

Exhibition of Maps at Manor Farm House

by Sylvia Ladyman

In April of this year an exhibition of maps was setup in Manor Farm House, Ruislip, by members of the Society to illustrate the history of Ruislip from 1066 to the present day. Besides maps there were photographs and a wealth of information about the map makers and the history of the parish.

The transcription of the Domesday entry of 1086 gives the impression of a village with much arable land, some pasture and large areas of woodland. There were 49 dwellings, 1500 pigs in the woodland, and livestock on the pasture. The village was owned by a Norman, Ernulf de Hesdin. The entry also tells us that there were four Frenchmen and a priest living in the village.

The next glimpse into the past is drawn from the 1565 Terrier (Land Roll) which was carried out on behalf of King's College, Cambridge, the owner of the parish at that time. The map shows field boundaries, roads (e.g. Green Lane, Fore Street), Ruislip Common Wood, Ruislip Park and Manor Farm. At the side of the map were photographs of old buildings of this period - Cannons Farm, Hill Farm, Tudor Cottage, Ivy Farm, Ramin and the Shooting Box. A detailed map showing the distribution of dwellings in 1565, beautifully executed with modern names was particularly interesting. It is amazing that about one third of these buildings can still be seen today.

In 1750 King's College asked John Doharty of Worcester to map all their properties. The Ruislip map was displayed on a table, and enlarged photographs of parts of it were on a wall each one alongside a descriptive paragraph. The arable fields, meadows along the river Pinn and cottages at Park Hearne can be identified. (These cottages were lost when the reservoir (Lido) was constructed in 1811). Modern names can be seen - King's End, Ladygate Lane, Great Windmill field, Fore Street.

Faden's map on the wall, dated 1788, showed roads and centres of population for 25 miles around Ruislip at a scale of 1 inch to 1 mile. Three smaller maps gave information of Ruislip, Eastcote and Northwood in the middle of the 19th century. At that time Eastcote was a small rural community with three important houses - Haydon Hall, Eastcote House and High Grove. Roads and other houses are clearly shown. Photographs again reminded us of the old

buildings. Northwood was an area of scattered farms and houses along the roads. The railway came in 1887, which stimulated more house building. The Ruislip map showed a cluster of houses around the church and scattered farms - Field End Farm, Hill Farm, Primrose Hill Farm.

By 1890 with better instruments, cartography became more accurate. Looking at the Ruislip map of this period one is amazed to see large blank areas to the south of the town - open unenclosed fields which provided hay for the horses of London. The villagers grazed their cattle in some fields, and they would have worked in the woods cutting and selling timber. The railway arrived in 1890 and soon after more houses were built for the expanding population.

By the 1930s there were signs of a gradual transition to Metroland - very obvious as one studies the map of that period. The curved pattern of the roads and the size of the plots for housing contrast with the older development. Towards the south of Ruislip there is a higher density of houses, each with a small garden, whereas between Park Avenue and Sharps Lane there are larger gardens and a lower density of housing. At the side of the map were photographs of 'The George', Astoria cinema, Sacred Heart Church and Rivoli cinema.

The 1960s brought in an era of demolition as shown by the photographs of demolished buildings. These included the Lido building (fire 1994), Battle of Britain House (fire 1984), Rivoli cinema (1929-66), Astoria cinema (1934-84), Coteford School building (demolished 1986 for sheltered housing), Methodist Chapel Eastcote, Eastcote House, Haydon Hall, 'The Ship' Joel Street and St Vincent's Hospital (1911-2005).

Fortunately, by the 21st century more interest had been taken in our heritage. Buildings in the area worthy of preservation now have local and/or national protection.

It is a pity that this exhibition lasted for such a short time, and for such limited viewing hours. Judging by the comments, visitors appreciated the amount of work involved in setting up the exhibition, which they thought was worthwhile. Comments included 'interesting to see the changes', 'informative', 'well done!' and 'more please'. A 10 year old wrote 'very clear / I can understand'. What more can I say?