

The Pound at Milborne Port

Animal pounds were secure enclosed areas where trespassing animals (usually cattle, horses, pigs or sheep) were impounded until their owners paid a fine or they were released as a result of a court judgment. Most medieval villages had an animal pound. The man in charge of impounding the stray animals was paid by the Lord of the Manor and was known as a *pinder* or *pounder*. Fines and disputes are documented in manorial court records.

In the medieval period, the field system in use was an open one, so it would have been easy for animals to stray onto a neighbour's land. Animals grazing unlawfully on common land could also be impounded. If a person owed a debt to another person, their animals might also be impounded until the debt was paid.

The word *pound* comes from the Old English word *pund*, meaning a pen or enclosure. In parts of Scotland e.g. Shetland the word 'pund' is still used. The term *pinfold* is used in some parts of Britain instead of pound e.g. in the north and east of England. There is a hamlet called Pinford close to Sherborne which might well have taken its name from its pound; the name suggests that there was a pound at a place where the river crossed a road.

Pounds were often sited near village greens, churches or crossroads to enable local residents to check if any of the impounded animals belonged to them; they were used until farmland was enclosed in the 17th to 19th centuries.

In some places, the pounds were probably enclosed by hedges or wooden hurdles or rails and these have long since disappeared. Some places had brick or stone animal pounds and a few of these have survived. However, some of the surviving pounds have at a later date been incorporated into neighbouring properties and so are no longer recognisable as animal pounds.

Not many examples of animal pounds survive in Somerset but surviving structures can be seen at Holford (dog pound), Crowcombe, Oakhill, Brompton Regis, Chaffcombe and Stogursey; there is also one in North Somerset at Hutton.

So where was the pound in Milborne Port? A map from around 1880 shows us that it was in Lower Kingsbury and Harry W Brown, writing in his 1941 'Gi'e 's a Dip – A Bit O' Wold Zummerzet' tells us that its walls were finally pulled down a few years before his publication. He quotes a record in the Vestry minutes for March 21st 1835: *George Parsons was appointed assistant Way Ward, with discretion to impound all stock feeding on the lanes and highways, and to receive 2/- for each lock of stock so impounded.*

Its location was on the left just after the bridge at the foot of the hill, just before the entrance to Plum Tree Cottage (on the right). This location does not quite fit with the notion that pounds were generally built near village greens, churches or crossroads but nowhere in Milborne Port at the time was particularly far from farms and farmland so it might have been as good a place as any, and it is conveniently next to the river which would

Harry W Brown tells us that its walls came down before 1941 but the lower parts can still be seen from the road on the southern and eastern sides and it is possible to peep through the overgrowth to see the space that the pound occupied. The entrance would have been in the land that is now part of the property of the house called Greystones, which is a little further up on the left.



So what might the Milborne Port pound have looked like? See below the examples from the other Somerset villages of Crowcombe, Oakhill and Stogursey.

