appreciate the Pound, still kept in an attractive state, and give a vote of thanks to all the *'Sir Galahads'* who have acted to preserve this historic place.

Ewelme Village Archive