

ORIGINS OF WINCHMORE HILL

Winchmore Hill is the nearest village to the pond, about ¼ mile away. Historically it was a divided village, both between the parishes of Amersham, Coleshill and Penn, and also between Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire until, in 1844, Coleshill, then a detached part of Hertfordshire, was put into Buckinghamshire.

The old county boundary made a sharp angle at the crossroads and gave the name 'the angled boundary hill' to the hamlet (Old English *wincel*, angle and *maer*, boundary). William de la Wenche was a member of a local jury in 1223.

The three parishes all met at a point at the crossroads by the Plough and children tried to stand in all three at the same time. In 1955, an Inquiry, supported by an overwhelming local vote, recommended that the whole village should be put in Penn Parish.

The population, in 1912, was about 300, almost all employed locally in chairmaking (69 in five factories), farming (12 in Fagnall, Glory & Lowlands Farms) and the pottery by the Potters Arms (5). Practically all were Methodist with two thriving chapels. The population in 1954 was 569 (Coleshill 310, Amersham 157, Penn 102), with chairmaking and agriculture still the main industries. It is now 618. The last chair factory closed in the 1980s. Farming remains important, but employs very few people.

Water mains arrived from Coleshill in 1911, at first as a single standpipe used by the whole village. Electricity came in the mid-1920s en route for Penn House, street lighting in 1957, mains sewers in 1989, gas in 1990.

1923/38 O.S. MAP SHOWING LINE OF PONDS AND COMMON



Colour Code:

Green overall - shows registered common

Green perimeter - land owned by Penn Parish Council

Brown - former common, now private land

There is a separate leaflet and information board for each of the three ponds, which are linked by a mile-long belt of nearly continuous common land. They are the product of a combined Penn Parish Council and Penn Estate project largely funded by a Local Heritage Initiative grant.

Useful references:

Penn Tithe Award & map, 1838

Penn Inclosure Award & plans, 1855

Penn & Tylers Green in old Photographs, Penn & Chepping Wycombe Parish Councils (2000)

Penn Pond Survey, Christopher Damant (2001)

Miles Green, March 2004

Penn Parish Council

Typeset by Bill Bundy - Penn Support Services



Local Heritage initiative



GAWDE WATER

(Popularly known as **Guardswater**)



In July 2001, a survey found the pond entirely dominated by Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), which had formed a dense floating mat leaving only a small area of open water. Common Duck-weed was frequent and emergent species present included water plantain, yellow iris, soft rush, gypsywort, water mint, bogbean, reed century grass and bittersweet.



Local volunteers, greatly assisted by the Chiltern Society and by a Penn Estate tractor, have done their best to restore open water and a healthy environment to the pond.

EARLIEST REFERENCES AND ORIGIN OF THE NAME



This plan is an extract from Plan A of the 1855 Penn Inclosure Award. Green indicates former common land.

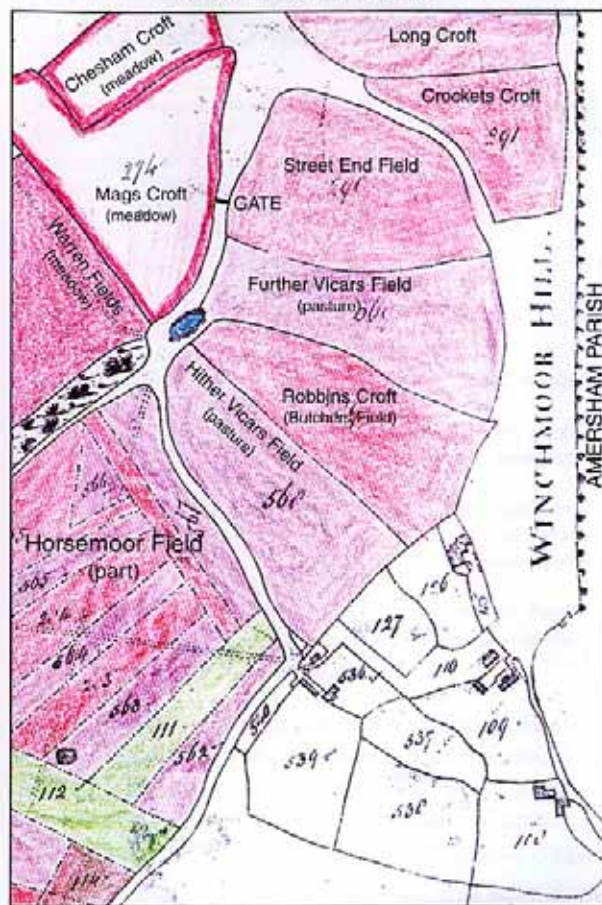
The plan above shows the pond as Gaude Water, but in the text the name is spelled Gauge Water. This is presumably a mis-reading of the plan, because the earliest reference, found in the Penn Manor Court Rolls for 1481, refers to 'the lane extending towards Gawde Water'.

It seems likely that the name derives from its gourd-like shape. *Gourde* is an Old French word and the various varieties of pumpkin would presumably have been familiar to medieval man. The story of Jonah and the gourd provided by God (Jonah iv) would have been well known.

It may seem surprising that a name should survive for so long, but pond names often do because, until superseded by cars and tractors from the 1920s onwards, public ponds like this one were vital to the rural economy and in every day use.

The name has mutated during the last century or so to a local pronunciation of Guardswater with the popular tale that it was used by the Guards on military training exercises. It may well have been, because the area was used by the Duke of Cumberland as a military training area in the 18th century and again during the Napoleonic wars when the military Staff College was based in High Wycombe. With the original meaning of the name long forgotten, and no knowledge of the written record, Guardswater would have made more sense to local ears.

TITHE MAP 1838



Amended Tithe map showing fields surrounding Gawde Water. The numbers relate to the Tithe Award which gives details of each field. All the fields are arable unless otherwise indicated.

Colour code:

- Vicar's glebeland - purple
- Church Knowle Farm - orange
- Penn House land - red
- Earl Howe's tenants - red outline
- Lowlands Farm - green
- Glory Farm - brown

Horsemoor Fields

The pond was the focus of many small fields and crofts including Horsemoor Field, the last survivor in the parish of the medieval open-field system of small individually farmed strips of land in one large field of over 30 acres. Part of the field is shown on the adjoining extract from the Tithe Map.

The Vicar

A terrier of 1634 records the Vicar of Penn as holding seven pieces of arable land 'in the common field called Horsmore bounded out by merebankes'. Later terriers record glebeland of about 10 acres there with names such as Bush piece, Handkerchief Piece and One Acre Piece. The vicar held 38 acres altogether in the parish and two of the five acre fields directly adjoining the pond were also glebeland, both pasture, called Further Vicar's Field and Hither Vicar's Field.

Farms

The remaining strips in Horsemoor Field were held by three neighbouring farms, Church Knowle (one of Earl Howe's tenant farms, 12 acres), Lowlands (5 acres) and Glory (3 acres).

Gate

There was a gate about 100 yards up the lane towards Penn Street that marked the start of common land. An 'ancient charter' of c.1400, defining the extent of the 4000 acre Wycombe Heath, refers to Gawde stakes as one of the entrance points. There were gates elsewhere in the parish for the same purpose of preventing animals straying from the common heath - Whielden Gate (at the entrance to Winchmore Hill), Red Gate (Penn Bottom, near the Common Wood Lane junction), and Tyler End Gate (B474 near Penn School, Rayners).

The Chiltern Way, which was established in 2000 as a circular route around the Chilterns, passes by the pond.