

WILD LIFE OF EARDISLAND.

THE VILLAGE lies chiefly on the Old Red Sandstone, and has the trees and flowers usually found on that stratum.

In the great gale of 1916 a number of trees were brought down, including several elms and an oak bordering the old Cricket field, which quite changed the aspect of what was then a centre of village life. Many trees were also brought down by the severe frost of 1941, and very big felling of the 1914-18 War at Burton Court and later at Hinton and other farms.

Many notable trees, mentioned by Mr. Barker (Vicar of Eardisland from 1867 until his death in 1901) in his Diary, have now disappeared - among them a remarkable walnut tree in the garden of the Porch House (now called the Manor House), "adjoining the turnpike road", said to have carried a crop of at least four waggons. A Holy Thorn which grew at The Brouch, in Burton Lane, and which was said to have been grown from a cutting from the Holy Thorn at Glastonbury Abbey, was alas struck by lightning in about 1946, and has since died. Recently, however, it was discovered that an apple tree, growing in the river garden at Staick House, is the only known specimen in the country of the Costard Apple, one of the earliest-known English apples (the word "costermonger" derives from it) - so it is felt that we have something to show on the credit side! Grafts of the apple have been sent to the National Trials Station at Wisley.

We are fortunate in the large number of wild flowers to be found in our fields, woods and hedgerows. Herb Paris and Tway Blade are two uncommon plants found in the Parish, and Asarabacca, presumably imported by Mr. Barker from Lymebrook Abbey in the neighbouring Parish of Lingen, is well established in the garden of Staick House. However, modern methods of cultivation - the ploughing of old pastures, sowing of leys, use of fertilisers, and cutting down of tall hedges - have caused a decrease in the flower population. I well remember one field which about twenty years ago was a most beautiful sight each Spring, being covered in a sheet of purple orchis sprinkled with the gold of cowslips. The field changed hands; it was fertilised, and since then it has been difficult to find a handful of the orchis. Mushrooms, too, have disappeared from many fields where they were formerly found.

During the Summer of 1954 myxomatosis made its appearance in the Parish, and has very greatly reduced the rabbit population.

Since the War of 1939-45, and probably due to the break-up of large estates and lack of gamekeepers, such birds as magpies, buzzards, ~~gnose~~ and ravens have greatly increased in numbers. Fifteen years ago buzzards chiefly frequented the wilder country on the borders of Wales, but this year

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Sketch of Old Pigeon Loft at the  
Court House,  
known to have been still standing  
in 1850.



Pigeon Cote, Carlisle.

they are nesting in a tree at Lynch Court, while a pair of ravens are nesting at Bidney, on the borders of the adjoining Parish of Dilwyn. There is also a very big increase in the number of wood pigeons, and these have become a real menace to farmers, so much so that organised pigeon shoots are arranged at frequent intervals in order to try to keep them down.

The corncrake, which seems to have been absent from the Parish for some years, was seen this Spring by Mr. Corfield, and it was also heard recently by Mr. Rogers at Hardwick Farm. The Hobby has visited the village for the past two years. The 'silver rain' of January 1941, when every tree, bush and hedge was thickly coated with ice and thick icicles hung in a wonderful array, caused the death of many birds as they were frozen to the branches. Thrushes especially seemed to suffer, and for several years there was a great dearth of them. Happily their numbers now seem to be normal again.