

THE HUNDRED PARISHES SOCIETY

www.hundredparishes.org.uk

Late 19th-century Ordnance Survey maps record the location of numerous ponds in farmland across lowland England, but since then farming practices have changed and many have disappeared.

Well-maintained ponds are hot spots for biodiversity, supporting special plants and animals. Responding to concerns about the loss of such habitats, researchers at the Pond Restoration Research Group at University College London joined forces with others to investigate the potential for restoring such lost ponds and produced advice about the best ways to create new ones.

Following on from this, Essex Wildlife Trust identified 17,200 Essex farmland ponds on these old maps but noted that 10,400 had since disappeared. A few have been restored, and the team is working with the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group to secure funding to help more farmers reinstate their lost ponds - <https://www.fwageast.org.uk/ponds>

However, pond restoration can be challenging - as evidenced by the difficulties faced during the project to resolve problems with Doctor's Pond in Great Dunmow. In recent years it has been polluted by toxic blue green algal growth. Ambitious and costly plans were drawn up to desilt the pond which necessitated the safe removal of fish so they could be returned in due course. Work commenced last October with the installation of safety fencing and the draining of water so that a digger could be used to help remove over 1,900 tons of contaminated silt. Heavy rains made the silt very slippery, and the digger became stranded in January. By the end of February all the silt had been removed.

Future plans include landscaping of the surrounding area and replanting with suitable vegetation once the pond is refilled. It is anticipated that in the coming months this attractive pond will once again provide a great habitat for ducks, fish and dragonflies.