



Ashden (formerly Esseden)

By Henny Shotter

Edward Hasted¹ mentions this small manor as being situated in the north of the parish. It is likely that it was part of the Manor of Lenham before the Dissolution of the Monasteries but was under separate ownership at the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The Manor was in a wooded area on the Kent Downs. The name derives from ‘ash’, the tree, and the word ‘den’, which doesn’t only describe a hiding place of a wild animal but also a woodland (swine) pasture. There is a fascinating article by Paula Jardine-Rose in ‘Discovering Ancient Lenham’² about Ashden, nowadays called Ashdown. ‘Chapel Wood’ in the Ashdown Valley is possibly a reminder of a wooden chapel which was associated with the Manor of Lenham and provided a place of rest for the herdsmen driving the cattle. This ancient woodland is still coppiced and harvested today and turned by Norman Davidson of Ashdown Farm into logs and charcoal which can be bought in the village.

Ashdown Road follows in part an ancient cattle drove. It leads off Faversham Road at the top of the hill through Ashdown Valley towards Wychling.

Providing pasture under tree cover, Silvopasture is one of the oldest forms of agriculture. It was very popular in the Weald. Today we know that this form of animal husbandry is very environmentally friendly and is practised, for example, on Hothfield Common, near Ashford.

¹ Edward Hasted, 'Parishes: Lenham', in *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 5* (Canterbury, 1798), pp. 415-445. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol5/pp415-445> [accessed 14 January 2021].

² There is a more extensive article by Paula Jardine-Rose (also in respect of interpreting the name) in 'Discovering Ancient Lenham, Lenham Archaeological Society, Volume 1, Edition 3