

## CHAPTER III

Chard Sub-Manor – Tatworth Middle Field - Land distribution - Settlement Laws –‘People’s Common rights’ - The Gentry – Mineral extraction - Limekilns - Brick making - Village status – Farming – Social changes. . .

In 1254, the spelling was Tattewurthe. By the middle ages, the village was a sub-manor of Chard based upon three large fields - operating an open-field system worked by the inhabitants. These fields were divided up into strips grouped in furlongs, all fields named as well as the strips, being allotted as one of a number, to each village family.

The strips were a chain width - narrow and rectangular - suitable for oxen to plough. A chain measurement was twenty-two yards and a furlong ten times that. The oxen and tools were shared evenly by ridged control – this exercised by the manorial staff. Each family worked a rotating strip... a number allocated from each field to ensure everyone had good as well as poor land. Most of the strips were used for arable plantings and the common land used for grazing.

However, the land was not shared evenly. The lord of the Manor had the largest followed by the Bishop and so on down the hierarchy until at the bottom the serfs had just sufficient to make a living on. A percentage of the harvest was passed over to the original owner of the land - in this case to the lord as rent and to the church, as a tithe.

Wheat was planted one year followed by a rotating fallow year. If a number of strips were planted at the same time, the animals browsed during the following year’s fallow period after gathering in the hay. The 1780 Tithe list gives the main street as Tatworth Street - the hamlet on the Fosse Way.

The Devon Record office records, Thatteworth in 1554, as the land was granted to William Petre, the ‘manor and park of Tatworthy... remained in the family until 1790 – it had previously been owned by the church. The distribution of each parcel of land was set as a standard for tenants. For the squire, parson and freehold farmers the parcels more numerous. The owner of the manor held the greatest acreage closely followed by the local Bishop. Although it is recorded that the distribution of land was evenly parcelled out it is apparent that for some inhabitants it was ‘fairer’ than for others!

It is difficult to see the effects the battles and disturbances had in the Civil War. Land was taken away from some, divided by others and sold on by widows and the bereaved. What one can say is that things were never the same again, even though some of the holdings returned to their former owners, the population had been unsettled, and it took many years for the effects to be absorbed.

The Settlement Law of 1662 required all persons to have a settled [home] parish. Anyone moving from that parish to another could be sent back within a forty-day period. This time scale was later relaxed if the parish of settlement accepted the newcomer. A hundred and thirty years later the decision of settlement relied upon ‘when the person was chargeable’ - to the poor rates of the parish.

The object of ‘enclosure’ was to link manorial strips, and common-land ‘waste’, into economic areas - which could be easily contained; stocked, manured, drained and worked... this was obviously beneficial if the object was economic efficiency. Cooperative fairness, reasonableness and for all the public’s good it was not. This Act worked in favour of the landowners both large and small. It enabled the less well off and the bereaved to be bought out over a long period.

The second half of the eighteenth century saw the foundations laid for the country’s industrialization and the first agricultural revolution – a time of commercial activity organized to take note of the market place – concerning profit in a consumer society. Nearly fifty per-cent of the nation’s income was generated by agriculture. Enclosure was the destruction, leading to the

disappearance, of an independent peasantry – the theft of ‘the people’s common rights’ affecting their fields, meadows and pastures. Enclosure led to evictions and oppression for the very poor, inarticulate, disabled and single parents over the centuries.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the result of enclosure became more apparent. The largest landowners who employed a land agent and farm manager were advantaged being able to increase their employer’s holdings... similarly, the farmer who owned more than fifty acres. The farsighted tenant farmers also increased their farm size by purchasing land for themselves. It was the small farmers with a large family who found themselves disadvantaged; they could not produce enough or buy new implements - to make the land profitable in bad times, as agriculture moved from subsistence to a commercial one.

The most substantial house in the parish is Parrocks Lodge built in the Regency neo-classical style at the time of George II, in 1801. Soon after it was built, John Deane moved in with his wife. Fifty years later the property was sold to Major John Churchill Landon. The Landon has had eleven children, which not only stimulated much energy to the hamlet and local aristocracy, although none was married, but kept the family fortune well attended. The Langdon family stayed there for a hundred years eventually selling the place to the North family who took over a dilapidated estate.

Two paths, Parrocks Lane and Church Path [Chard Road], bisected the Tatworth Middle Field [one of the recorded open field systems]. In the centre lay William Drake’s Bean Land on Woodcock Gate, below which Parrocks House, Farmyard and Parkland lay. The present day Lodge and associated farm buildings are sited here. Over the parkland, boundary and wall were limekilns and pits owned by the original owners John Deane, when he died his partner Benjamin Coles took over the business and house.

Carboniferous Limestone is dry at the surface, and sends out springs at the base; its local soil is thin. It was discovered that by spreading crushed limestone onto arable soil improves texture and fertility. Lime is used in the building trade - for making mortar, lime-putty, daub and lime wash, and in the leather industry - for soaking animal skins - to remove hair. When baked in a kiln lime produces a caustic solid of calcium, and some magnesium, oxide.

In the early to middle 1800s in Tatworth a large part of the male population worked on the land as farm workers – in times of need these worker turned their hand to all the other parts of the industry – hedging, ditching, horsemen, shepherds, stockmen and foresters, the list is endless. There was a class division between him and the tenant farmer or smallholder. From a social point of view there was also a difference between the farm labourer who lived in Tatworth and a farmer who lived outside the parish – they were not considered part of the community.

The business of farming is about working the land, which conferred a ridged social hierarchy. The people in the village knew who their gentry were and who owned the land – they lived under and worked within their employer’s shadow.

Up to the time of The Great Exhibition in 1851, Tatworth had been considered a hamlet. This prior to the chapel being built about the same time the Langdon’s of Pattocks Lodge arrived in the new village... to present an east and south window to the new chapel. Tatworth was raised to the status of ‘village’ when the chapel was built – and then higher still when the school was built twenty years later. Tatworth that year covered an area of 1552 acres and had a population of 852.

As with the rest of the country Tatworth went through many high and low employment cycles – these naturally conformed to average prosperity figures... National and civil wars, plagues and common ailments, clothing fashions and availability of natural resources, all contributed to population growth, economic and social wellbeing, and individual and group feel good factors. The Enclosure Act had a particular effect on rural life especially for the workers and those who lived off the land and forests.

Before 1875, 'High Farming', a term used to declare agricultural prosperity, rural emigration reached its peak. It is from that time that many hamlets and villages lost their viability – became deserted – the few who remained moved away.

At the turn of the century, the schoolchildren who knew each other viewed those from another district suspect. There was a strong kinship between Tatworth villagers past and present as my mother explained, 'what did they know or care how we lived and loved'.

The happenings on the continent also influenced to a lesser or higher degree how manufacturing flourished, particularly those towns and villages within easy reach of the coast and trade routes. However, with all those influencing factors the two greatest disasters were the two world wars... the former, by loss of fathers and sons, the latter, the change wrought on the countryside and landowners – the breaking up of estates, [ this occurred during and just after: The Depression, The First World War, and later, by Government Legislation – Death Duties. Each changed Tatworth, radically...