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ROUND THE DISTRICT WITH 'BEORCHAM'

Old Local Field Names

(CONTINUED)

A name which has given rise to much controversy figures prominently in documents attached to the Tithe Map. References are made to several "Pieces in Doctors Common" and to an "Enclosure in Doctors Common."

Note the name: there is no "s" at the end of Common, as in Doctors Commons-road. Obviously, it was a tract which in some way, at some unknown time, was associated with a doctor. There is no link whatever with London's historic Doctors Commons. And we can afford to laugh at the theory, once propounded in a letter to the Press, that the doctor's surname was Common or Commons. He may have been a common doctor, but that is no concern of ours.

Land for 250 Houses

DOCTORS COMMON was one of the largest named tracts in the town, though at various times it was divided into plots. It stretched from Gillams-lane (now Cross Oak-road) to a hedge where Doctors Commons-road stands today, and from Greenway-lane (now Charles-street) to about 250-ft. beyond Anglefield-road.

In the past 70 or 80 years, some 250 houses have been built on Doctors Common. The only ancient feature still preserved is the right of way known as Angle-place, now a fenced alley instead of a pleasant country walk. How this right of way must have irked estate agents, who had to be content with several unshapely triangular plots! Only one section of this old footpath was closed, and that was along Sainfoin Field, from the present end of Angle-place to the King's-road—Charles-street corner.

Partridge Close

Our fields were as irregular in shape as the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle,

and it would be difficult to give precise locations without going into tedious detail. So, in trying to recall our ancient field names, let us start off on another imaginary tour, first paying attention to the east side of Cross Oak-road. Starting from Charles-street, we pass on our left Doctors Common. Beyond this, from "The Oaks" to the corner of Graemesdyke-road, was PARTRIDGE CLOSE, which, rather more than half-way down Graemesdyke-road, joined Timber Close, mentioned in last month's article. Partridge Close is now occupied by the houses and gardens of "The Oaks," "Rusden," "Red Lodge," "The Dyke," "Kilfillan," "Graeme Lodge," "Frandy," and—happy thought!—"Partridge Close."

Continuing up Cross Oak-road, we pass DELL FIELD, which stretched from "Ruscote" to "Briarlough," and had its eastern boundary on King's-road, thus including most of the Kingsdale-road area.

Beyond Dell Field was KENTISH CROFT, which extended to Shootersway and half-way to King's-road. Kentish Croft, like Partridge Close, is perpetuated as a house name.

Gillams Lane Field

Now for the west side of Cross Oak-road. Starting from Shootersway, the first field (still crossed by an ancient public footpath) was THREE CORNERS. Next was GILLAMS LANE FIELD, which recalls the old name of Cross Oak-road; "Greystoke" and "Grafton House" stand on this small field. Below Gillams Lane Field was FIVE ACRES, which extended to within about 150-ft. of Greenway, where there was a narrow strip of land appropriately called LITTLE FIELD. Incidentally, the field behind Gillams Lane Field and Five Acres (now allotment gardens) was GRIMES DYKE, named (like Graemesdyke-road) after the ancient earthwork which starts on Berkhamsted Common, crosses the valley, and has been traced as far west as Haddenham.

The land between Greenway and Shrublands-road, from Cross Oak-road to the footpath behind Shrublands-avenue, was GREENWAY COMMON. Thus we had two adjoining Commons—Greenway and Doctors. To the west of Greenway Common were four little fields, UPPER COOMBS, LOWER COOMBS, BRIARY FIELD, and DELLFIELD. The west side of Queen's-road was described as "Part of Arable Field," and what is now popularly called East's Meadow was DARVELLS.

Before leaving the west end of the town, it should be explained that some obvious omissions are due to the fact

that certain fields were not named on the Tithe Map. Moreover, land adjoining the High-street had already been divided into small plots for houses and gardens, with a few little, unnamed meadows here and there.

Around Swing Gate Lane

Some interesting field names are found between Swing Gate-lane and Chesham-road. The lower part of the Swing Gate-lane Estate (Curtis-way, Holly-drive, and the lower end of Woodlands-avenue) was CROP CROFT. Beech-drive, Oak-drive, Briar-way, Hazel-road, Chestnut-drive and most of Woodlands-avenue stand on ST. EDMUND'S FIELD.

ST. EDMUND'S (without the addition of "Field") was the name of another field, now occupied by the Chesham-road allotment-gardens and by that part of the adjacent field above the Rectory Meadow and Cemetery. East of St. Edmund's, above the prefabricated houses, was GILLIFLOWERS. The upper part of Hospital-close stands on the south-east corner of Gilliflowers, an attractive field name which was also given to what is now known as Velvet Lawn. Between the two fields named Gilliflowers was OX FIELD, on the western end of which stands the lower part of Hospital-close.

Ashlins does not provide interesting names; various sections of the estate were described as "Part of Park," "Wood and Plantation in Park," "Wood in Park," etc.

Nash's Pigtle

Before we leave the south side of the town, here are a few more names. The western end of the large field which adjoins Swing Gate-lane, just north of Long Green, was NASH'S PIGTLE. This, of course, had no connection with The Pigtle, the former name of Highfield-road; this ancient word indicates a strip of meadow land between two copses.

On two sides of Brickhill Green was BRICK KILN GREEN FIELD. Note the word "Kiln," for Brickhill Green was originally Brick Kiln Green. The field on the west side of Chesham-road (between Brick Kiln Green Field and Hockeridge Bottom) was CHERRY TREE FIELD. To the west was BRIERY FIELD, and then POND FIELD, which was separated from Kingshill by BARN FIELD, a name which is still applicable.

River Meadow

The north side of the High-street has its share of unnamed meadows. But one, facing The Hall (now demolished) was called RIVER MEADOW. Between Raven's-lane and Manor-street, stretching from the Bulbourne to within about 100-ft. of the High-street, was GREAT MEADOW. Between the river and the canal (behind Chapel-street Infants' School) was CANAL SLIPE. Another narrow strip of land, now occupied by the houses in Station-road, was recorded as MEADOW BEYOND CANAL. There was another SLIPE between Station-road and the railway.

(To be continued)

Medicine and Food

Local Arrangements

Arrangements for the emergency supply of medicine now operating in Berkhamsted is as follows:—

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August 2—8: Taylors
August 9—15: Boots
August 16—22: Figg
August 23—29: Dickman
August 30—Sept. 5th: Taylors.

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