

## Environment

# New Owner for Slipper Mill Pond

Words by Jim Hailstone,

**The Slipper Mill Pond Preservation Association (SMPPA) is pleased to announce that ownership of the pond has been transferred to the SMPPA from the former owners, after leasing it for over 50 years.**

The change of status of the SMPPA to a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) in 2019 presented an opportunity for the ownership of the pond to be transferred to the SMPPA from the existing shareholders. The 7-acre Slipper Mill Pond, the one south of the Hermitage Bridge, was created in the 1760s to supply water to power the former mill, and has been in private ownership ever since.

Leigh Thomas (Millers) who owned both Slipper Mill and the Old Flour Mill sold Slipper Pond to the then owners of No. 2 Slipper Road in 1960. A consortium of local people had tried to buy it but could not raise sufficient funds and instead in 1967 leased the pond. The group became the SMPPA in the 1970s, and formed a registered charity in 1977 specifically to look after it 'for the benefit of the public'. The pond came up for sale again in 1980. 33 individuals, mostly householders overlooking the pond, clubbed together and raised the purchase price of £10,000; equivalent to

£45,600 today. At that time, there was a real threat that the pond could be filled in and sold for development. This purchase removed the development threat, and the pond continued to be maintained for the benefit of the public; much as today, by the SMPPA, under the terms of a 99 year lease from the Owners' Trustees renewed in 1982.

As time went on, the powers of the Trustees acting on behalf of the 33 pond owners became rather limited. There was no effective solution available to pursue shareholders when contact had been lost, nor the facility to raise funds for any reason. By 2019 only two of the 33 original shareholders still held their shares, and transfers to new owners had not always been made compliantly. Records held by the owners' trustees showed that correctly-transferred current information was only held for 18 of the 33 holdings; (55%). These Owners held 65% of the total shareholding.

It took very many hours of work to trace pond share owners, update their legal ownership status, obtain the formal consent of a majority to the proposed transfer, and legally remove a covenant tied in error to the deeds of one property that in theory prevented a disposal of the pond by one shareholder. Several



*The future of Slipper Mill Pond has now been secured for the benefit of wildlife and the local community.*

*Right: Slipper Mill Pond in the 1920s*



changes in solicitors also caused delay and frustration to the transfer process.

At last, on 22 April 2022, the transfer of title to the SMPPA was completed. The future of the pond as a wildlife area maintained for the

benefit of the public has now been secured, and any development threats virtually eliminated. For more information or if you would like to support the SMPPA, go to [www.smppa.org.uk](http://www.smppa.org.uk) or email [info@smppa.org.uk](mailto:info@smppa.org.uk).