

Mrs. Heinman started up a Women's Institute for local people, where the infants school is in Fore Street. That was originally built as a community centre, it wasn't built as a school. It had lots of classes that her mother went to, and she got a lot of education that way.

Mrs. Hayward and Mr. Tapping, members of the poorest families said they had little time for fun, whereas Mrs. Hood and Mrs. Webb both from farming families told me of pleasant social activities. Their family income supplemented by garden produce was sufficient to feed and clothe the family adequately, leaving them spare time for social amusement.

Miss Braybrooke's horizons were much wider, including trips to London not just to Harrow and Uxbridge, the limit of most old Ruislip families. Work such as that mentioned by all the others played no part in her childhood at all.

*These reminiscences revealed the differences of life style between the newcomers to Ruislip and the indigenous population. An earlier group of newcomers who moved into Field End Villas in the middle of the last century must have had a significant influence on the area. Karen Spink gives an interesting account of this early development in Eastcote.*

## FIELD END VILLAS EASTCOTE

*Karen Spink*

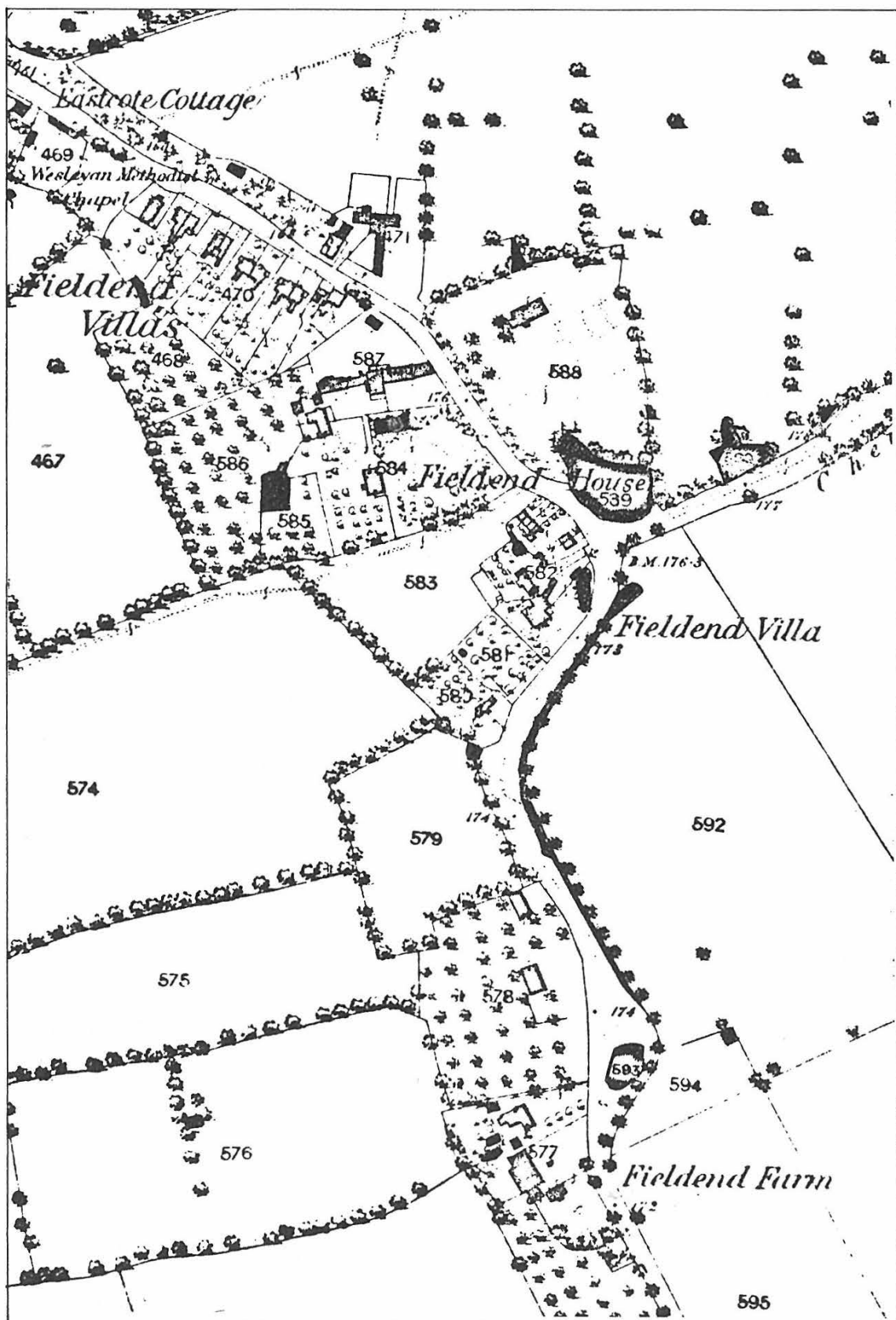
When I moved into a Victorian house in Field End Road, Eastcote about three years ago, I was surprised that so little was known about it. Our predecessors thought it was 140 years old, which did not seem quite right, and local knowledge, including W. Kemp's 'The History of Eastcote', suggested it was late Victorian.

The house is one of a row of four pairs of semi-detached houses known as Field End Villas. A neighbour said they were built by a Mr. Lawrence; the first pair intended he thought (mistakenly) for his grandparents, who were related to the Lawrence family and a branch of the Lavender family. I am not sure what his reactions were when, after looking at some documents, I told him that an attempt had been made to have Mr. Lawrence certified towards the end of his life!

Having decided I would try to find the exact date when the Villas were built, and what kind of people lived in them, I first looked at the census returns for Ruislip, for the years 1851, 1861 and 1871, which are available in Ruislip Library.

Field End Villas are situated in Eastcote, in what was once known as Chapel Hill, now part of Field End Road at the Eastcote High Road end. On the right-hand side, on the corner, is Eastcote Cottage, a much-altered 16th century building. Further along, on the right, once stood the Methodist Chapel, built in 1847, from which Chapel Hill took its name. Immediately next to where the Chapel stood is the row of Field End Villas with a little white cottage at the end named Field End Cottage. I soon realised, looking at the census returns, where most of the dwellings, even farms, are not mentioned by name, that I would have to take in the whole of what was known as Field End, to help me identify the different houses and their occupants. Field End extends along what we know today as Field End Road, as far as Field End Farm, Eastcote. It passed Park Farm and Sigers Farm (now demolished) on the left, and on the right The Retreat Cottage and Field End House Farm (now demolished). It carried on round the bend past Tudor Lodge, then known as Field End Lodge, and also sometimes, confusingly, as Field End Villa. There were several cottages on the right, including Orchard Farm, which is still standing, though not immediately recognizable as having been built in the 1860's. It was altered by the architect Edwin Hartley, in 1931, before he moved in. Field End Farm came next, and beyond this the road was known as Northolt Lane.

Looking at the census returns, the first year of any interest



Section of O.S. Map 1866 showing Field End, Eastcote.

was 1861. Here I found four entries for Field End Villas, and an entry for the Wesleyan Chapel, oddly marked by the enumerator 'To Let'. In 1871 all the eight villas are mentioned, though some were unoccupied. Looking at the 1866 Ordnance Survey Map I found all the villas clearly marked.

I then turned to the local street directories in Uxbridge Library and found mentions in 1857. Unfortunately there were no directories for the years between 1851 and 1857. I began plotting a chart starting from 1851 of all the dwellings in Field End and their occupants.

All the villas have now been renumbered, but I will start with what was originally No. 1 Field End Villas. In 1857 a Mr. J. Mitchell was living here. By 1861 the census shows Mrs. Mary A. Watson, aged 60 of Ealing, a widow, living here with her daughter and granddaughter. She lived here till 1881. In No. 2, in 1857, lived Mr. J. Francis. In the 1861 census, the head of the household was named as Mrs. Susanna Francis, his wife, a 66 year-old fundholder from Middlesex, London, living with her invalid sister aged 77, Elizabeth Elliott, and a domestic servant aged 17, from Uxbridge. Mr. and Mrs. Francis are both buried in Ruislip churchyard. From 1868 to 1871, a retired banker's clerk lived at No. 2 variously entered as Mr. Fairburn, Fairborn and Fairbank!

These are probably the most interestingly designed of the villas. They are built of red brick, with attractive small coloured panes of glass around the French windows at the front. And although these are fairly small houses (No. 1 now has a modern extension on the side), consisting of two rooms and a kitchen downstairs, and four rooms (two of these small) upstairs; each house has two staircases. The back staircase is a narrow winding servant's staircase leading from the upstairs servant's room directly down to the kitchen.

Next we come to Nos. 3 and 4. In 1861 in No. 3. lived a 36 year-old landed proprietor from Kensington, Mr. Valentine Holmes and his wife Elizabeth from Tottenham. Living with them was a 1 year-old nurse-child (i.e. foster child) and a 61



year-old cousin. In No. 4 in 1861 lived John Y. Wilkinson, a 51 year-old gentleman of Lambeth, Surrey, with his wife Charlotte aged 35, and a 17 year-old general servant from Rickmansworth. It was in No. 4 that I believe Rev. Roumieu, the curate of Ruislip Church, lived during 1871, with his wife and baby daughter and two servants, before moving to Eastcote Cottage, Wiltshire Lane.

The first mention of No. 5 is in 1865, when Miss Brooks lived here. I could find no mention of No. 6 till 1870. This was a Mr. McEvoy, a surgeon. The 1871 census shows him as a Medical General Practitioner from County Meath in Ireland, aged 55, living with his wife Sarah, aged 60, and Emily Ive, aged 16, a general servant.

We then come to the last pair of villas, Nos. 7 and 8. A Mrs. Yacoby lived in No. 7 in 1865 and then in 1870 Mrs. Elizabeth Marshall, a 60 year-old widow, born in Berkhamsted, but formerly of Islington. Mrs. Marshall was living on private income from house property and employed a 15 year-old general servant, Eliza Evans of Ruislip. In 1865, in No. 8, lived Captain Crocker, R.N., and then in 1870 James Sayer, a coal merchant. The 1871 census has James Sayer living here with five children (three sons and two daughters, aged from 12 down to 1) and one servant. James Sayer was then aged 45, born in St. Andrews, Suffolk, and his children were born in Paddington, Ealing and Eastcote.

So, a professional class of people was coming to live in Eastcote, attracted by adverts such as this one, in the Buckinghamshire Advertiser, 28th November 1872:

“To let, with immediate possession, two semi-detached eight-roomed villas, with large productive gardens, beautifully situated  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Pinner Station on the L. and N.W. Railway. Rent £20 and £26 per annum, to commence at Christmas. Apply to William Lawrence, Field End House, Eastcott, Middx.”

This brought me back to Mr. Lawrence. I had always imagined that the houses were owned by their occupiers, but they

were of course only rented. The villas were part of Field End House Farm Estate, an estate of 101 acres. William Lawrence was left the estate by Miss Cornelius Winter in 1851. It was she who built the Methodist Chapel, presumably on a piece of her land. William Lawrence built himself a new farmhouse, now demolished which stood near the modern St. Thomas More Church. Working back in the rate books for Eastcote, I found in 1857 the first four villas rented out to: No. 1 — Mary Watson; No. 2 — Mr. Francis; No. 3 — Mr. Goodmann; No. 4 — Mr. Wilkinson, and a Beerhouse and Shop rented to Richard Eales Jnr. In 1862 the other four villas are listed as well. (I wonder if Field End Cottage was the Beerhouse?)

This was a time when Londoners were being attracted out into the rural areas, by the development of the railways, and the prospect of cleaner, healthier country living. William Lawrence was presumably trying to cash in on this. Interestingly, it completely changed the structure of the population of Eastcote. Up till this time the population was mostly made up of the agricultural working class, those in domestic service, the farmers, and the gentry living in the grand houses: Eastcote House, Haydon Hall and Highgrove House. We now had a new middle class developing.

I suppose I shall never know who the builders were. Judging by the way the villas were built, I suspect they were built by local workmen with local materials, except for the slate tiles. John Cox, a Master Carpenter and Builder was living in Field End in 1851, and had two sons (John and Walter) also carpenters, who lived in Field End till 1896. Did they have anything to do with the villas, I wonder?

And what of the people living in the villas? How did they enjoy their new rural setting? It can't always have been ideal, as we read in the Buckinghamshire Advertiser, 2nd February 1889:

“On Sunday last an alarming accident, which might have proved very serious, took place in this district. Two daughters of the late Mr. Parker, Mrs. Plum and Mrs. Jessie Parker, came to visit their mother at

# HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD OCCUPYING FIELD END VILLAS

	NO.1	NO.2	NO.3	NO.4
1857 Rate Book (February/April)	James Mitchell	Mr Francis	Mr Goodmann (in April Only)	Mr Wilkinson
1857	Mr J. Mitchell	Mr J. Francis (d 26/11/65, buried Ruislip)		
1861 Census	Mary A. Watson (Fundholder. Age 60, b Ealing)	Susanna Francis (Fundholder. Age 66, b London)	Valentine Holmes (Landed Proprietor. Age 36, b Kensington)	John Y. Wilkinson (Gentleman. Age 51, b Lambeth)
1862 Rate Book (February)	Widower Watson	Susanna Francis	Valentine Holmes	Mr Northcole
1862 Rate Book (August)	Widower Watson	Susanna Francis	Valentine Holmes	
1865 Directory	Mrs Watson	Mrs Francis (d 20/7/79, buried Ruislip)	Mr V. Holmes	
1867 Directory	Mrs Watson			
1868 Directory	Mrs Watson	Mr Fairburn		
1869 Directory	Mrs Watson	Mr Fairburn		
1870 Directory (Bealby's)	Mrs Watson	Mr Fairbank		
1870 Directory (Trenchard's)	Mrs Watson	Mr Fairborn	Williams, Esq	Mr Sandover
1871 Directory	Mrs Watson	Mr Fairborn	Williams, Esq	Rev J. J. Roumieu
1871 Census		George Fairbank (Retired banker's clerk. Age 79, b Hull)	John Williams (Annuitant Civil Service. Age 73, b Portsea, Hants)	? ←
1874 Directory	Mrs Watson	Mr Lucas		
1875 Directory	Mrs Watson			
1876 Directory	Mrs Watson			
1877 Directory	Mrs Watson			Mrs Kingsmill
1878 Directory	Mrs Watson			Joseph Kingsmill, Esq
1881 Directory	Mrs Watson		Rev A. Ward	
1881 Census		William Michelson (Acting Sergeant of police. Age 48, b Lincs)	Rev Alfred Ward (Clergyman of the church of England without cure of souls. Age 43, b Bridlington, Yorks)	William Elliott (Retired major in the army Age 65, b Woolwich)
1887 Directory			Mr W. J. Murch	Mr G. Parker
1888 Directory	Miss Vowles	Mitchelson, acting sergt	Mr W. J. Murch	Mr G. Parker
1889 Directory		Mitchelson, acting sergt	Mr W. J. Murch	Mr G. Parker
1890 Directory		Mitchelson, acting sergt	Mr W. J. Murch	E. Powell
1891 Directory		Mitchelson, acting sergt	Mr W. J. Murch	Mr E. Powell
1892 Directory		Michelson, acting sergt		Mr E. Powell
1893 Directory		Mr Michelson	Mr W. J. Murch	E. Powell
1894 Directory	*	Mr Michelson	Mr W. J. Murch	*
1895 Directory		Mr Michelson	Mr W. J. Murch	
1896 Directory		Mr Michelson	Mr W. J. Murch	
1897 Directory		W. Mitchelson	W. J. Murch	
1898 Directory		G. Weller?	W. J. Murch	
1899 Directory		Frank B. Weller	Mr W. J. Murch	
1900 Directory		F. Weller	Mr W. J. Murch	
1901 Directory		F. Weller	Mr W. J. Murch	
1902 Directory	F. Curtis	F. Weller	W. J. Murch	

\* Many names in directories from 1890s on without house numbers. + Census return unclear which house unoccupied

Compiled from Rate Books, Street Directories (various) and Census Returns,

NO.5	NO.6	NO.7	NO.8
Mr Mackenzie (No5 or 6?)	Widower Dinsdale (No.5 or 6?)	B. Brown, Esq. •	Capt Croakier •
	Widower Dinsdale (No.5 or 6?)	B. Brown, Esq. •	Capt Crocker •
Miss Brooks		Mrs Yacoby	Captain Crocker, RN
Miss Brooks			
Miss Brooks			
Miss Brooks			
R. M. Hopwood, Esq	McEvoy, Esq, Surgeon		J. Sayer, Coal merchant
Hopwood Esq / Miss Winter	Mr McEvoy, Surgeon	Mrs Marshall (Widow of William, d 12/2/65)	Mr Sayers
Hopwood Esq / Miss Winter	Mr McEvoy, Surgeon	Mrs Marshall	Mr Sayers
John J. Roumieu + (Curate of Ruislip, BA. Age 27, b Bovingdon, Herts)	Francis McEvoy (Medical General Practitioner, LRCS & LSA, London. Age 55, b C. Meath, Ireland)	Elizabeth J. Marshall (Income from house property. Age 60, b Berkhamsted)	James Sayer (Coal Merchant. Age 45, b St Andrews, Suffolk)
Mr Inglis	Charles Stanforth	Mrs Marshall (d 3/1/75, buried Ruislip)	Captain Walsh
			Captain Walsh
			Captain Walsh
Mr Longbottom	Mr Stanforth	Mr Inglis	Captain Walsh
Mr Longbottom	Charles Staniforth	Mr Inglis	
Mr S. Longbottom		Mr Inglis	
Stainton Fitzherbert Longbottom (Gentleman, fundholder. Age 46, b St Johns Wood)	Elizabeth Bult (Retired lady. Age 74, b Bideford, Devon)	Thomas Inglis (Retired manager of brewery. Age 65, b Edinburgh)	
		Mr Inglis	Mrs Griffiths
		Mr Inglis	A. T. Smith
	Mr Bell, Artist	Mr Inglis	Mr Dimsdale
	H. D. Bell, Esq.	Mr Inglis	
	H. D. Bell, Artist	Mr Inglis	
	H. D. Bell, Esq.	Mr Inglis	
	H. D. Bell, Esq. Artist	Mr Inglis	
*	*	*	*

Field End Villas, Eastcote, and upon returning about 9 p.m., to the Metropolitan Station, Pinner, by the Bridle-road, walked into a pond at the junction of Chenies Street and the Bridle-road. The ladies were, unfortunately immersed in mud and water up to their armpits. Mr. Plum and Mr. Charles Parker were about 100 yards in front, and hearing stifled cries for help ran back, and after great difficulty succeeded in finding them and pulling them out. The ladies were at once taken back to their mother's home, where all were detained till the next day. Something should certainly be done at this corner, as it is as dangerous to vehicles as it is to foot passengers on dark nights."



*Nos. 3 and 4 Field End Villas. Drawing by Karen Spink.*



*In 1875, the Reverend Roumieu, an occupant of one of the Field End Villas, published a history of Ruislip Parish and Church in which he referred to Ruislip as ‘a quiet and secluded spot’. It was not always completely quiet however, as an account in the Buckinghamshire Advertiser of 1st June 1872 indicates. Entitled ‘Insulting boys — a caution’ it tells that Thomas Nash with two other boys, Samuel Botwright and John Joel, of Eastcote, were summoned for using insulting language towards Emma Hailes, a cook in the service of Mrs. Kingsmill of Field End, Eastcote.*

*Emma Hailes claimed that she had frequently been called a snob by these boys as she was on her way to and from church. On 5th May 1872 she alleged that Thomas Nash had said, “I don’t have stinking meat” and had looked at her. This account was confirmed by fellow servant Anne Baynes and although the boys denied the charge, the Chairman of the Magistrates said that he was sure that the words had been used to annoy the complainant and fined the boy 20 shillings including costs.*

*The information on Field End Villas stemmed from the researcher’s desire to learn more about the house in which she lives. Other research has been prompted by chance events as is the case of Robert Steel. Now read on...*

## **RUISLIP COTTAGERS’ ALLOTMENTS CHARITY**

*Robert Steel*

I was a new boy in the W.E.A. Class on Ruislip Local History at the end of 1980, and just before Christmas that year a friend of mine showed me a cheque for £2 that he had received from an entity called ‘The Ruislip Cottagers’ Allotments Charity’,

together with a letter, with an indecipherable signature, wishing him a Happy Christmas.

He was puzzled — and so was I — as to what this Charity was, and how it had come upon his name. I asked, “Had he got an allotment, then?”. He replied, ‘No, and never had had one’. And there we left it.

Naturally, however, I mentioned it, casually, as a matter of interest to our lecturer Mrs. Eileen Bowlt at our next meeting. To my rather shocked surprise, she countered with, “Ah! there you are. There’s your project. Research it!”.

Now, this sort of thing was quite new to me, but ‘She who must be obeyed’ had spoken, so I knew I had to have a try at it.

When next I encountered my friend, I asked if I might see the letter again. Frustration number one; being that sort of a chap he had already thrown it away — the letter not the cheque! So I had to start from scratch.

Well, the resultant interest which this minor research has given me, on and off, over the past year, has been really quite enjoyable. My clumsy enquiries have taken me to places I would not otherwise have dreamed of visiting.

I started off boldly by going to the Charity Commission in the Haymarket. There I met with the next frustration. They could find no mention of this Charity in the card index.

Mrs. Bowlt came to the rescue by suggesting that perhaps I might find something in Kemp’s History of Eastcote. I think, perhaps, when I recollect a twinkle in her eye, that she knew more about all this than she was going to disclose, so as not to spoil my fun and games.

Anyway, this led me to the Secretary of the Ruislip Natural History Society and a visit to Uxbridge Library’s History Department to find a copy of that Society’s Journal for 1959; then other visits to obtain permission to take a photocopy; on to the present Hon. Secretary of the Charity, the former Clerk of Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council, Mr. Saywell, now living in Northwood in retirement; on to a current Trustee of the Charity, Ruislip Councillor Mr. Booth; on to the Director of Finance and Treasurer of the London Borough of Hilling-

don, and to the Council's Legal Department; and back again to the Charity Commission in the Haymarket — this time with a correct File Reference number.

Now to my report:—

I will try to give you the background of the Charity's title, viz. 'Cottagers' and 'Allotments', and a few words about the Charity itself — the product of my research.

The story starts in 1804. In 1804 when the common pastures, waste grounds and open arable fields of the Manor of Ruislip were enclosed and redistributed by Act of Parliament, the greater part was divided into individual copyhold and freehold parcels among those who had rights in land under the old existing system; but three parcels of the former common lands were set aside for the use of the *occupiers of cottages*, as *their* share of the common and waste lands, the qualification being a rent not exceeding five pounds per annum and having no other house or place of residence. This was the 'poor's allotment' — a term used rather confusingly in later years for a different concept.

The largest of these 'poor's' areas, one of approximately 39 acres between Copse Wood and the Reservoir is now the public open space we know as Ruislip 'Common'. There were two others — an area of 18 acres in Joel Street and a very small piece, the 'poor's field', just over 2 acres close to the 'Six Bells' public house. The Reservoir did not, of course, exist at the time of the passing of the 1804 Act.

These new 'Cottagers' Commons' were vested in the Lords of the Manor (King's College, Cambridge) and their lessees, the Ministers and Churchwardens of the Parish, the overseers of the poor, and two representatives of landowners of £100 chosen at the annual Vestry; and they were given power to make regulations for the good management of the commons, and to employ persons to see that the regulations were obeyed, and impound straying cattle.

There were other provisions in the Act to safeguard other users; for example, a right of way to occupiers of land in the

month of May to obtain gravel for roads from the Gravel Pits at Northwood, but these are irrelevant to my present memorandum.

By 1875 few cottagers possessed cattle. If a cottager were an agricultural labourer, the right to put a horse or a cow on the pasturage was not of much value to him if he had no other land, apart from his grazing rights and his cottage garden.

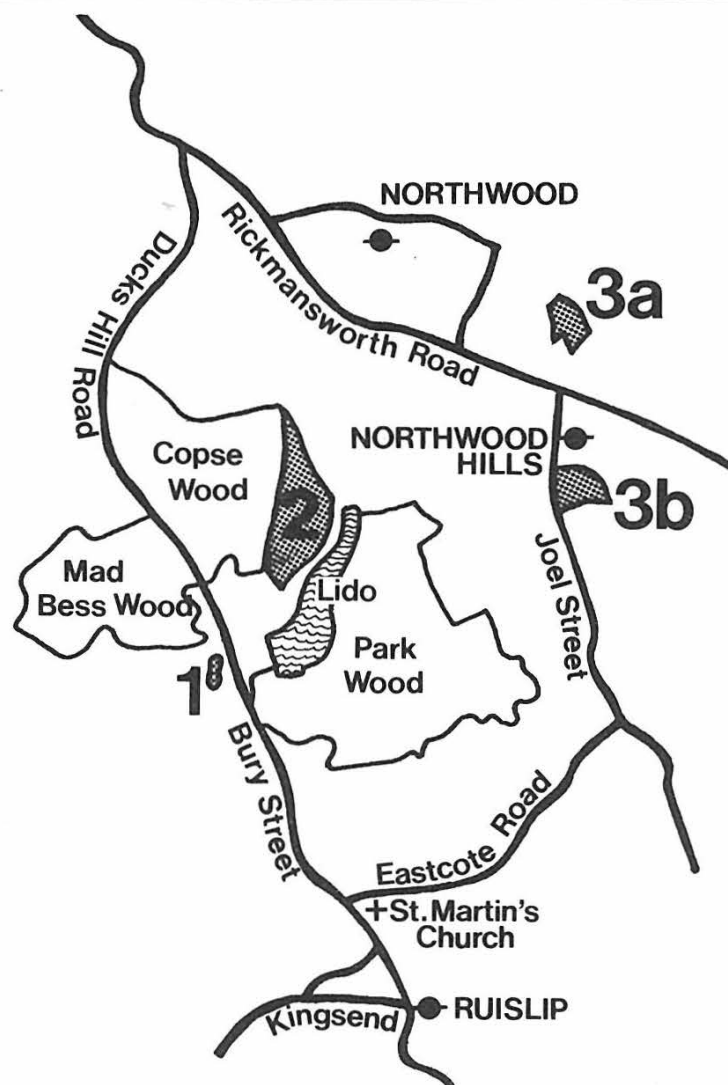
In 1882 the Charity Commissioners granted the Trustees permission to establish a more flexible and useful scheme, under which they were empowered to let to cottagers, *allotment gardens* of not more than one rood each in land taken from the Joel Street field, and in the two acre field. They were also authorised to appropriate parts of the lands as recreation grounds, and set aside an area where cottagers could pasture one head of cattle between 1st May and 31st December.

A further change came in 1909 when the Charity Commissioners made a new Order under which the Trustees were authorised to let land as *allotments* or to let it to the Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council, which by then had come into existence, for re-letting in *allotments*. Major changes at that time were: the replacement of the word 'Cottages' by 'Tenement', which entitled not only cottagers but also persons renting a room in a larger building, to obtain the benefits of the Charity; it was also arranged that the District Council would appoint eight of the thirteen Trustees of the Charity, thus changing the outdated hierarchy.

I hope this may have given you some idea of the derivation of the rather odd but picturesque title of 'Cottagers' Allotments Charity', and shown how the original purely rural based poor-box progressed to its urban form today, nearly two centuries later.

Today, the allotments in Joel Street are leased by the Charity to an entity the 'Ruislip-Northwood Small Holding and Allotments Society', and the lease, and the rental, are reviewed at five-yearly periods.

At one time the income of the Charity was distributed to *necessitous persons* in the form of vouchers, drawn on local



*Poor's Fields*

Black Pots 1.	Ruislip Common 2.	Northwood Hills	
		3a.	3b.
Now absorbed into Crematorium area	1939 transferred to Ruislip / Northwood Urban District Council for recreation area	1935/36 part near Northwood Hills Station exchanged/sold for land in Northwood Way — now Hogs Back recreation ground	Joel Street allotments leased to Ruislip-Northwood Small Holdings and Allotments Society Ltd.



suppliers, for food and coal, but now the income from the allotments, together with the income from investments is distributed, for administrative convenience, at two-yearly periods, in the form of cheques to individuals, mainly aged persons (£2 to single individuals, £3 to couples) — hence the cheque which gave rise to my researches — and donations are made to hospitals, and old peoples' homes. Nowadays, the individual donations are rather in the nature of hand-outs for extra 'comforts'.

In 1909 the gross income of the Charity was about £50 per annum. It is now about £500.

Over the years the Trustees negotiated an exchange of 5.4 acres of land close to the present Northwood Station for 9.4 acres elsewhere, which later was leased to the Council. This became the present Hogs Back public open space in Northwood. (A much earlier transaction was one in which the Enclosure Commissioners sold land to the Grand Junction Canal Co., and purchased other land, as a result of which the Reservoir — commenced in 1811 — now known as the Lido, in later years has become a public amenity). Also, by negotiation between the Trustees and the Ruislip-Northwood Council, Ruislip Common was taken over by the Council in 1939 to be maintained in perpetuity as a Public Open Space.

In conclusion, I would like to quote the Ruislip historian, the late Mr. Laurence Morris, to whose work I am largely indebted. In 1959 he wrote:

“One can fairly say that this is a good example of a charity whose trustees have consistently over the years adapted the organisation to changing conditions and made the best of their opportunities. It is worth remembering that there were once *common lands* in Ruislip and that when they were enclosed the poor were not completely ignored.”

I may say I have enjoyed this, my first research immensely, and recommend research as a delightful and absorbing hobby. Incidentally, it has now led me to another minor research — a local charity — the Ruislip Non-Ecclesiastical Charity. Ever heard of it? Well, that's another story.

*Although there were a number of substantial houses in Eastcote, Ruislip itself had only one large house, Ruislip Park. This now belongs to the Royal British Legion but Valery Cowley describes what she has found out about earlier occupants. Perhaps we shall also learn who provided the tea for the National Schools children previously mentioned.*

## THE PARK HOUSE ESTATE, RUISLIP

*Valery Cowley*

Now the British Legion Club, the house itself stands behind the Regal Florist and Chamberlain & Bickerton Estate Agents in the High Street and it was the centre of a 40 acre estate (bounded by High Street and Ickenham Road), which was created in the early 19th century by the owner of King's End Farm, Harry Edgell.

The house is listed as early to mid. 19th century. In the Ruislip Northwood & Eastcote Local History Society Journal, 1981, Mrs. Bowlt has traced its ownership from 1839 to 1930, but there are gaps in our knowledge. From 1878 to 1888, it was not mentioned in local directories, nor from 1904 to 1912. There is also a gap in the Library's collection of such directories from 1916 to 1927 but in 1928 Park House is *not* mentioned.

I have attempted to piece together a picture of life in and around the house from the turn of the century. I began in 1890, when the name Kent appears in the directories as owners of the house. Various people told me that this was the famous brush manufacturing firm, so I wrote to them and was sent 'A Short History of the House of Kent', written by Doris Woodall M. A., Director, in 1959, the Company's 182nd year. From this I learned that George Barton Kent, grandson of the firm's

founder, William Kent, died at his country house, Ruislip Park in July 1890.

G. B. Kent was the only son of John James Kent and Elizabeth Barton and, according to Miss Woodall's booklet, he was noted for his mathematical and business talents. He began his career as an indentured apprentice aged 14 and mastered in turn all the firm's departmental skills. In 1854, on the death of his father, he succeeded as head of the firm.

In 1851, George Kent married a distant cousin, Julia Neild, a great granddaughter of William Kent, the firm's founder and they had two daughters and four sons.

In the winter of 1888-1889 G. B. Kent visited the Continent and Egypt. Then in the July 26th edition of the Bucks Herald appeared a notice of his death and an account of his funeral at St Martin's Church Ruislip:

"The funeral of the late George Barton Kent, Esq, whose death occurred very suddenly on the previous Thursday, took place here on Monday last. The deceased gentleman, who had only come to reside at Ruislip Park since Christmas last, was, nevertheless, held in great esteem, and the sincerest sympathy is expressed on all sides to Mrs Kent and family. The funeral cortège was met at the churchyard gate by the Vicar, the Rev T. M. Everett, and as it entered the church Mr. T. B. Garrett, organist, played "Blessed are the departed" from Spohr's *Last Judgement*. A very large number of mourners followed including Mr. Harold Kent, Mr. Arthur Kent, Mr. George Kent, sons, Genl. Neil (sic), brother-in-law, and two daughters, as well as about 100 of his London employees, the church being filled by mourners and others. The 90th Psalm was chanted by the choir and the hymn "My God, my Father" was also sung. As the mourners left the church the Dead March in *Saul* was effectively rendered by the organist. The service was most impressively conducted throughout by the Vicar, and at the grave the choir sang, with much

feeling, hymn 499, "On the resurrection morning". The coffin was of polished oak, with massive brass fittings, and on a panel was engraved the following: 'George Barton Kent, born January 31st, 1826, died July 17, 1890.' The deceased gentleman was therefore in his 65th year. The wreaths were exceedingly numerous and beautiful, many of them being composed of orchids and other choice exotics. The funeral arrangements were entrusted to Messrs. Cox Bros. of Eastcote; and were carried out in a thoroughly efficient manner."

G. B. Kent is buried beneath a (then fashionable) Carrara marble foliated cross\* on a pediment which stands to the left of the churchyard path leading from Eastcote Road. His wife, Julia, who died on February 17th, 1897 is buried with him.

In 1893, the directories list H. F. Craggs, J. P. as the occupier of Park House and in 1899, Cornelius Thompson (as in 1889). However, from 1904 to 1912 there is no mention of the house in Uxbridge Street Directories, but we know that auctions of the estate were taking place. It is difficult to match up the details of the 1906 sale catalogue† with the house as it stands today, but the 'landing lighted from an octagonal dome' is still to be seen at the top of a back staircase leading now to the flats in the upper floors (where Bill Collins remembers delivering papers in 1934); their doorways look typically 19th century. Instead of a 'spacious square entrance hall' to the house, there is now a modern lobby, but instead of opening onto the dining room, it leads to the bar and lounge of the British Legion Club. The 'french casements' and 'lawn' have also vanished, as has the 'handsome statuary marble mantelpiece (though I'm told it stood on the right as you enter, where there is now a cupboard); the 'elegant drawing room' is likewise no more. There is no longer a 'comfortable library open-

\* Monument number 109 in the Churchfields Gardens plan in 'Here Lyeth' (Ruislip W.E.A. Local History Class 1976-1979).

† Quoted in the 'Ruislip Park Estate' by E. M. Bowlt, RNELHS Journal, April 1981.



*Plan of part of the Park House Estate 1906.*

ing upon verandah' and the present billiard room is in a later extension. Instead of one of the two sheets of ornamental water, we have the Police houses in The Oaks; and the rookery, shrubbery, walled kitchen garden, greenhouses and vinery have also disappeared under modern buildings such as the Telephone Exchange. The stables were to the left of the 1911 photograph of the house i.e. behind what now appears facing

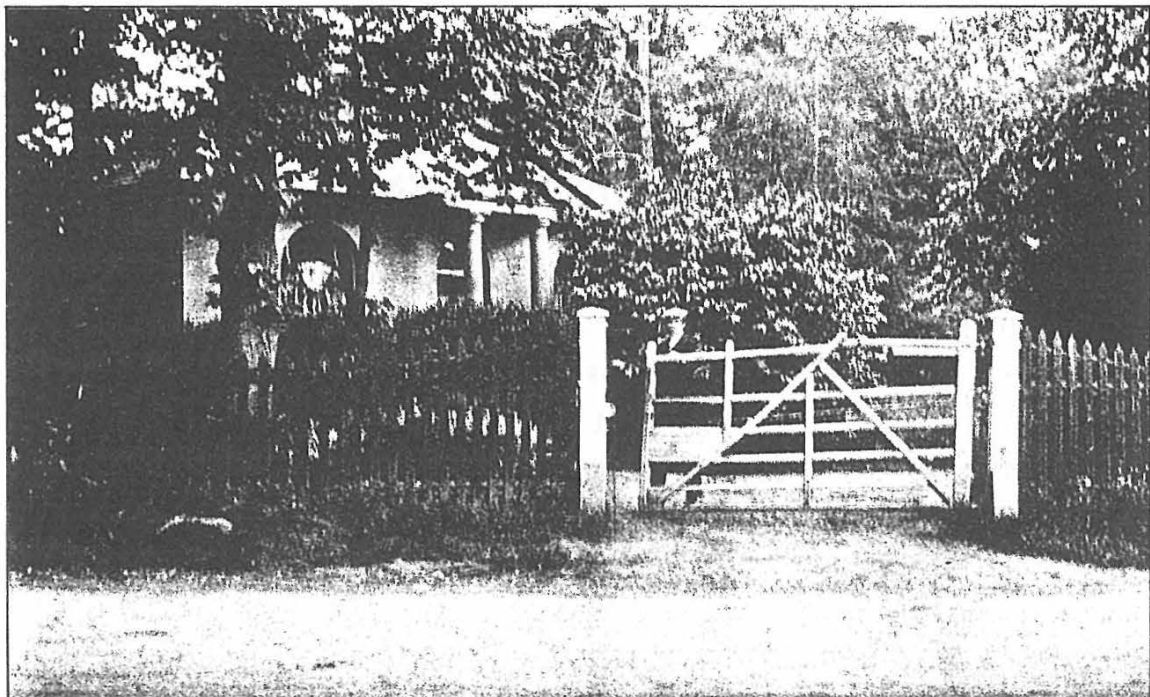


the High Street. Park Lane (also known as Swan or Bell Alley) was only 10 to 12 feet wide and Park Cottages then faced the 20-feet-high wall of Park House Estate, which for 100 yards flanked the kitchen garden. A high fence joined this wall to the gate leading into the Park. Next to Park Cottages was an orchard behind spiked railings.

The estate was offered for sale in 113 lots in July 1906, when there were two auctions, and another in June 1911.

In 1913, F. Brewer Esq., appears in the directories as owner of Park House and he was still there in 1916 when it is erroneously listed as The Manor House. I have seen a 1923 street directory, which also mentions him, so he appears to have been resident until 1927, when he is listed again.

This brings us into a period that some other local residents can remember. For instance, the figure outside the lodge to Park House (where W.H. Smiths is now) in the photograph from the 1906 catalogue, was identified by Mr. H. Collins of South Ruislip as Mr. Allwork, the local builder, and this was confirmed by various people at the British Legion Club. Mr.



*The Entrance Lodge from the Sales Catalogue.*

Collins, who worked for the Lavenders in the wood trade, remembers that Mr. Ewer of Manor Farm, with a pony and trap, would drive sheep to Watford Market, taking several hours. There was a wood sale on the first Wednesday in November, facing the Six Bells, which, with its stable nearby, was kept by Sam Ives, who used to take ricks of hay to London. These were the days of the Poulterers' Dairy Farm at Ducks Hill; when Martin was gamekeeper in Mad Bess Woods and Alf Watts in Park Woods; when Ruislip Fair was held by the Pump and the old George; and later the Pettigrews had the Fair in a field by the Lodge (now the Public Conveniences); when planes landed on the rough field known as The Moors; when foxes were hunted at Ducks Hill; when Mr. Paradine and then Mr. Clark kept The Plough; the days of farthing bundles of kindling and tramps sleeping rough at Manor Farm.

Mr. H. Collins once worked with George and Charlie Allen of Hills Lane, who worked for Mr. Richard Ewer at Manor Farm. They recollect selling the acorns they picked to the farmer, for feeding pigs and sheep, at 9d a bushel. George fed and watered 16 head of cattle in the Cow Byre at Manor Farm. Chaff was cut and straw stored in the Library (when it was a barn).

The Allens' grandfather, who looked after Mr. Watson of Harefield's cattle, grazing in 'The Park', was blind and used to tap past the Swan up to the pillars of Park House's archway and back, in the days when Mrs. Maggs lived in the lodge, near the Poplars tearooms. Local boys once broke into the lodge and stuck knives and forks in the doors and fried sausages. They were locked in the Police cells for a few hours.

Mr. Wallis had the farm at the top of The Oaks and kept carts and carriages in an old barn which was at the back of the house owned by Mr. Penny, the tiler, in Manor Road. The big, white gate across the Park path which led through to the orchard in Ickenham Road, was shut once a year. In the two cottages at the back of what is now Master Fixit, lived Tommy Silver and Farmer Watson's carter. The cattle grazing in the Park used the pond below Sharps Lane and one between King

Edward's Road and Ickenham Road.

The Allens remember three boys living at Park House who used to want to play with them. Those were the days of spinning-tops and iron hoops, mended at the forge for 1d. by Mr. Doe. The High Street, at the side of Park House, was a gravel road with no kerbs.

Horace Woodman of Northwood, who is said to be the last person to have slept in Park House as it was before conversion, remembers that Mr. Brewer there kept gamefowl. He was a friend of King Edward VII and a glimpse of Park House's visitors early this century would have been intriguing but unfortunately my potentially valuable source of information, the housemaid, Lizzie Clark, who moved with the Brewers to Thame, died within the last few years. She was the daughter of the butler, who was friendly with Horace Woodman's grandparents; they played dominoes together. Mr. Brewer was apparently in the tobacco business and lived with his sister at Park House. Horace Woodman remembers horses being turned out in the Park and hay being cut.

Mrs. Edith Jarvis (formerly Collins) of Ickenham, remembers details of the outside of Park House. By the door were stone bollards, two steps and a footscraper. When you pulled a knob, a bell rang and old Mr. Clark, the butler, would come down the covered way from the door to the street, with a taper.

A high fence stretched down to King Edward's Road with two large oak trees inside it, where the Post Office is now. Through a hole in the fence, children could glimpse the goings-on at 'the big house'. From the end of the present Post Office were gardens and a huge lawn. It was a long walk from the door of the house to the road.

At the back of Nailor Cottage (between Mrs Riddle's shop and The Swan in the High Street, but now demolished), were two more cottages. Mr. Ewer lived there and married the 'beautiful Ellen', who was parlourmaid at the Vicarage. In Bell or Swan Alley, at Park Cottages, lived the Bell family, the Allens and an engineer, who worked for Gurney & Ewer's, motor engineers in Bury Street. This man had no legs and

travelled about in a box cart.

Mrs. Jarvis remembers going to tea at Park House on Sundays, as a friend of Lizzie Clark, the parlourmaid. When Mrs. Jarvis was a child, the Lodge was empty and then the Abercrombies started running Guides there, the First Rosebuds becoming the Second Brownies. They met at the Lodge on Saturday evenings. The gate, which was the main entrance to the estate, later had a hedge grown across it. There was also a side door to Park House from which Mr. Clark, the butler, would emerge. The High Street shops at the side of the house seem to have been erected piecemeal in the late 1920s or early 1930s but no-one remembers exactly when. Mrs. Jarvis says that at the Church end of Park House was the kitchen, with a huge old range.

When Miss Brewer was ill, Lizzie Clark was her maid. Children would pull the Park House bell and run and hide in Mrs. Gooderson's shop while Mr. Clark trailed the long way to the door to answer it. Mr. Clark was originally the Brewers' coachman, but when he developed arthritis, he became butler, silver-cleaner and general factotum. Annie, Mr. Clark's wife, looked after the Brewers after Mr. Brewer's wife died. (She was their cook/housekeeper at Holloways, Thame, when they moved to Oxfordshire). Their daughter, Lizzie, taught Mrs. Jarvis at Sunday School. Mrs. Jarvis' father was one of two local postmen, whose round included Ducks Hill and as far as the aerodrome.

The Brewers were the last family to live in Park House, which then lay empty for about two years until the Royal British Legion took it over. There is a large Brewer family grave near the Recreation Ground wall and Thomas Marsh Everett's grave in Ruislip Churchyard.

There is talk of the Collins family having had the house, about 1930, but the list of Conveyances does not show this. (There were Collinses in a house near the present Police Station apparently, a solicitor with two daughters). Their ground went back to Church Avenue. Mrs. Cooper, who told me this, also remembers living near Crookall's, the butcher's shop. The





Photo: A. J. Woodruff

*Park House from the High Street around 1920.*

registrar of Births and Deaths came weekly to Mrs. Riddle's shop. When a Mrs. Smith lived at the Lodge to Park House, the doctor would come there once a week to hold a surgery. Mrs. Cooper's cousin, George Allen, lived at the Lodge at one time.

In 1930, Park House was rented and in 1946 purchased for £13,000 (with the aid of a bank loan, for which six founder members stood guarantors) by the Royal British Legion Club, for whom the Ruislip Branch are still tenants of the premises. Headquarters' records were lost during the Second World War but, according to the Branch Bulletin's Diamond Jubilee Edition of June 1981, one longstanding member says the Ruislip branch existed in 1926; and there is a Report of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Ruislip-Northwood Branch in July 1956, confirming their Diamond Jubilee last year. The branch began in the Assembly Room behind The George before it rented the then empty Park House.



Mrs. Rita Hall, secretary at Chamberlain & Bickerton, tells me that coal was once kept in the Park House cellars for their office, which used to be H. Dennis Brookes and, before the war, Panter & Pugh, both estate agents. Mrs. Pugh ran Hudson Banks the chemist in Ickenham Road but she is now in New Zealand, from where she wrote me a most informative letter of reminiscences.

There are strange stories about Park House; for instance, Charlie Bell, of Park Cottages, tells how his grandmother and aunt were about to 'scrub out' Park House about 60 years ago, when suddenly doors started to creak, things began to move and footsteps were heard, though no-one was in the house. The two ladies picked up their buckets and ran! Mrs. Bowlt has been told of people sensing the presence of children playing. The Allen brothers tell of ducks being sent up the tunnel, (which is supposed to go underground from Park House's cellar level to St. Martin's) coming back without their feathers.

Since my initial request for information in the Ruislip Northwood Gazette, my researches have led me to meet many local people and I have learnt much more about Ruislip generally than about Park House, but it has taught me two things: never throw out old mementoes such as postcards or local directories; the Local History Collection at the Library needs them or copies of them; for instance, those published by Rawlinsons of Northwood (who say they keep no back copies!); or The Homeland Guides of Northwood & District, published by Frederick Warne & Co., of the Strand, one of which came my way by chance and was most informative about the area in 1912.

*The development of Ruislip Park Estate and much of Ruislip itself was closely associated with the coming of the railway at the beginning of this century.*

*As Harry Pellow relates, not everyone shared the Reverend Roumieu's views of 'the evils arising from the inroads of the iron horse'.*