

THE EWERS – the last farmers in Ruislip?

by Eileen M. Bowlt

The Ewers were the major farming family in Ruislip at the beginning of the twentieth century. They were remarkable in being the only family to have maintained residence in the area from the sixteenth century and a long association with a particular property, Mill House (see Cover and Fig.2) in Bury Street. During that period most of them had been tenant farmers. This article shows their metamorphosis into landowners as the major estates broke up in the face of suburban development and suggests that adaptability in the face of changing circumstances beyond their control, allied to managerial skills, led to their success. The careers of Henry James Ewer (1849-1916), his uncles, cousins and sons, are especially considered.

The Ewers in 1904

Henry James Ewer (1849-1916) was prominent in Ruislip at the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth centuries. He was the tenant of Manor Farm (Fig.1), the largest farm in the parish, which he leased directly from King's College from 1886 until his death in 1916. He was elected to the new Ruislip Parish Council that was set up in 1894/5 as a result of the Local Government Act 1894, and to the Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council that superseded it in 1904.

At that historic moment when Ruislip with its newly-opened Metropolitan Line station was about to kick off the traces of its rural past and move into a suburban future, Henry James Ewer and his relatives owned an impressive amount of property in the parish. He owned Mill House, Sherley's Farm (Fig.7) (now The Barn Hotel/Hawtreys Restaurant), a house called Elm Grove south of Sherley's Farm (Garden Flats now on the site) and five cottages called Beddingfield Place (Fig.8) (Nos. 85-93 West End Road). His uncle Edwin Ewer (1830-1914) had Primrose Hill Farm and two cottages at King's End and Field End Farm (Fig.6) (Pond Green now on the site) as well as another 47 acres of land at

King's End and Ickenham Road. His sister Mary (1847-1907) owned Nailor Cottage on the High Street next door to The Swan. His cousin James Ewer (1859-1935) owned the Old House (Fig.4) and Rosebank Villas (Fig.5) in Bury Street; and was also in possession of Spring Cottage (now called Flag Cottage) in Eastcote High Road. Home Cottages in Sharps Lane belonged to two more cousins, Lydia Ewer (1863-1921), who married her cousin, James, and William Ewer (born 1858). They had two each. Both Home Cottages and Rosebank Villas had been erected in 1885 and 1895 respectively in the garden of the Old House. His brother Herbert owned The Ferns in Withy Lane. A niece, Charlotte Ewer, had two or three cottages at Tile Kilns.ⁱ

These property-owning Ewers were not living in their own houses. Henry James was leasing Manor Farm from King's College. Edwin was at Wilkins Farm in the High Street (Woolworths now on the site) that was still owned by the Hilliard family in 1904. Mary Ewer was living at Mill House in 1904, housekeeping for her elderly father, Henry Ewer (1816-1905). Hill Farm (Fig.3) where James Ewer lived was part of the Swakeleys estate. The Ewers seem to have been a close-knit and mutually supportive family; for example there was a tendency for widowed sisters-in-law to be accommodated in other family property or households.

All these Ewers were directly descended from James Ewer (1730-1813) who lived at Mill House. I have used the name Mill House, although that usage started in the twentieth century. Before that it was called Mill Farm or simply a messuage in Bury Street.

Earlier History of the Ewers in Ruislip

Ewers appear in the earliest extant parish registers from 1695, but there are gaps in the records, so no complete family reconstruction can be achieved. Ruislip's Manor Court



**Fig. 1 - Manor Farm at the time the Ewers lived there.
Note the timber framing and brickwork were rendered over**



**Fig. 2 - Mill House in the twentieth century, with a member of the Ewer family outside
(Uxbridge Library Ewer Archive)**

Booksⁱⁱ take the family presence in Ruislip back to 1589, when Richard Ewer was admitted to a cottage and garden in Bury Street with an orchard and two closes of meadow measuring in all 8 acres. This cottage can be definitely identified by descriptive details in successive documents as the present Mill House. The court records show the ownership of the house descending through two-three Richards, and a Joseph to a John Ewer who was in possession by 1655. John Ewer was still owner in the 1670s, when the house was assessed as having four hearths in the Hearth Tax Returnsⁱⁱⁱ.

When James Ewer applied for a licence to marry Mary Anderson in 1762, he described himself as 32 years old and his bride as '21 and upwards'^{iv}. He is the James Ewer who kept a diary described in an earlier edition of this Journal (1978). Two of his sons, Henry and James, survived him and he divided his property between them. In his will^v, proved in 1813, he left Mill House 'wherein I now reside', the Great Field and Mill Pond Close (about 8 acres in all) and 23 acres newly enclosed land, to his elder son Henry, and a field called the Hop Ground (in Sharps Lane), some land at Rawedge down Hook Lane (now Brickwall Lane) and £800 to James (1774-1857).

After Henry died, apparently childless, in 1825, James, the younger son, inherited the property. By that time James, who had married in 1811, was long established at Hill Farm as a tenant of the Clarkes of Swakeleys^{vi}, so Mill house was let. He had already a share in Rose Cottage in Breakspear Road which came through his mother's family, the Andersons, and in addition to his inheritance he had purchased Bury Street Farm in 1816. He may have been a rising man, looking to increase the family fortunes, but he was by no means a large landowner and apart from a few acres in Cheyney Street, did not enlarge his property after 1825. He farmed through the difficult 1840s when all farmers struggled to make a living and had a large family, most of whom remained at home at Hill Farm until shortly before his death.

James Ewer had had some form of relationship when in his twenties, because in 1799 St Martin's registers record the baptism of 'Mary, the daughter of James Ewer and Mary Anderson', a namesake and perhaps a relative of his mother. Mary Anderson later married James Gladman, a labouring man from Pinner. It is not known whether James Ewer supported his child or not, but his father, James Ewer (c1730-1813), left the girl £100 in his will to be paid to her when she reached the age of 21. Young Mary had a baby herself in 1813, when only 14, and the father, James Weatherly, married her two years later. Was he prompted by the £100 bequest? Dying in 1841, she did not survive long enough to inherit anything from her father and by a strange quirk of fate her widower was living in a barn belonging to the Ewers at the time of the 1861 census^{vii}.

After James Ewer died in December 1857 all the property that he owned was put up for auction, which suggests that the family either needed capital or was seeking to distribute the inheritance fairly. The probate of his will gives the valuation of his personal effects as 'under £2000' so we do not know exactly what he was worth and property is not included among 'personal effects'. In the event Mill House was sold to William Mason, the long-term tenant, and Rose Cottage went to William Smith of Harefield, but Bury Street Farm and the various parcels of land were purchased by James Ewer's children^{viii}. At this point the family fortunes seem to have been moderate. It was James' sons and grandsons who turned them around. The Hill Farm family is listed below.

Ewer Family at Hill Farm^{ix}

James Ewer (1774-1857) and Elizabeth (1790-1830)

The elder James Ewer mentioned in his diary that 'James Ewer married at London Sept 17th 1811' without giving the bride's name, but baptismal records at St Martin's show that her Christian name was Elizabeth.

1813 Sept 19 Hannah
bur 1825 July 30 12

1814 Oct 16 Elizabeth
bur 1888 May 23 73

1816 Sept 29 Henry
bur 1905 Sept 14 89
marr 1846 Fanny Webb

1818 May 17 James
bur 1873 Dec 24 55
marr c1858 Ann

1820 Jan 30 Richard
bur 1882 Sept 16 62
marr 1856 Jan 12 Elizabeth Healy

1821 Dec 30 Mary

1825 Oct 23 Hannah Sarah
bur 1857
marr 1857 W.H. Thomas

1827 May 13 John
bur 1899 Apr 15 72
marr 1854 Mar 28 Hannah Newman

1829 Apr 26 Edwin
bur 1914 Jan 21 83
marr (1) 1871 Mar 22 Ann Weedon
(2) Susanna Shatford

Henry the eldest son had married Fanny Webb of Harefield at St Martin-in-the Fields in 1846 at the age of 30, but eight years passed before any of his brothers ventured to tie the knot. The first to do so was John, marrying Hannah Newman at St Martin's, Ruislip, in 1854 shortly before his 27th birthday. This proved to be a fortunate move because Hannah's father, Thomas Newman, who was a baker, owned The Old House in Bury Street, next door to Mill House, and also Spring Cottage in Eastcote. John was described as a farmer in the marriage register and was presumably working at Hill Farm along with his brothers and very elderly father. By 1857 the Ruislip Parish Rate Books^x show that he was living at The George, which had a butcher's shop at the side and he seems to have been running the business, but he went on to Dormers Wells at Southall and became a dairy farmer. His wife inherited The Old House, and Home Cottages, Sharps Lane, were built on part of their ground in 1885 and Rosebank Villas, Bury Street in 1895. John and Hannah had six children who were baptised in Ruislip and possibly a younger girl, Alice, who may

have been christened elsewhere. Two of them, Lydia and William, owned the cottages in 1904 and Alice later came to own the villas.

James Ewer (1818-73), John's older brother, married soon after his father's death and had a son James, born in 1859 and another son, George in 1864. The small family continued to live at Hill Farm along with Richard (1820-82) who had married in 1856 and also had a young son called James. The 1857 Rate Book shows that James actually owned a cottage and orchard in Sharps Lane that was occupied by Edward Bray. Edwin, the youngest son of old James Ewer moved to Wilkins Farm in 1857, taking his eldest sister, Elizabeth, and a long-time servant, Hester Webb, with him. Hester's grave stone at St Martin's records her death in 1870 aged 65 and says 'For fifty years a faithful servant and valued friend in the family of the late Mr James Ewer'. In the same year Hannah Sarah, another sister, married W.H. Thomas of Sloane Street, but unfortunately died some months later, following the birth of a daughter, Marion.

With the removal of first John Ewer, then Edwin and his sisters Elizabeth and Hannah Sarah, from Hill Farm, together with an improved economy for farmers in the 1860s and 70s, the Ewers at Hill Farm seem to have become richer. Richard Ewer's personal effects were valued at over £9000 at the time of his death in 1882. He had, however, owned a relatively new house built on the High Street c1850 and had sold it to the Metropolitan Police in 1869 to become a permanent police station.

James died in 1873 and Ann, his widow, with her son, James (1859-1935), (George, disappears from Ruislip records) moved into part of The Old House, owned by Hannah Ewer, her sister-in-law. By 1881 the house was divided into two, and a baker, Charles Butler, lived in the end called Green Cottage. Young James returned to Hill Farm, probably after the death of his Uncle Richard (1882) whose only son was long since dead, and took over the tenancy. He was living there unmarried and with just a general servant



**Fig. 3 – Hill Farm, home of the Ewers from 1814.
The house now stands in Orchard Close, which runs through the farmyard**



Fig. 4 – The Old House in Bury Street. The later addition at the north end with the front extension, became Green Cottage and is believed to have housed the Newman's bakery

at the time of the 1891 census. His mother, Ann, had moved into one of the Home Cottages and died in 1896.

James (1859-1935) married his cousin, Lydia, daughter of John and Hannah of Dormers Wells. This was another fortunate marriage as it led to the former Newman property eventually devolving upon him. Lydia owned Southcote Farm with 56 acres by 1914^{xi}. She lived with James at Hill Farm and her mother Hannah died there in 1899. Alice Ewer from Southall, possibly her younger sister, sometimes stayed at Hill Farm. She was described as a visitor in the 1891 census returns, when a niece, Eleanor, from Ealing was living there as well. By 1914 Alice was the owner of Rosebank Villas and was living at No. 3 and also owned a pair of cottages in Sharps Lane next to Home Cottages. Another pair of cottages had been built between the original Home Cottages and Rosebank Villas by that time. The marriage of James and Lydia appears to have had no children.

Edwin Ewer and Wilkins, Primrose Hill & Field End Farms

Edwin was the baby of the family and was only a year old when his mother died. Elizabeth, then aged 16 had probably taken care of him and it may have seemed natural for her to accompany him to Wilkins Farm in 1857, especially with two new sisters-in-law in the house. The farm belonged to George Hilliard of Cowley House, a major landowner. Most of its 160 acres lay to the west of West End Road. Elizabeth was still living with her brother in 1871, when he married Ann Weedon, but she later moved to Belmont Road, Uxbridge where she died in 1888. After Ann's death in 1874, aged 33 Edwin married Susannah Shatford from Gloucestershire. A son, Edwin Shatford Ewer (1880-1955) was born, but Susannah died 'from exhaustion arising from her accouchment', as reported in the local paper of 21 August 1880. She was also 33. Her sisters, Mary Ann and Sarah Shatford, from Gloucestershire, took over care of the household and baby. They died in 1919 and

1927 respectively and are buried in St Martin's graveyard.

Edwin Ewer took over the tenancy of Primrose Hill Farm, another Hilliard property, from Walter Weedon in 1884, but continued to live at Wilkins Farm until his death in 1914. He purchased Primrose Hill Farm and Field End Farm as well, before 1902, when he is shown as the owner in the rate books. His son, known as Shatford Ewer, married in 1910 and had a new house built at Primrose Hill, designed by the architect, Frederick Herbert Mansford, who lived in King's End, the new road driven through former demesne pasture, when King's College was beginning to develop land near the station in 1906. The old Primrose Hill Farm became farm cottages.

Field End Farm had long been run as part of Primrose Hill Farm and the old timber-framed house, which had barns alongside, was used as two cottages. Members of the Weedon family lived in one part from c1860. Mrs Alice Hood née Weedon, who was born there in 1898 said that although there were two front doors and two families lived in the house, there was no division between the parts of the building upstairs. Her father was an agricultural labourer and worked for Mr Ewer. The Metropolitan Railway line was built between 1902-4 and the GWR a few years later, cutting swathes through the farmland. Accommodation bridges had to be built to allow cattle and men to pass from one part of the land to another. The bridge over the Metropolitan line is still there, though blocked. Only the approach to the one across the GWR Line remains. Mrs Hood remembered watching the workmen who built the Metropolitan Line and Ruislip Station sitting around braziers. Many years later one of her sons and a friend found a nineteenth century musket and a powder flask (now in the writer's possession), while poking about in one of the barns at Field End.

Henry James Ewer (1849-1916)

Henry James Ewer was born at Crows Nest Farm, Breakspear Road, on the 9 September



Fig. 5 – Rosebank Villas, built in 1895 on ground belonging to the Old House, which can be seen on the right



Fig. 6 –Field End Farm Cottages photographed in 1967

1849, to Henry and Fanny Ewer, the second of their four children.

Family of Henry (1816-1905) and Fanny Ewer (1821-71)

Henry Ewer married Fanny Webb of Harefield at St Martin-in-the-Fields in 1846

1847	Mary	bur 1907	60
1849	Henry James	bur 1916	66
1851	Frank	bur 1896	45
1855	Herbert	bur 1928	74

Among the Ewer archives there are two sets of verses, certainly written out by and believed to have been composed by Henry James Ewer. One called *Jockey and Jenny* is signed 'Henry James Ewer, Harefield' and the other *My Rattling Mare and I* is signed and dated 10 November 1868. They are not marvellous poetry, but are rather jolly and have a dancing rhythm as if intended to be sung. Whatever his education, his later achievements show him to have been a man of ability. He married Mary Ann Churchill from Northwood at Marylebone in 1875 and their first child, Henry Nelson Ewer (known as Nelson), was born in Westbourne Park. In 1881 he was living at Southcote Farm on Ladygate Lane and had three children. The farm, of only 64 acres, in St Catherine's Manor, was then owned by Henry H. Partridge. Henry James moved to Vale Farm in Sudbury in 1883, but was back in Ruislip by 1886, when he took over Manor Farm. This was a major step.

The agreement^{xii} between King's College and Henry James Ewer was made on 11 May 1886. He was to have Manor Farm House (the homestead), cottages and enclosures totalling 378a 3r 23p. In addition he had the Keeper's Cottage in Frog Lane (Fore Street), a field called Bulwarks Field nearby and shooting rights over all the Manor Farm land and over Park Wood. The lease for Manor Farm began at Michaelmas 1886 for 14 years and the lease of Keeper's Cottage and the shooting rights also ran for 14 years, beginning 1 February 1887. The annual rent for Manor Farm was £650 and for the

shooting rights etc a further £100. He also had to pay all rates, taxes and outgoings. He was obliged to farm the land according to the best system of husbandry, and had for example to bring back one cartload of dung for every load of hay sold. The College was to supply drain tiles up to a value of £40 in one year on Mr Ewer draining such portions of the land as required draining.

He is reputed to have been a good farmer in his days at Manor Farm and must have had a flair for business before that, moving from one farm to another fairly rapidly and then taking over a large undertaking with a high rental to find each year. One of the first things he seems to have done at Manor Farm is to have filled in the northern end of the moat in 1888. His young cousin, Shatford Ewer was only eight at the time, but remembered ploughs being used to push earth into it from the inner side and thought that a small overflow ditch had been deepened to drain the north side^{xiii}. He also had pleasant recollections of skating on the remaining moat with the other children. Henry James and Mary Ann (Fig.9) had six children by 1889.

Family of Henry James Ewer (1849-1916) and Mary Ann (1850-1923)

Henry James married Mary Ann Churchill of Northwood at Marylebone in 1875.

1878	Henry Nelson	born Westbourne Park	died 1944
1880	Mabel Fanny	born Ruislip	
1881	Richard James	born Ruislip	
1883	Marion Lillian	born Sudbury	bur 1892
1886	Edith Mary	born Sudbury	
1888	Violet Sarah	born Ruislip	

Manor Farm was a mixed farm with a beef and dairy herd of cattle, 30-40 head of geese, and hay for the London market as the staple product. Fred Collins who worked there before the First World War took milk along to Wilkins Farm, where Edwin Ewer had only a beef herd. Bert Collins and Jo Ayres, wrote down their recollection of haymaking at Manor Farm at the turn of the



Fig. 7 - Sherley's Farm (now the Barn Hotel), one of Henry James Ewer's purchases



Fig. 8 - Beddingfield Place 3 June 1922. The photograph shows Elizabeth King of Beddingfield Place and Leonard Blake of Chinnor on their wedding day. The bride's father, George, is absent as he was working for the Ewer's. Mrs. Ewer, Dick's wife, is seated beside the groom. (Courtesy of Alan Richins)



Fig. 9 – Henry James Ewer and Mary Ann at about the time of their marriage in 1875 (Uxbridge Library Ewer Archive)

nineteenth/twentieth centuries. They have been preserved in the Helen Hoare Collection at Manor Farm Library. 'Prior to haymaking Mr Henry Ewer used to buy a barrel of beer and when haymaking was in progress would fill stone jars with beer, that were taken out and left under the trees. At first cutting haymakers would do three rounds of the field with horse and mower, then stop for 'new knifing' and half a pint. The half a pint used to end up a half pint every half hour!' Apparently Mr Ewer paid five shillings extra to attract better workmen. Thatchers were employed to thatch the hayricks.

Mr Ewer's second son, Richard (known as Dick), followed him into farming and lived at New Pond Farm (now Ruislip Nursing Home in West End Road), where he farmed the southern part of the demesne, in the early years of the twentieth century, until returning to Manor Farm towards the end of his father's life. He continued the tradition of

neat and well-thatched hayricks and used to win prizes for them in farming competitions. Richard Ewer was the last farmer at Manor Farm and moved to a farm near Southampton after Manor Farm was conveyed to RNUDC as a gift for the people of Ruislip, in 1932, at the same time as Park Wood was purchased to be a public open space.

Henry James Ewer started buying property in 1894, when he bought Sherley's Farm, Beddingfield Cottages and Elm Grove and also the old Ewer property, Mill House^{xiv}, where he accommodated his aged father, Henry, his sister Mary, his brothers, Frank and Herbert and Herbert's daughter, Charlotte. Herbert had been married and widowed twice and had farmed at New Years Green Farm, Harefield, until after his second wife's death in 1892. Henry had left Crows Nest Farm with Mary and Frank, his unmarried children after 1881 and was living at 23 Hillingdon Road, Uxbridge in 1891. Two of Henry James' little girls were staying there on the night the census was taken. Henry died at the age of 89 in 1905 and his daughter, Mary, two years later. She left Nailor Cottage beside The Swan to Herbert, who went to live there and eventually married a girl called Ellen and had four more children.

Mill House was left free for Henry James' eldest son, Nelson Ewer to move in.

Henry Nelson Ewer (1878-1947) and Gurney & Ewer^{xv}

Nelson Ewer (Fig.10) (1878-1947) seems to have differed from the rest of the family in his interests, because instead of embracing a career in farming, he went to Swindon and was apprenticed as a draughtsman at the GWR works. By 1905 he was married to a girl from Wales and returned to Ruislip where he started an agricultural engineering business called Gurney & Ewer in the barn at Mill House. He first moved into Elm Grove, a late Victorian house that had been built by the Sherleys in West End Road on land just south of Sherley's Farm. His father, Henry



Fig. 10
Nelson Ewer, founder of Gurney
and Ewer, probably taken when he
was an apprentice at Swindon
(Uxbridge Library Ewer Archive)

James Ewer, had purchased the farm and the house together. Nelson's son, also named Henry Nelson Ewer (known as Nelson junior), was born there in 1905. He moved to Mill House in 1907 and remained there until his death in 1947, when the long Ewer connection with that building finally came to an end.

Hugh Mansford, son of the architect, has left some reminiscences about the factory and Mill House before and during the First World War: 'Young Nelson was about my age, and we played together in and around the old house and barns; the house with its sloping brick-floored kitchen at the back, and its vaulted brick baking oven - it was pre-heated by lighting a fire of faggots inside, and when the oven was hot, the fire was cleaned out to make way for the dough or pastry.'^{xvi} Hugh Mansford grew up to be an engineer and was intrigued by the engineering workshop as a child. 'The works were powered by a Blackstone oil engine, which with its twin flywheels could be seen through a plate-glass window facing the road. It was a fascinating advertisement to the public of the hidden activities within the buildings.'

Over the years the business developed and became an Engineering and Motor Repair Works, with a Garage and Petrol Pumps. Young Nelson Ewer went to Basingstoke to be an apprentice at Thorneycrofts, a firm that made heavy commercial vehicles. When he returned to Ruislip to work with his father, he started a Vehicle Body Building Workshop. Customers bought a chassis and had a body built according to their needs, be it delivering bread or transporting coal. A new building was necessary for these operations (Fig.11) and the Mill House barn was demolished in 1936. Gurney & Ewer made munitions during the Second World War. Up to 150 employees tested parts for aeroplanes, tanks and guns. Nelson Ewer designed a new way of producing Sten Gun Breech Blocks on an automated production line.

When Nelson married in 1931 his parents made over land adjoining Mill House for him to build a house. It is called Robins Dell. After the war both his parents died and his marriage broke up. He left the district and Gurney & Ewer was sold to EMI.

The end of Farming in Ruislip

What the Ewers did with their property

Farming declined in Ruislip in inverse proportion to the spread of suburban houses across the farmland, which was determined to a large extent by King's College. The Provost and Scholars decided to develop the demesne as soon as the railway station opened in 1904. To prevent tying up capital for too long, they set up the Ruislip Building Company Limited in 1907 to expedite sales of land (only six plots had been sold) along the new road, King's End, which had been driven through Withycuts (the pasture land between Wood Lane and Ickenham Road). In 1910 the company assigned its interests to Ruislip Manor Limited, just as members of the College were considering the desirability of planning the layout of the entire demesne on Garden Suburb lines. Mr (later Sir) Frank Elgood, well-known architect and chairman of the RNUDC, and the Town Clerk, Mr Abbot, were both influenced by the Garden



Fig. 11 – Inside Gurney and Ewer during the Second World War
(Uxbridge Library Ewer Archive)

City and Garden Suburb movement, exemplified by such places as Letchworth (1903) and Hampstead Garden Suburb (1906) and were eager to prevent a repetition of ‘the badly-arranged and closely-packed working-class area near Northwood Station’. They were appalled by some of the developments already underway in Eastcote and South Ruislip on land formerly owned by the Deanes of Eastcote House, and therefore were delighted to find the major landowner in agreement with their aims. The result was the Ruislip-Northwood Town Planning Scheme of 1914, which incorporated a detailed plan for the demesne by A. and J. Soutar.

The railway company was pressed to open a new halt (Ruislip Manor Station) in 1911 to encourage building between the railway line and Eastcote Road in the first instance. The Ruislip Manor Cottage Society started building in Manor Way and Windmill Way and already Henry James Ewer had fewer fields at his disposal. The houses were intended....‘for persons in receipt of moderate

or small salaries and wages’ who could participate in a profit-sharing tenancy scheme and were well planned and designed in an attractive cottage style. The Council also started to look for suitable sites for Council houses and chose the north side of Reservoir Road and a portion of Hill Farm, subsequently built as Field Way and known locally as Clack Village, reducing the land farmed by James Ewer. The First World War slowed down development considerably, although Ruislip Park Estate (Church Avenue, Manor Road and King Edward’s Road) slowly grew. The major push came in the 1930s with the Church Croft Estate (1930), the Manor Homes (1933) and the Southern Estates houses around New Pond Farm and Ruislip Gardens being developed. Houses were built north of the River Pinn on both sides of Bury Street. Park Avenue, Broadwood and Sherwood Avenue were driven through the bottom end of Park Wood and only the intervention of residents anxious to preserve the ancient woodland led to the preservation of all the remaining woodland in 1932 (Park Wood) and 1936 (Copse Wood and Mad Bess Wood).

Henry James Ewer remained at Manor Farm, probably content to have the other properties as security against the diminishing size of his farmland. Dick Ewer lived at New Pond Farm and succeeded him at Manor Farm. The map on the following page shows the land leased to him by King's College in January 1923.

The accompanying lease^{xvii} gives the acreage of the Manor Farm portion as 290a 1r 1p (roughly 90a less than in 1886) and 43a 2r 12p at New Pond Farm. The annual rent was £555 and the lease was for only three years, back dated to Michaelmas 1921. There was a proviso 'that if at any time or times during the said term the lessors shall require all or any part of the said premises for the purpose of sale to any person or persons or Company for development purposes or for the purpose of constructing buildings laying out roads or railways or constructing sewers, drains or sewage farms or for digging for sand or brick earth or for any other purposes whatsoever except for agriculture without reference to the particular purposes above mentioned (which shall not be held to restrict or limit the general operation of this clause) the lessors shall be at liberty to give a notice in writing to the lessee by leaving the same at the said messuage that at the expiration of three calendar months from the date of the notice they will resume all or any part of the said premises hereby demised'....This was not a secure tenancy for Dick Ewer.

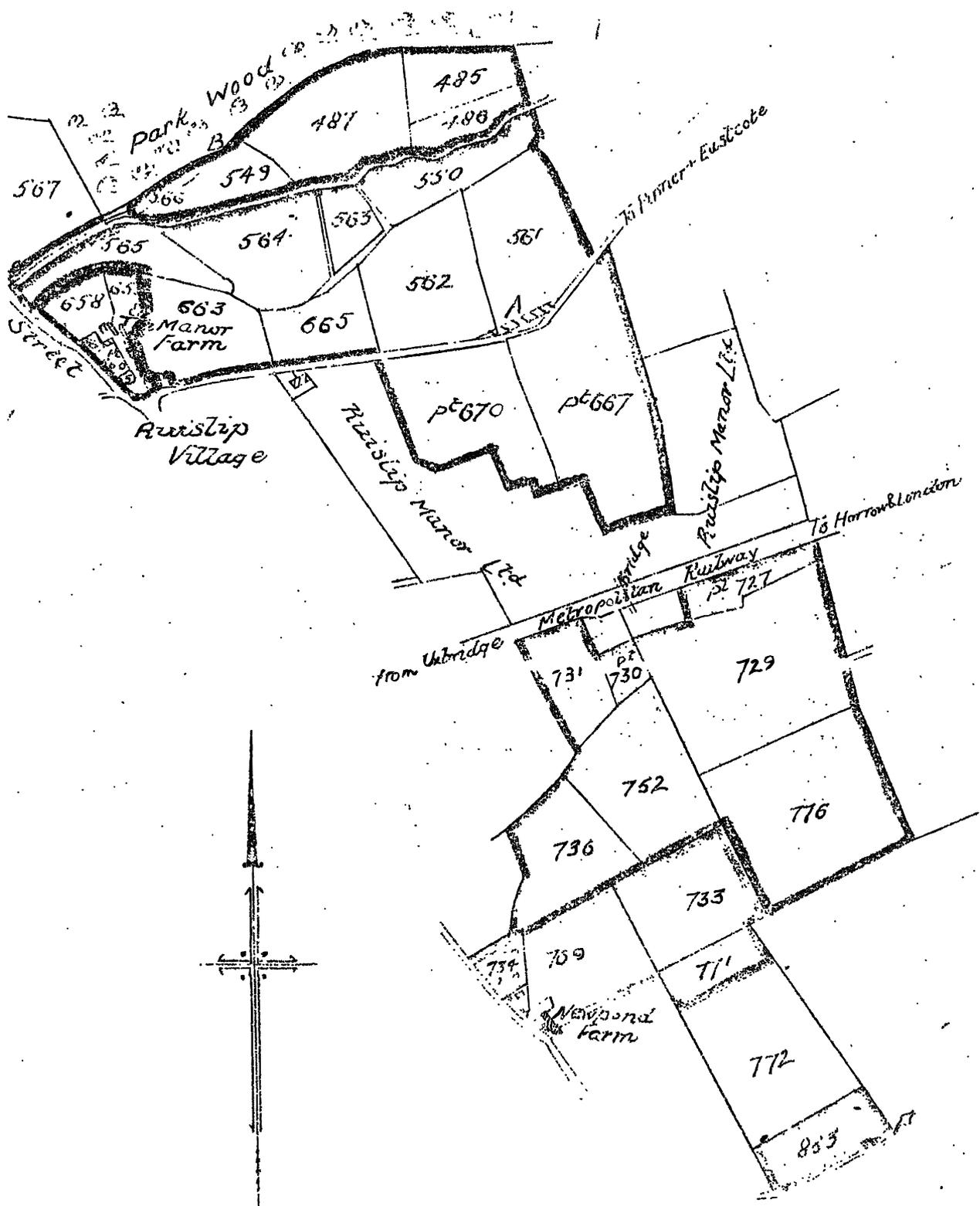
Probate of Henry Ewer's will was granted to his son, Nelson, and his cousin, James Ewer of Hill Farm in June 1916. His personal effects were valued at £13,929 12s 2d. Eight years later the trustees of the will auctioned his acquisitions, Elm Grove, Beddingfield Cottages and the Hop Ground in Sharps Lane. The Hop Ground was divided into plots and sold for development. The 1930s houses on the north side of Sharps Lane are built on the Hop Ground. Three of the Beddingfield Cottages, 89-93 West End Road, have survived. The other two, originally a semi-detached pair, have been rebuilt. Elm Grove was occupied by Mr and Mrs Dansie Carter (she was a Ewer) in 1924. After the

sale Garden Flats (now shockingly dilapidated) were built on the site, but not until the 1930s.

Sherley's Farm itself had been lived in by different generations of the Collins family since the 1860s as tenants of the Sherleys and then the Ewers. Harry Collins was demobbed from the Coldstream Guards about 1927 and took out a 20-year lease with the intention of buying it. He let the barns and stables to a riding school. When he died in 1947, soon after completing the payments, the house was condemned as unfit for human habitation. Mr. Saunders bought it, restored it within two years and turned it into a hotel. Mr Will Collins who used to live in Sharps Lane remembered staying away from school every Tuesday afternoon to help his mother make butter at Sherley's Farm. He had to bring water from Beddingfield Place because the well there was thought to have purer water than the one in front of the farmhouse.

When the Swakeleys Estate was auctioned in 1922, James Ewer purchased what was left of Hill Farm, which he and his forebears had lived in as tenants since 1814. It was sold with only 56 acres of land, a far cry from the 230 acres farmed by his grandfather in 1851. James sold the farmland to H.M. Guy Estates^{xviii} for development and after houses had been built from Sharps Lane to the farm (Orchard Close really was a close in 1930) he sold the house and moved to 'Ambleside', 34 Sharps Lane, where he died in 1935. He had sold Spring Cottage in 1924, but the Old House went to young Nelson Ewer. Austin Farr of Farr Bedford estate agents later bought The Old House and lived in it for many years. It is still a private house.

Shatford Ewer owned the buildings at Wilkins Farm by 1914. He seems to have bought other land piecemeal in the ensuing years, along Brickwall Lane for example in 1924. The land between Brickwall Lane and the railway line had Pembroke Road driven through it and was built upon in the 1920s and 30s. Shatford Ewer in partnership with F.H. Mansford the architect, Prowting, the local builder and Mr Lee, a solicitor who



Land leased to Richard Ewer by King's College, 9 January 1923

lived in Sharps Lane, developed Poplars Close on the land attached to the farm buildings in 1929-30. The Poplars Tea Garden closed in 1929 and shops were built along the High Street frontage of the tea gardens and Wilkins Farm. Mr. Brown built a garage on the site of the house and Woolworths is now on part of it.

With all the building some farmland was taken for recreational purposes and what was left was farmed in a marginal way. The fields of Primrose Hill Farm were mainly used for grazing, for example. After his death in 1955, Shatford Ewer's widow sold Primrose Hill to Glaxo as a farm in the early 1960s, but it was sold on to Wimpeys and the 1910 house was demolished and the land on the north side of the railway line was developed. Some of the land became Ruislip Rugby Football Club in the 1950s and Colin Gooderson, architect, designed the Club House. When Mrs Hood's uncle, George Thomas Weedon, died in 1958 the house was in good condition and was sold to Austin Farr, estate agent. After several years of neglect it was demolished and a line of maisonettes built on part of the site. Pond Green was built on the orchard in 1969.

The overall impression is that the Ewers were farmers at heart and loved the land. Nelson Ewer and his descendants appear to be the only ones who moved into a different field, during the period of suburban development. Henry James Ewer showed no disposition to develop his lands during his lifetime. It is difficult to know what was actually passing through someone's mind unless letters or diaries have survived, but he may have been buying simply to secure his future against development of the Manor Farm lands. He must have observed how King's College had begun to develop in a small way on demesne land near Copse Wood after the opening of Northwood Station in 1887 and seen the writing on the wall. Because of the slow pace of development he probably never felt the need to proceed any further and it was left to his descendants to develop the Hop Ground.

His son, Dick simply moved elsewhere to continue farming.

Herbert Ewer apparently dabbled in property, buying and selling houses in Harlesden in the 1880s as can be seen from the Middlesex Deeds Registry^{xix}, sometimes in association with his sister, Mary. He and his brother, Frank, had land in Kingston Lane, Hillingdon, where Hutchings' Nurseries later stood, but he does not seem to have started any development in Ruislip, although he owned The Ferns in Withy Lane.

John and Hannah built the cottages and villas around The Old House, but took their development no further.

James Ewer of Hill Farm waited until 1930, when farming was clearly running down before selling his land for Orchard Close.

Edwin Ewer, like his nephew, Henry James, farmed until the end of his life and left it to his son, Shatford, to indulge in a little development in the High Street and in Poplars Close. He certainly bought up land between Brickwall Lane and the railway line to sell off later. Otherwise he, too, remained a farmer.

It seems that the inexorable spread of Metroland caused the Ewers to join in the building fever, but only in a minor way. There are still farms in the old parish of Ruislip - Youngwood and Ashby Farms in Ducks Hill and Ducks Hill Farm itself. Warren Farm in Breakspear Road is just in the Ruislip boundary. Priors Farm in South Ruislip continues the old tradition. Glebe Farm opposite is now derelict. These existing farms are all on the fringes of the parish of Ruislip, whereas the Ewers farmed very much around the village centre. The Ewers seemed to be here in force when farming was at its zenith and were more successful than most of the other farming families, perhaps because they stuck together in the main and helped each other out. They are the only family present in Ruislip in the reign of the first Queen Elizabeth, which was still here and farming in the time of Elizabeth II.

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- ⁱ Uxbridge Library: RNUDC Rate Books
- ⁱⁱ British Library: Add MS 9367
- ⁱⁱⁱ LMA: MR/TH/23
- ^{iv} Guildhall Library: Marriage Allegations
- ^v National Archive: Prob 11 1544
- ^{vi} LMA: DRO 19/E/ 22, Ruislip Parish Rate Books
- ^{vii} National Archive: Prob 11 1544, James Ewer's Will 1813; Information re later history of Mary Anderson, the illegitimate child, courtesy of Marilyn Adcock
- ^{viii} Manor Farm Library, Local History Room
Photocopy of auction brochure at King's College, 1858, annotated by someone present at the sale
- ^{ix} Information from Parish registers: St Martin's Ruislip (LMA: DRO 19 A/1 -22; St Martin's Graveyard memorials, Transcript, Local History Room, Ruislip Library; H.J. Ewer's Birth Certificate; Ancestry.co.uk; James Ewer's Diary (LMA: Acc 538 2 8/11)
- ^x LMA: DRO 19 E2/39, Ruislip Parish Rate Books
- ^{xi} Uxbridge Library: RNUDC Rate Books
- ^{xii} King's College Muniments: RUI/386/2
- ^{xiii} Manor Farm Library, Local History Room: LE Morris collection, Shatford Ewer's memoirs
- ^{xiv} LMA: MDR 1895 30 867-8
- ^{xv} Uxbridge Library: Ewer Archive: memoirs of Christopher Ewer and obituary of Henry Nelson Ewer
- ^{xvi} Hugh Mansford's Memoirs: in writer's possession
- ^{xvii} Photocopy of lease from King's College, in writer's possession
- ^{xviii} Deeds of house in Orchard Close
- ^{xix} LMA: MDR 1894 28 616; MDR 1894 30 864; MDR 1894 8 880

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