

Coldham's Common

Coldham's Common is one of twelve commons in Cambridge. In the Middle Ages the area of Abbey was rural with farms and the work done by peasants. They had strips of land where they grew their own food. Peasants had to work on their lord's land growing the lord's food. Cows and sheep and horses owned by the people of the community, were grazed on their commons for free. Over time, these strips of land and the commons were reorganized into fields, and surrounded by fences. This change was known as 'enclosure'. Cambridge people, called 'commoners', were against losing their common land and so in 1594 they rose up against local landowners. Under the leadership of a commoner, Jake of the Style, they resisted enclosure and as a result the land is still for all the commoners today and is naturally grazed by cows and managed as a nature reserve for everyone to enjoy! A time that Coldham's Common changed was when there was a rifle range made for training in WW1 and WW2, and the remains are known as "chalk hill". A century earlier the Common became industrial for a while when dinosaur poo, (called coprolite), was discovered and huge holes were dug including the pond that is known locally as "dead man's lake".

