

CAGE

Notes from A.T. Walker's file No. 10

Note from "A History of Meopham" by C.H. Golding-Bird

"The cage was, in olden days, common on every village green or square."

Birchington's was a brick building and was used not only for imprisoning vagrants and for "ill-behaved and riotous persons", but was also later used for storing parish property needed for the repairing of the roads. Often in Birchington, persons apprehended, eg. for bastardy orders, were kept in one of the local inns for the night, until they could be brought before a magistrate by the local deputy the following day.

1828

"Resolved that the Parish Tools, Barrow etc shall be brought and placed in the cage over night or such pauper neglecting to comply with this resolution shall be scotted¹ half a day's pay."

The reason the poor workers may have neglected to return the tools to the cage at the end of the day was if they were working on a stretch of highway some distance from the cage at sunset. If their journey home did not take them past the cage, their weariness might tempt them to take the tools home till the following day. Losing half a day's pay, however, was a severe penalty on their very meagre wage and could mean the difference between living and starving.

¹ an old word for docked or deducted