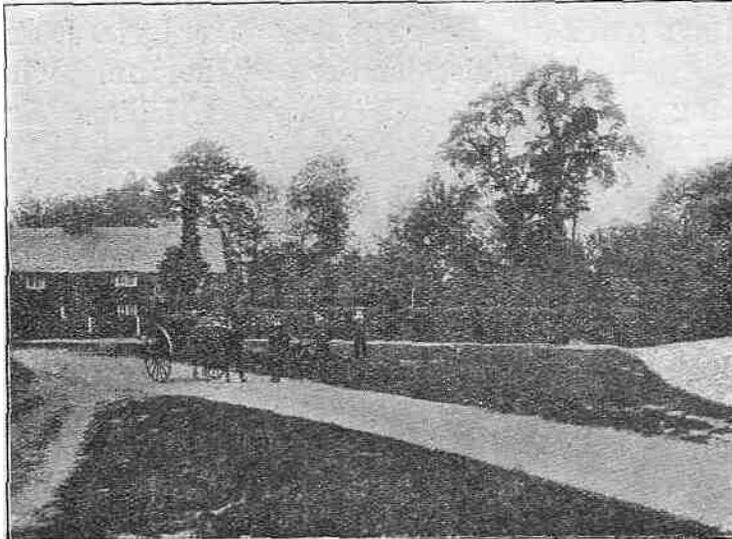


## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE FOLK-LAND AND WAYSIDE.

If we go back to Saxon and early Norman times we find that almost the whole of the village, outside the Lord's demesne, was common land.



Hartley Green.

In the present day the portion of Hartley in which all have common rights and privileges consists of the roadways and a little bit of waste which we call Hartley Green.

The parish in the early days, outside the demesne,

consisted, firstly of the arable land. This was divided into strips or furrow-longs—furlongs as we should say now. These were about 220 yards in length. In width they were the length of the rod or ox-goad, that is 16½ feet, our rod; pole or perch, Four of these strips made an acre. On this land the people grew their corn.

Then there was the pasture on which every villager had the right of grazing, and the meadow land from which he might mow some grass for hay. If anyone over-stepped his legitimate rights, he answered for the misdemeanour before the Manor Court.

There was also the waste. That was the land which was too poor to cultivate, but valuable for its yield of brushwood, turf and bracken, and other useful produce, which all alike might share.

Beyond all this was the woodland or forest. Here again the people had rights, which included the cutting of wood for firing, and forage for their pigs.

The word "forest," by the way, in Norman times was used in a wider sense than that in which we usually understand it. It was, properly speaking, territory, including woodland, waste, and even pasture, over which the King or others had the right of hunting.

Even etymologically the word does not signify

woodland. But so much forest land *was* wooded that the word came to be used in that sense.

The Folk-land then, pasture, wood and waste, was the common property of the people of the village. The Lord was the owner of the Manor *subject to these rights of the people*.

But the time came when the Lords made inroads upon the common property, and Acts of Parliament were passed permitting them to do so. The Statute of Merton, 1233, and the Statute of Westminster, 1285, authorised Lords of Manors to enclose land providing that *sufficient pasture was left for the tenants*.

The extent of common land in that age was so great that it was not missed. There was more than enough to supply the people's needs, and so these first enclosure acts were easily passed.

In a later age the adding to the area of cultivated land came to be considered of such national importance that a great impetus was given to enclosure measures. By the end of the 18th century, 6,000,000 acres had been fenced in.

We may thus easily understand the dwindling away of the common land in this and other parishes. Even in comparatively recent times Hartley Green or Common extended as far as Hartley woods on the one side and, over what is now called on the maps, Hartley Green Field on the other. But surround-

ing landowners apparently extended their fences, with or without the help of Parliament, till nothing but the present scrap of Green remains.

Enclosures under the Statutes of Merton and Westminster were finally stopped in 1893, except with the consent of the Ministry of Agriculture,

Much of our roadside waste has also gone. The public rights, of course, extend to all the wayside and not only to the metalled roadway. Any encroachment therefore on this infringes these rights. It is true that the soil of the roads is vested in the adjoining landowners, but they have no right, as was frequently assumed in the past, to take their fences to 15ft. of the roadway centre. If the present rapid motor traffic had been foreseen, there is no doubt that roadside waste would, in the past, have been more carefully guarded.

But there are other features of the Folk-land we have lost besides the common pasture and the roadside waste. We have, perhaps, at the present time in the parish, as many public footpaths as are reasonably required, but the fact remains that in the past, many more existed. Over the common land and through the woods they went in all directions, but as the land was gradually fenced in and the woodland cultivated, they were greatly reduced. Some of them, indeed, had a why and where-

fore, which no longer exist. Some were roadways to and from chalk pits not now worked. And there was another goal to which the footpaths, from all parts of the parish, converged, and that was the shooting butts. There was a time when every able-bodied man in the village was obliged to wend his way to that spot on every Sunday afternoon and holiday, to practise shooting with the long bow, and short cuts, we may be sure, wherever possible, were made to this spot.

There were short cuts, too, to the Village Green, and to the Church.

It is probable that all our Hartley roadways date from ancient times. What we call Steephill was the site of the forest track to Fawkham. All the forest villages, constituting the "Hundred," were linked up by forest tracks and packways. We still use the old roads that led to Ash, to Meopham, to Longfield and to Sutton.

Before the 17th century very few roads in this country were fit for wheel traffic, the usual mode of travelling being by horse.

In the middle of the 16th century the parish was made responsible for its own roads, bars and toll-gates later on being set up on the highways to defray the cost.

A surveyor was appointed in each parish by the

Churchwardens, who was responsible for their upkeep. Later a system of rating superseded the turnpikes. Rough and ready methods of road-making were employed in those days. There were no steam rollers, and metal was cast on the roads to be worked in by the traffic and this, in the case of country roads, was a lengthy process.

But, at any rate, in those days the ratepayers' money does not seem to have been unduly squandered. Here is a highway surveyor's account at the beginning of last century, in a neighbouring parish.

"Grubbing, £3 12s. 11d.; 187 loads of stone at 4d. a load, £1 12s. 4d.; labour, £1 1s. 10d.; paid a boy (22 days), 2s. 6d.; steeling a mattock, 1s.; beer, 8s. 4d.; spent at the vestry, 7s. 6d.; total, £8 10s. 2d.

In 1925, the highway expenditure over the same mileage was £160. Hartley highway rates the same year, with about double the mileage, amounted to £551.

The local surveyors were superseded by Highway Boards. In 1888 the County Councils became responsible, and in 1894 the District Councils.

Another feature of the parish has almost disappeared—the roadside ponds.

Sometimes, it is true, they overflowed and interfered with the traffic, but the water they supplied was, before the advent of the Water Company, a



A Roadside Pond.

valuable asset of the parish, and was used for many purposes. For horses, cattle and sheep passing to and fro they were invaluable.

Apart from their lessened utility sanitary science of to-day has laid its ban on stagnant water and the roadside pond is rapidly disappearing, the surface water being disposed of in some other way. A hundred years ago there were 17 ponds in this parish, now there are 5.

Once upon a time the wayside Cross was seen in every village, and we may be almost sure that one

stood at the parting of the roads where our War Memorial stands. Many of these disappeared in Reformation times, and the Puritan Parliament of mid 17th century ordered the Churchwardens to destroy all such objects of superstition.

Later on the utilitarian finger posts were erected in their stead and **helped** to guide the weary traveller to the next village, if not to heaven.

The area of the parish is 1,211 acres. The railway occupies 8 acres. The land in private ownership amounts to 1,192 acres. The total extent of the Folk-land, wayside, and waste at the present day is, roughly, 13 acres. In the 12th century it was about three fourths of the parish.