

Do you really live in Littleworth?

May be you have heard of 'The Common', that is, Jolesfield Common? Possibly because of the recreation ground and football pitch. Do you realise that the area there is only just a small part of what was originally over 70 acres?

The common before enclosure in 1872 spread from the coker at the bottom of what is now known as Staples Hill, previously Church Hill. Before St Michael's was built near the end of the 19th century the hill was called Hammond's Hill. Going north from Staples Hill along the B2135 (which in 1872 was the Steyning to Horsham Turnpike) behind the Green Man lies Freezers. This was the old Green Man at the time of enclosure and opened on to the common.

Further north, Sextons and its barn, yard and hovel abutted the common and could be seen easily from the turnpike, with no school or bungalows to obscure the view. Then we come to Midway House, recorded as 'Shop House Jolesfield' on the pews in St George's Church. It was certainly operating as a shop in the late 18th century selling items such as candles, raisins, pepper, salt, silk and corks, long before any of the shops we know today in Partridge Green existed.

As we head on up the road towards the war memorial you can still see the original edge of the common in the field to the left. The hedge is relatively young and the boundary, several yards back from the road is evident from a series of wet areas on a line between the last oak tree at Midway House and the next in the front of Needs.

The Parish War Memorial was built here, as it is said to be the middle of the parish, equidistant between the two Anglican churches. The common, however, doesn't stop there even: it reached further up the road to what is now called Old Pound, just past the 1930s Needs Bungalow. It's here that there was an area for stock to be kept and watered on the edge of the common.

Back to Mill Lane, a dead straight road laid out before enclosure, possibly to aid access to the windmill. The properties to the north, in particular Quince Cottage and Potters Field abut the common. Up until the 1950s, the residents of Mill Lane all lived on Jolesfield Common, the name Mill Lane not coming into common use until then. Quite recently, Mrs Brown of Pound Cottage, received a communication from a relative of PC Holdstock, our wartime constable, addressed to Pound Cottage, Jolesfield Common.

Further along the road stands Mill House. At one time there was a Georgian fronted main section, which was destroyed by fire in the 1930s, the singed timber from the old house was used in the garden porch. Behind the house stood our windmill, built as Jolesfield Mill at least as long ago as 1787, some now choose to call it Littleworth Mill. After years of neglect it was taken down in 1959.

Now we come to the junction of Mill Lane with Littleworth. To the north is Littleworth, but anybody living to the south of the junction has their home built on, or facing the common. Can it be said that this is truly Littleworth? At one time the road was known as Broad Lane, probably due to the poor state of the road, causing the carts to drive wide as the conditions got wetter on the clay ground. In the 1950s when Mrs Provis first came to live at 'The Willows' south of the junction, the lane at this point was known as Blanches Lane.

So if you live as far down the road as the Blanches Farm area, do you still live in Littleworth? Well, it is south of the common, which stops just up the road where it met Joles Farm's land, near where the Victorian villas are. So do you really live in Partridge Green? Well, that's just a small area of waste land along the High Street, which was enclosed at the same time as the common.

Littleworth really started just north of the junction with Mill Lane. An 1805 map shows that there was a poor house on the left in the region of the pub, so maybe the name Littleworth is associated with the poor house and being of little worth?

So, are you a Littleworther, or a Jolesfield Commoner? The choice is yours, but if you've had this newsletter delivered by hand then you probably live in the parish of West Grinstead at least!

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