



HIKING, CAMPING and TENTING

words well known and regularly used amongst the local farming folk even fifty years ago, but which had meanings quite different from present-day outdoor recreation.

Tenting was attending, and could be used for watching for rain on washing-days, but especially in these parts it was one of the duties of a farm dog. It had to be alert to give warning of anything unusual within its patch. It could easily recognise, even in the dark, the footsteps of the family and friends and neighbours, but would bark at a stranger. One dog was able to recognise the sound of its master's motor coming home along a fairly busy road while he was still two hundred yards away. Before cattle-grids, one could sometimes find on a busy moorland road, a kennel at a farm boundary with a dog and its day's rations. Shep might seem to be snoozing, but would prevent any sheep from taking advantage of the open gate. When the traffic slackened off at the end of the day, farmer would close the gate and take Shep home.

Camping was chatting with one's friends and neighbours, usually after dark on long winter evenings, sometimes well into the night if work allowed so much relaxation. In fact, the word only applied to sessions of more than half an hour, so it was rarely possible for able-bodied people to camp in fine weather in daylight, except perhaps on Sunday. It must not be thought that camping was a waste of time. It was a necessary social contact between people doing lonely jobs in isolated places long before there was radio or television or telephone.

Hiking is an older and less well known word and refers to cattle doing damage with their horns, especially damage to hedge-banks and fences. This was most likely to happen in dry weather in summer when neighbouring herds met on opposite sides of a farm boundary and bellowed threats and insults at each other. Unless someone separated the mobs, small bushes and fence-posts could be uprooted and much dust would fly. If animals did break through the boundary, the hiking could become personal and there could be injuries to cows' udders. This could even happen within the herd, if for instance farmer bought a new cow and did not introduce it carefully. There is always a distinct "pecking-order", starting with the dominant boss cow, and working downwards towards the less aggressive, and the coming of a stranger means that this order is challenged and may have to be re-arranged in a long series of contests. De-horning has ended hiking, and the need for farm lads to spend half the winter rebuilding hedge banks or "cops".



TWO USEFUL HAYMAKING IMPLEMENTS

Laurie Harrison remembers two useful haymaking implements from the days when all cattle farmers made hay. For making a haystack quickly in a big meadow, the hay-sweep was ideal. It was a sort of simple sledge, about ten feet wide, with about six wooden prongs in front and a pair of handles at the back, pulled by a horse at the end of two long ropes. In no time it could collect a large pile of hay and slide it to where it was needed. Then the worker would tip up the handles and the sweep would do a somersault over the pile of hay and be ready almost non-stop for the next trip. Laurie's family called it "Tumbling Tommy". These sweeps have even been used behind the family car, in the days when cars were higher off the ground and petrol was a few pence a gallon. But obviously one could not sweep through narrow gateways or along the lane, and some hay was left on the ground, so the sweep had a limited use on a small farm.

The traditional farmer would be more likely to have a "donkey rake", sometimes called a rover rake, to collect the last wisps of hay when the cart was being loaded. This was a very efficient implement which could be pulled along by a woman or child with very little effort. It was about four feet wide and the metal teeth were shaped to slide easily through the stubble. When the rake was full it was lifted backwards to leave the hay on the ground.