

# **Response to a brief to suggest names for the ponds on the Frenchay campus of the University of the West of England, Bristol**

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**February 2019**

### *Preliminaries*

A group of volunteer third-year English Language and Linguistics undergraduates with a proven record of interest in onomastics (the study of proper names) was recruited by Prof. Richard Coates in response to an approach by Dr Jeanette Sakel, Director of Student Experience in ACE. They are Eloise Lobban, Lucy Nicholson, Sophie Rotter and Katie Watson.

This group, with Coates, reviewed:

- a. the local nomenclature of the parish of Stoke Gifford, in which the University is situated (Smith 1964: 140-1; Watson 2018)
- b. the history of Wallscourt Farm, whose lands this campus of the University occupies (Kerton undated: *passim*, including essays by Kerton and Stanbrook and a collection of scanned primary source material)
- c. the history of Frenchay campus (scattered references in Evans 2009)
- d. the topography and ecological value of the site, as portrayed on historic and current maps and UWE planning documents and as appreciated during site visits
- e. more informally, aspects of the historic naming of bodies of water in England

We considered the appropriateness, in this context, of keeping names that were already in place. Where there were no such names we considered in advance what factors might be relevant when bestowing new names. These included descriptive reference to the appearance, environment and ecology of each pond; its history (mainly whether it was natural or artificial) in relation to the known field-names of the farm; the University's history and its current preoccupations and aspirations (especially in the light of its Masterplan: Stride Treglown 2012); and the relevance and impact of particular persons on the site and the University.

### *Water features of the site when still farmland*

Scrutiny of early surveys (Kerton, undated), transcribed and published versions of the Stoke Gifford Tithe Award and Map of 1842 and Ordnance Survey [OS] maps from the mid 19thC onwards revealed a number of pond-sites within or very close to the area of the present campus, as follows:

In field [19thC OS number] 262 (called *Holiday Ground* in 1900, previously *Home Leas*), site now under the Robotics building car park

In field 298 (*The Furlong*, previously part of *Home Leas*), site now just to the north of the first roundabout south of the MoD roundabout

In field 300 (*Bushy Ground*), site now under the A4174 Northern Ring Road

At the southern tip of field 302 (*Upper East Field*, one of the *East Fields*), south of P Block and now under roads or paths

In field 303 (*Lower East Field*, one of the *East Fields*), east of the Halley Nursery on the line of the present watercourse close to the eastern boundary of campus

In field 314 (*Long Down*, previously *Long Mead Down*), two ponds, one on the site of a dammed area in the watercourse just mentioned and one site under A Block

Feature 318, the farm pond south-west of the Farmhouse

In field 322 (*Horse Pasture*, previously *Long Down*), two ponds, one a wallow with an adjacent cow barton (cow-house) and one in the centre of the field

None of these ponds bore any recorded name.

### *Water features of the site in 2019*

These ponds survive as follows:

Feature 318, the farm pond south-west of the Farmhouse (= pond 5. below)

In field 322 (*Horse Pasture*, previously *Long Down*), two ponds, one a wallow with a now vanished cow barton (= pond 1. below) and one in the centre of the field (= pond 2. below)

Ponds 3., 4. and 6. below are new. 3. was probably dug in a small boggy area giving rise to a watercourse which is a headwater of the Hambrook stream. 4. is entirely new. 6. is in an area with previous water features nearby, but not a direct successor to any of them.

### *The six ponds to be named*

A decision was taken immediately not to take a thematic approach to naming because of the diverse history of the ponds: some more or less still as they were before the development of the site, some reshaped and repurposed, and some entirely new. After site visits, we therefore approached the naming of each pond on its own merits.

We approached the task thinking of *ponds*, but other words for such features exist in English, notably *pool* and *lake* (Cavill 2018). We settled on *pond*, thinking that the applications of *pool* in sport and recreation might lead to its use in names being thought unsuitable in a safety-conscious environment; but see our remarks on pond 4. The question of *lake* is addressed in our comments on pond 3.

#### 1. The pond on the southern boundary of the campus close to S Block

This pond has borne the name *Corke's Corner* since 2001. It was developed out of a cattle wallow of Wallscourt Farm and retained as an educational resource adjacent to what was then the New Redland building (S Block) for ecological studies at the instigation of now-retired Education lecturer Jo Corke, after whom it is named (Cundy, pers. comm.). We felt it was completely appropriate to retain this name in commemoration of Jo's campaign, and as people with a strong interest in all aspects of language use we noted and enjoyed the alliteration of the two words and the fact that

the name is allusive (a case of metonymy involving *corner*) rather than merely a descriptive label. It is, however, actually in a corner of the campus, at its extreme southern point.



Jo Corke, photo by courtesy of R. Cundy

## 2. The pond between car parks 1 and 2 south of S Block



Photo: R. Coates

This is the apparent source of a culverted stream that feeds pond 3. It is situated in a narrow belt of small trees separating the two car parks and is part of the ecological value of that belt, within which is a footpath. The pond carries a warning about its depth and is partly fenced off for public safety. Perhaps the most striking feature of its

environment is a red-barked tree close by. We do not know the genus and species of this tree (perhaps *Acer griseum*?), but in any case we think the use of a vernacular term is better here than a fairly obscure scientific classificatory term. Accordingly we recommend the name *Red Tree Pond*.

### 3. The pond north of Mallard House

This pond forms the apparent source of the watercourse skirting the eastern boundary of campus. This feeds the stream giving its name to the village of Hambrook, which falls into the river Frome below Hambrook. The fact that the building adjacent to it has already been named *Mallard House* with reference to the flock of ducks that live on it made the suggestion of *Mallard Pond* for the feature itself almost inevitable.



Photo: K. Watson

*Mallard Lake* is an alternative, which we recommend. This is (just) the biggest water feature on campus. One might argue about the distinction between ponds and lakes, but lakes are typically judged bigger, deeper and more scenically attractive than ponds (see e.g. Hutchinson 2014). The use of *lake* here would diversify the stock of names proposed. There is a technical view (Brown 1987: 163) which says that a lake has at least one aphotic zone, i.e. where sunlight cannot reach the bottom, whilst a pond has none, and therefore rooting plants might in principle fill the whole feature. By that criterion, all UWE's water features seem to be ponds. But no systematic distinction is made between lakes and ponds even in technical writing.

\*\* We inspected the feature to the east of the Halley Nursery and decided to treat it as a mere widening of the watercourse here above a dam, and not as a pond, despite its being on or very close to the site of the feature marked as a pond in field 303 on 19thC maps. If campus planners view it differently, then *Nursery Pond* or *Halley Pond* (commemorating Margaret Halley) would no doubt serve the purpose.

\*\* We noticed that the landscaped valley in the north-east corner of campus, which serves occasionally for flood alleviation, is sometimes referred to as *the ravine*

(Stride Treglown 2012: several places, e.g. 80), which seems over the top. We recommend standardizing reference to it using a name, and we suggest the traditional and common local English term *slad* or *slade*, therefore *The Slad*. The relative obscurity of this should provide a talking-point, and the word shares its origin with the village-name *Slad*, well known as the birthplace of the Gloucestershire author Laurie Lee. The best-informed scholarly opinion defines the Old English source-word as ‘flat-bottomed, especially wet-bottomed valley’ (Gelling and Cole 2000: 141-142), which fits the “ravine” fairly well.

#### 4. The pond between P and Q Blocks



Photo: S. Rotter

This pond is an artificial ornamental feature with no relation to previous surface water features on the farm. Its context includes two memorials to deceased former students: a planted tree dedicated to Emma Furmston, who studied Law and European Languages at Bristol Polytechnic from 1990-1, and a plaque set up in 1999 by Thames Water to their employee Sharon Marie Hattam (Shaz), who had studied Quantity Surveying at UWE from 1994-7. We felt that the pond might sensitively reflect the solemn context by being called *Memorial Pond* whilst noting that its striking kidney shape might also be taken into consideration. However, other possible names might detract from the memorial value of the site.

\*\* We felt that this would be a suitable place formally to memorialize, in some respectful way, students of UWE who have taken their own life or in some other way died too early. If this suggestion were to be followed up, we considered that the alternative name *Pool of Memory* might be appropriate. It could be taken as alluding to the pool in the Mnemosyne story in Greek mythology. In the tradition of Orphism, initiates were taught to drink from the Mnemosyne, the pool of memory, and that would stop the transmigration of the soul. Rather few people will know this and its complex theological implications, and we felt that the suggested alternative name would speak for itself rather than call up more obscure allusions.



## 5. The pond south-west of the Farmhouse



Photo: S. Rotter

Mostly surrounded by trees including ash and willow, and including a small island, this was the original main pond for the watering of the animals of Wallscourt Farm. It drains from its south-western corner to the south, off campus into Long Wood. It seemed appropriate to choose a name referring clearly and obviously both to its historic function, and to the proximity of the building that will continue to be referred to as *The Farmhouse* (as already on new signage): therefore *Farmhouse Pond*. Since the name of the entire tract of farmland was *Wallscourt*, since we have *Wallscourt Gym* adjacent to the farmhouse, and since there are new student residences adjacent called *Wallscourt Park*, *Wallscourt Pond* might

also serve the purpose. But we thought that that would overload *Wallscourt*, especially since just outside campus is also *Wallscourt Farm Academy* primary school.

## 6. The pond near the north-western extremity of campus

Historically the site was within the completely obliterated field 298, and 100 metres or so to the east of a stream which now forms part of the landscaped lake in the grounds of the Ministry of Defence building on the other side of the new dual carriageway from the A4174 to Cheswick Village. It is a new feature. It functions as a retention (attenuation) pond whose overflow down a concrete spillway feeds the MoD lake. Its immediate environment has been heavily landscaped, no doubt in part because it occupies a site adjacent to the Harry Stoke drift coal mine, which closed in 1963, and in part because of works at the MoD site and the Hewlett Packard site which now belongs to UWE. Disused tips are shown nearby on OS maps of the 1990s. Planted trees and shrubs are both native and non-native (Cooper Partnership 2009). The artificial origin of the pond and its subsequent planting leaves the field clear for a wider range of suggestions than in some of the other cases.

We considered (i) its position not far from the University Enterprise Zone; (ii) its position on the lands of Wallscourt Farm (once known locally as *Starve-all*), as improved by the progressive Victorian tenant farmer Thomas Proctor (Holland 1989) and his landlord's architect George Godwin (Kerton, undated); and (iii) its physical characteristics, thus:

- (i) *Enterprise Pond*
- (ii) *Proctor('s) or Godwin('s) Pond*
- (iii) *Roundish Pond*

The first two suggest values appropriate to the University's aspirations, one overtly and the other allusively. *Proctor's Pond* would share the alliterative and structural pattern seen in *Corke's Corner*. The appeal of the third suggestion may be less obvious, but it chimes with a traditional English pattern of naming hard-to-manage or remote features of an estate, especially on or near its boundaries, in a humorous or fanciful way. We prefer the second for its linguistic characteristics, and by a majority vote recommend *Proctor's Pond* over *Proctor Pond*.



Photo: K. Watson

#### *Summary of recommendations*

1. Corke's Corner
2. Red Tree Pond
3. Mallard Lake
- [At this point, see comments on other features.]
4. Memorial Pond (but see the suggested alternative)
5. Farmhouse Pond
6. Proctor's Pond



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