9th January 1972

SUMMER STAGNATION OF SUTTON POYNTZ POND

The Sutton Poyntz pond and its associated network of streams are the framework around which the village was built, and the water, which once also served to power the mill, still provides the most attractive feature of the village environment, giving pleasure to inhabitants and to countless visitors throughout the year. Its value is appreciated by the Weymouth Corporation which has put considerable effort into maintaining the pond and its surroundings, and has been further emphasised with the designation of the village core as a Conservation Area with the pond as the central feature.

What is the problem?

In recent years the pond has been increasingly deprived of water during the height of the summer, usually coinciding with the period when numbers of visitors arrive to see and enjoy it. There have been many times when the inflow has been so restricted that there is no flow through and the pond becomes stagnant. At times there has been no water for such long periods that it has been reduced to a muddy quagmire, which tends to collect refuse and is almost impossible to clean, and harbours mosquitos. This is not only unsightly, but any life in the pond is destroyed. At various stages golden carp have been introduced but many of these died when stagnation occurred and survivors have had to be removed. Weymouth Corporation have made attempts to improve matters by introducing a weir, an island, by reducing leakage and by mechanical cleaning. However these efforts cannot solve the problem which remains the same; lack of an adequate flow of water during the summer. For some 45 or so weeks there is no problem and the pond is clean. Only a guaranteed minimum flow can solve the problem of the remaining five or so weeks.

How has the problem arisen?

The water supply is from two sources, some from streams taking run-off from the fields. This has diminished over the last ten years as a result in reduction in rainfall. The second source is outflow controlled by the waterworks, owned now by the Dorset Water Board, which takes water from the ancient springs above the village and pumps it to reservoirs supplying the Weymouth area. In the past any lack of water from the ditches in summer was compensated by a fortnightly flushing through process when, during manual cleaning of the source basin, a large throughput was directed through the pond. This not only provided fresh water for the pond and streams but also washed through the pond, carrying away much of the silt and debris that had collected. Over the past few years the Water Board has progressively introduced more efficient chlorination and the need for manual cleaning has been reduced. Flushing through now takes place only every four or five weeks and may be further reduced. An unfortunate case of technological progress benefitting an industry at the expense of local environment.

How much water is needed?

The supply is abundant in winter, and adequate for all but the weeks of high summer. The attached sketch shows the size and depth of the pond

when full to the brim, (i.e. the weir). It contains approximately 32,000 gallons. To maintain a minimum flow, (say about 1/10 inch over the weir) we need about 5,000 gallons a day; less might well be adequate to compensate for leakage and evaporation. This is equivalent to about 2 or 3 taps running full bore, and would be required only for the few really dry weeks of the summer.

A Senior Officer of the Dorset Water Board suggested that the Sutton Poyntz Society might have a meter inserted and pay for the difference in cost of water extracted at Sutton Poyntz and other slightly more costly sources. We understand this suggestion, which the Society could not of course take up, no longer stands, but the total cost of water, as on any metered supply, would be about £1.50 for 10,000 gallons, therefore perhaps up to £30 a year. It could be claimed that water bought at the source should be considerably cheaper.

What are the possible solutions?

The inhabitants of Sutton Poyntz cannot see a gradual destruction of the village pond. However, we can only act by persuasion and negotiation. The responsibility for the maintenance of the pond is in the hands of the Corporation; the control of the water supply is in the hands of the Water Board. Both these bodies have been approached formally and informally. We are still waiting for a reply from the Town Clerk. The South Dorset Water Board on the other hand have replied, stating that if we want water we must pay for the difference in extracting it from this source and other, more costly, sourses, (an offer which has since been retracted) and for a meter and its installation. This has been the only solution offered so far. Although the Sutton Poyntz Society could help in raising money for the meter, and would most willingly do so if this is the right solution, it could not guarantee the cost of the water in future times.

We are therefore trapped between two public bodies each, apparently, without the flexibility, and sadly perhaps without the motivation, to come together over the problem.

What action can we take?

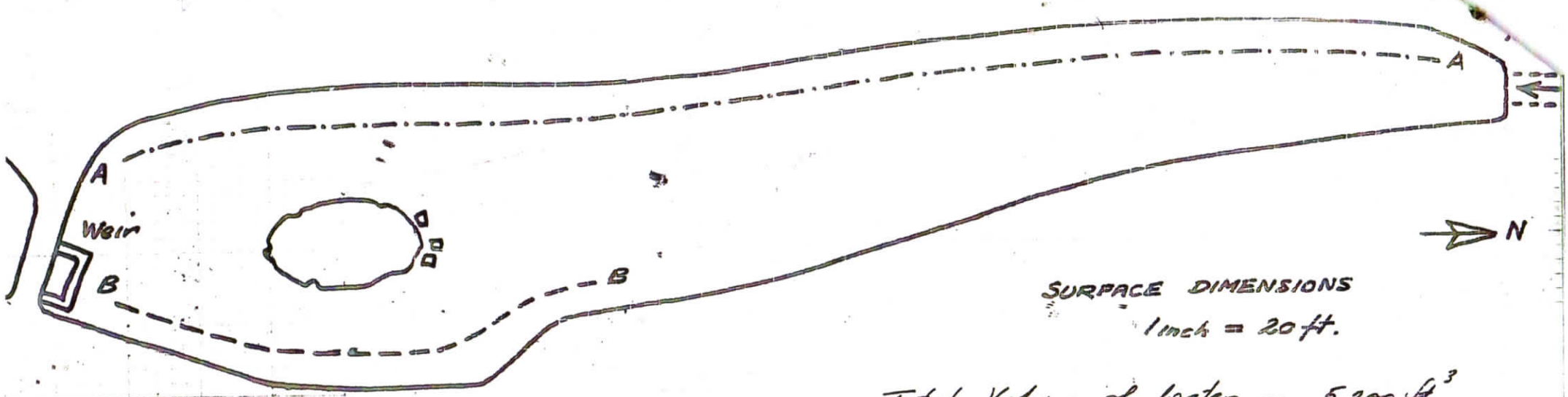
Our first action should be to bring the problem to the attention of the Officials of Weymouth Corporation and the Council and to have the problem discussed at the appropriate Committee. It is to be hoped that when the facts are known the Corporation will agree to accept responsibility for the supply of water during the critical summer period as they have assumed responsibility for other aspects of pond maintenance. We should also consider what means we have for raising money for the capital cost of the meter and its installation if required.

Another approach might be the legal one. The pond was there centuries before the waterworks. Unfortunately we can find, by our own efforts, no records of any residual water rights. On the other hand a number of water outlets (hand pumps) were maintained in the village until about 15 years ago under an Act of Parliament. Perhaps we have a right to re-instal these and take water from them for the pond? We need professional advice; if anyone can offer this we should be most grateful.

We fervently hope that a prolonged campaign will not be necessary and that common sense and a realisation of the ammenity value of natural water will prevail, but are determined that our village pond shall not be allowed to stagnate, for our own sakes, for that of visitors, and for future generations.

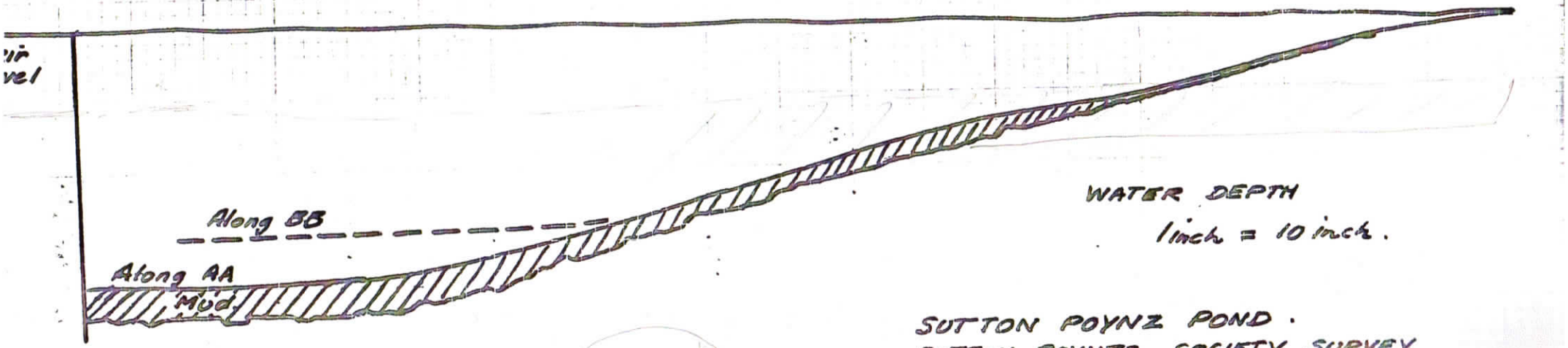
G L SHIRES
Chairman, Sutton Poyntz Society.

19 May 1972.



SURFACE DIMENSIONS
1 inch = 20 ft.

Total Volume of Water = 5,200 ft.^{3}
= 32,000 gallons.



WATER DEPTH
1 inch = 10 inch.

SUTTON POYNZ POND.
SUTTON POYNTZ SOCIETY SURVEY
G.L.S. H.L.S. A.G.S. 9.1.72
& H.M.M.