

The Cotgrave Pinder

The Cotgrave entry in the 1844 issue of the White's Trade Directory contains an interesting snippet. It refers to a man called Zadock Wilson who acted as 'Pinder'. We can also find him listed in both the 1841 and 1851 Census Returns, where he refers to himself as an 'Agricultural Labourer'. It would appear, therefore, that his occupation as pinder was an essentially part-time activity. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines his role as; 'an officer of a manor in charge of impounding stray animals' and this leads us to a connection with the 'pen' in which such animals were impounded, known, in Yorkshire, as a 'penfold' but in Nottinghamshire definitely as a 'pinfold').

This tangle of words relates, in fact, to the Cotgrave 'Inclosure Act' of 1791. As explained in the 'Yellow Book', prior to enclosure, the majority of peasants survived only by keeping a goat or cow or a few geese on what was known as the waste land which was not actually under cultivation (the open field system had involved leaving land fallow for one year in three.) Under the terms of the Inclosure Act such waste land was no longer available – the interests of agricultural efficiency demanded that all available land should be enclosed within the new large field system – and the labouring poor suffered considerable hardship in consequence. Either they could make a living by working for a landowner or leave the village to find employment in a nearby town or city. This harsh imposition was policed by the practice of impounding any stray animals in the local pinfold, with a stiff charge for their recovery.



All this implies that there was a pinfold somewhere in Cotgrave – but the question remains; exactly where? Fortunately, the answer is not hard to find because there are two clearly defined notices just along the Bingham Road, where the Colston Gate road diverges from the Hollygate road. Attached are photographs of the pair, one on either side of the Bingham Road. This leaves a small uncertainty in its precise location but I suspect that it lay on the south side of Bingham Road. Glebe Farm was adjacent (just a few yards up the Colston Gate

road) but that may have been pure coincidence – we have no evidence that it was in any way concerned with the pinfold.

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