

THE HISTORY OF PEPPERSHELLS LANE

Yes, living on Peppershells Lane , I was taken to making a research on the origins of the village and name of Peppershells , and it took me on an interesting journey, via Bath Abbey as our Village was connected to Bath Abbey and Glastonbury Abbey, and finally to the Lincolns Inn Library in London.

The name Peppershells Lane was thus derived meaning “French Hedge”, or Pippleshaye.

The French Hedge is a construction of an earthen bank heaved up to form a mound traversing a boundary, onto which vegetation is encouraged to grow.

Not unique to France, as this is seen all over England where stone is not found in sufficient quantity to make dry stone walls as stock proof field boundaries.

Once the earthwork is completed, the second phase is to plant well rooted trees or shrubs, of indigenous species on top of the bank, hazel nut being the most common to find, as squirrels planting the nuts for food, provide the most copious of plants to be found and are easily transplanted as saplings at any time of the year.

The idea is that the roots will then hold the bank in place, providing a permanent stock proof enclosure, long before barbed wire was invented.

Don't forget every square inch of land was being attended to then, as most of the population lived and worked in the countryside.

The effort of making this type of boundary, is not inconsiderable, and involves moving hundreds of tons of soil per linear mile, but manpower was cheap, or slaves were even cheaper, but again hand tools of spades and shovels, were not very developed, so it was a huge effort, back in the 1100's .

I say that date as of course that's when the French came charging over from 1066 onwards and the Norman rule integrated into our governance.

I was directed to the Lincolns Inn Library of London, the place reserved for barristers to find advice , where an archivist there was able to find me a most beautifully illuminated page in a large leathern bound book, which contains the text “Pippleshaye “ at Cumton De anno.

So there we have it, referring to the village after the Norman invasion, the village listed in the 1086 Domesday Book as Comtuna.

a 'valley enclosure'.

The village was held by Alexander de Alno in the 12th century, after the Norman Invasion and the lands divided out to the French Nobles and also by 1297 the name Dando was added after Geoffrey de Anno.

There were more dwellers in the part of the village known as nearby Tuckingmill, which was abandoned after the great plague in the 1300's , then the village started to develop where we see the village centre today in view of the Church.

The French eventually sold the extensive lands to the Monks of Bath Priory, and it was the Monks who recoded the Pippleshaye documents , as they were the only ones that could write and after the

Monks were forced out of the Abbeys which were dissolved in the 1400's the lands passed to privateers and after the Civil War the lands also divided out again. In the meantime , the document survives to this day from the 1100's scribed by the Monks of Bath Priory, as a record of the lands.

So became Peppershells Lane in Compton Dando, nothing to do with Pepper, but to do with the construction of the French Hedge. Of course running adjacent to this is the ancient earthwork of the Wansdyke, formed centuries earlier, but that's another story for another day.

Sadly I have lost the email showing a picture of the page with an illuminated gold inscribed drawing the text all in Latin, but it was quite satisfying to get the derivation.

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