

CHAPTER XII

PLACE-NAMES

HEMP LAND

STRANGELY enough, very few of the younger generation seem to have heard of this, though the older inhabitants of the village know it well. The name occurs in the Minute Books of the Parish Vestry :

“ 1814 Apl 2. Taking 2 loads of stone to the hempland.”

“ 1829. May 29 Repairing the hempland wall 5/.”

Earlier than that, it is mentioned in the Enclosure Award and is marked by that name on the map. It also had its place in the Rate Books up to the year 1916, but after that date it appears no more ; for the hempland is that square piece of ground running out from the north-east of the old churchyard, of which it now forms part. Formerly it was a portion of the Rector's glebe, for in a Terrier dated April 21, 1855, signed by the Rev. T. A. Kershaw, in describing two small plots of land the deed runs, “ the other being one close or old enclosure called the Hemp Land, containing 24 perches and adjoining Milton Churchyard.” In 1912 the Rev. Andrew Cavendish Neely, Rector,

conveyed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners "all that piece of glebe land containing 30 poles or thereabouts" to form an addition to the churchyard.

So the name is passing away, a name with its own historic significance. The "hemp land" carries us back to the days of Henry VIII. To encourage home manufactures the King discountenanced the importation of certain foreign goods,

"amongst the which wares one kind of merchandise in great quantity, which is linen cloth of divers sorts made in divers countries beyond the sea, is daily conveyed into this Realm; . . . And also the people of this Realm, as well men as women, which should and might be set on work, by exercise of like policy and craft of spinning, weaving and making of cloth, lies now in idleness and otiosity, to the high displeasure of Almighty God, great diminution of the King's people, and extreme ruin, decay, and impoverishment of this Realm. Therefore, for reformation of these things, the King's most Royal Majesty . . . hath, by the advice and consent of his Lords and Commons in Parliament assembled, ordained and enacted that every person occupying land for tillage, shall for every sixty acres which he hath under the plough, sow one quarter of an acre in flax or hemp." (24 Henry VIII).

This piece of legislation, however, did not meet the need, but in many parishes there is still a "flax piece" and in some the "hemplow," and in others, as in Milton, the "hempland," that has survived in name for so many years.

THE VILLAGE POUND

As was the case with most, if not all, other parishes, Milton possessed its "pound." This was an enclosed space into which cattle might be driven and shut in securely if they had been found straying. The pound at Milton stood in that wide recess that still exists in the garden wall where the pump now stands, close to the Little Green. A fence and a large gate formed the side nearest the road. In this enclosure the straying beasts were "impounded," or in common parlance "pinned," a word derived from the Old English word "pyndam," which meant to "dam up" or to "enclose," and survives in the verb "to pen." From this, animals thus secured were said to have been "penned," or pounded.

There were two kinds of pounds, one called the "pound overt," that was built by the Lord of the Manor for his own use or that of his tenants, or was one that belonged to the parish or village; the other was the "pound covert," which was owned by one person for his own use, and so was a private pound. That at Milton was a "pound overt," it being a public one, and a man was appointed by the Parish Vestry to take charge of it. In his possession the key remained. To him application was made if animals were to be impounded or taken out of pound. In Milton this official was called the "pinnier" or "pyn-yerd." Mr. W. W. Clarke informed me that as many as twenty horses could be "pinned" in the Milton pound.

The method of impounding was as follows : A farmer or other occupier of land, finding straying animals damaging his crops, or gardens, would drive them to the pound in the village. The "pinnier" would then unlock the padlock so that the beasts could be driven through the gate. Then in some places he would snap a stick in two pieces, giving one to the aggrieved farmer and retaining the other piece himself. The owner of the straying cattle on finding them "pinned," would demand the name of the impounder, and this being given him he would go and learn what amount of damage his animals had done. On paying the cost of the damage, he would be given in receipt the piece of broken stick which he would take at once to the pinnier. That official would join the broken ends together and, if they matched, it was proof that the cost of the damage had been paid. But then there was another bill to pay. If the animals had been in the pound several days, there was the cost of their keep to be accounted for, and only after this was paid would they at last be delivered to their owner.

Sometimes the amount of costs incurred would be so considerable that the owners of the trespassing animals would in desperation endeavour to commit "pound-breach," that is, break open the gate or otherwise damage the pound and drive off their property without paying anything. This was a misdemeanour and punishable by law.

Pounds fell into disuse through the greater convenience afforded by the County Court for

recovering of debt and cost of damage. It is not generally known, however, that under the Public Health Act, 1875, Urban District Councils have the power to provide a pound in their district for straying animals and to impose penalties on the owner. The last pynyerd of Milton was a Mr. Voss.

The earliest reference to the Milton Pound occurs in the Will of Thomas Wells, Yeoman, of Milton, June 8th, 1686 :

“ Unto my sone Richard Wells the little close in Milton wch adjoyneth to the Common pound.”

The following Parish Vestry minutes may prove of interest :

Nov. 5th, 1827. “ That a Pinnier be appointed to the Parish, and that the office be offered to Benjamin Oxley—and that he may demand the sum of four pence for each lot of animals found at large in the public streets or otherwise trespassing.”

March 6th, 1852. “ That in consequence of the many complaints which have been made respecting stray cattle in the lanes and streets damaging property and crops, a printed notice be posted in the village “ that all such cattle will be pounded,” and also that a new substantial lock and key be provided for the pound door, the expenses of the same to be inserted in the surveyors’ accounts.”

March 21st, 1872. “ It was agreed that Mr. Fisher should make an offer to Mr. J. P. Roe of the ground on which the old pound was, subject to the Clerk of the Board of Guardians opinion as to the legality of the parish being able to make the offer.”

Decr. 12th, 1884. "It shall be suggested to the Hardingstone Local Authority that a well be sunk on the site of the Parish Pound, and if a good and pure water supply be found a parish pump shall be erected."

ANCHOR CLOSE

In the village is a yard commonly known as "Barrack Yard," but which is also called "Anchor Terrace." On the Enclosure Award Map this piece of ground with the site of the neighbouring nursery gardens is marked Anchor Close and formerly belonged to the Rector. Part of it, at the time of the Enclosure, was exchanged for the tenement and piece of ground known as Pluck's Close, now occupied by the Rectory and grounds in Pluck's Lane. The old Rectory used to stand somewhere near the present Post Office, adjoining Anchor Terrace, and tradition tells us it was burnt down about the end of the eighteenth century.

The term "Anchor" takes us back to mediæval days. It has nothing to do with ships, but with hermits or "anchorites." These men, who lived the solitary life, would seek a spot for their habitation near a church and also, if possible, near the priest's abode. They lived on the food provided for them by the pious villagers, and as it was an easy method of gaining a living if the religious exercises were omitted, it came about that amongst the Anchorites, many of whom were, doubtless, very holy men, there were also unfortunately to be found some impostors.

Thus it came about that the place where the Anchorite of Milton had his little hut in days

gone by, came to be known as "Anchor Close." As one died, he would in time be succeeded by another, and let us hope for the credit of Milton that the Anchorites who lived here were of blameless reputation.

FISHPOOLS

This is another name that takes us far back into the past, when the laws of the Church were strictly observed. During days of abstinence fish could be eaten when meat was not allowed, but it is a far cry from Milton to the sea and there were no fast trains in those days, while ice in summer would be regarded as a miracle.

In fact, there was a proverb bearing on this: "The Mayor of Northampton opens oysters with his dagger." An old work, *A Collection of English Words not Generally Used*, by John Ray, F.R.S. (1737), explains this as follows:

"To keep them at a sufficient distance from his nose. For this Town being eighty miles from the sea, fish may well be presumed stale therein. Yet have I heard (saith the Doctor—i.e. Doctor Fuller, author of *Worthies of England*) that Oysters put up with care, and carried in the cool, were weekly brought fresh and good to Althorp, the house of Lord Spencer at equal distance: and it is no wonder, for I myself have eaten in Warwickshire, above eighty miles from London, Oysters sent from that city, fresh and good, and they must have been carried some miles before they came here."

Vegetarianism not being just then a popular notion, provision had to be made for the lords of the two manors of Milton and the strangers

within their gates, for the Rectors of Milton and Collingtree, for the old Anchorite if in residence, and for the husbandmen and labourers of the parish. According to what I have been told by men of Milton, who had it from their fathers, there was a chain of three well-stocked fishponds, which was the usual number, behind the field to the south of the east end of Pluck's Lane, fed by the little brook that still runs there. I was told that in the ponds were "carp as big as pigs." The third field on the west side of Barn Lane, about fifteen acres in area, is called Fishpools, and formed part of the glebe before it was sold in 1919. The little cottage called Water Hall was built as a fishing lodge. About seventy years ago, when the road from the Rectory to the cross roads was levelled, the chain of fishpools seemed peculiarly adapted to accommodate part of the surplus earth, which was accordingly tipped therein. Old Terriers mention extensive osier beds near "the Lake," which, I presume, was the largest of the fishpools.