

# The Sherleys in Ruislip

by Eileen M. Bowlt

## *Sherley's Court at Kemps Hale*

One of the blocks of retirement flats at the junction of Wood Lane and West End Road is called Sherley's Court (Fig. 1). It was built in 1996 upon a piece of land that was owned from 1847 to 1901 - a relatively short time, in historical terms - by Frederick Sherley or his trustees. Its ancient name was Kemps Hale, referring to the bend as Wood Lane sweeps down to what was once Field End Green, since the word hale means bend. He also had the farm on the opposite side of West End Road that became known as Sherley's Farm and is now The Old Barn Hotel/Hawtreys Restaurant (See Fig. 3). Some fields and a cottage at Little King's End, now number 74 Sharps Lane, made up his Ruislip estate. All three properties had belonged to the Hilliard family at the time of the Ruislip enclosures that took place between 1804-14 and all three were acquired by Frederick Sherley during 1845-7;<sup>i</sup> but not directly from the Hilliards. Why is his name commemorated in Ruislip to this day?



**Fig. 1 - Master's Court and Sherley's Court**

## *Frederick Sherley c1787-1873*

Sherley is not a local name and in fact, there is no evidence that Frederick Sherley ever lived in Ruislip.<sup>ii</sup> He was born in Barnet, Herts., about 1787 (working back from his age as given in the 1851 census) and was living in Hayes, Middlesex, in the 1830s. His name appears on the Hayes Electoral Roll and his right to vote depended upon a house and land that he occupied there in the Cotman Town area. He has not been identified in the 1841 census, but was still in Hayes in 1845

as shown in the Middlesex Deeds Registry Memorial, recording his purchase of two fields in Ruislip.<sup>iii</sup> They added up to just over 10 acres in size and he paid £960 for them. He moved to Ealing some time later and on the night of the 1851 census he was there at his residence, Haven Green Farm, where his unmarried sister kept house for him. His occupation was described as surveyor, land agent and manorial bailiff, and he was employing three labourers on 70 acres of land. He married Mary Ann Wells of Ealing, who was 30 years his junior, in 1853 and remained there for the rest of his life. He died in 1873.

Ruislip clearly had some special attraction for him and his wife, because despite dying in Ealing, he was buried at St Martin's <sup>iv</sup>. His widow then moved to Sherley's Farm and was living there with the farm bailiff, Thomas Collins and his family, at the time of the 1881 census. She had received some six acres of land immediately south of the farmhouse under the terms of her husband's will and by 1891 had a villa, Elm Grove, built upon it and is where she died in 1898.<sup>v</sup> The now sadly dilapidated Garden Flats (see Fig. 5) replaced Elm Grove in 1936-7.<sup>vi</sup>

We do not know why Frederick Sherley was buying agricultural property in the mid-1840s at a time when farming was at a low ebb locally as well as nationally. Agricultural labourers had been especially badly hit by the gradual change over from the growing of wheat, peas and beans to the production of hay, following the enclosures,<sup>vii</sup> as the latter required scarcely any workers until haymaking time. Hay was the petrol of the 19th century and London with its millions of horses provided convenient markets for disposing of the crop, so local landowners or their tenants were in a fortunate position. The profits to be made from hay may have tempted Mr Sherley in the first instance, but in fact it was probably his occupation as land surveyor that got him involved in Ruislip.

In 1846 the Rev John Hilliard conveyed (along with other land) the three Ruislip properties to Henry Hill Esq. for £6900.<sup>viii</sup> Mr Hill was engaged in several financial dealings involving local property at the time. He had owned the Park House Estate (Park House is the

British Legion establishment behind Ruislip High Street) from 1840 and was about to sell it. Having purchased the Hilliard lands, he promptly mortgaged them for £6000, repaid the loan within the year and then sold them to Charles Shadwell of Northolt. He also sold 'to Frederick Sherley of Hayes, Land Surveyor, several other lands to be held upon the same title' as those sold to Charles Shadwell.<sup>ix</sup> Frederick Sherley became responsible for keeping and making extracts and copies of the deeds.

### *Frederick Sherley's brickfield*

Nearly 20 years later, in 1865, the Ruislip parish ratebooks <sup>x</sup> show that he opened a short-lived brick field in West End Road, on land that was part of Sherley's Farm, near where Grosvenor Vale is today. It seems to have been worked for only one season, 1865-66, and to have been used specifically to provide bricks for Beddingfield Place. This was a terrace of three cottages built in West End Road (nos. 89 to 93) near the site of the brickfield. A semi-detached pair was built beside them some years later. The terrace remains and the pair was rebuilt as a single house about 1984. Each of the terraced cottages had a front living room, a kitchen with a range for cooking and two bedrooms. There were gardens where vegetables could be grown. Earth closets provided sanitation. Water came from a well. These small dwellings did not provide the standard of accommodation to be found in cottages being built on the estates of large landowners around the same time, which usually had three bedrooms so that parents, boys and girls could sleep separately. Homeside in Fore Street built as a Cowman's Cottage for the Haydon Hall estate is a good example of the superior type of tied cottage.

In the 1860s the only cottages available and cheap enough for agricultural workers to rent on the Ruislip side of the parish were in the village centre or around Ruislip Common, those at Great King's End and Primrose Hill being occupied by workers at the farms there. The census returns of 1871 and 1881 show that a police constable lived in one of the Beddingfield terraced cottages, and the other occupants were a shepherd, an axman (woodcutter) and agricultural labourers. A haybinder and a laundress were in the semi-detached cottages by 1881.

### *After Frederick Sherley's death*

Frederick Sherley's trustees, Charles Sherley of St John's Wood and Edward Sherley Smith of Acton, sold the cottage, premises and buildings at Kemp's Hale and a corner of Sherley's Farm land to the Harrow and Uxbridge Railway Company in October 1901<sup>xi</sup>. Subsequently Ruislip Station was built on the farmland. The railway line crosses the site of the cottage at Kemp's Hale, and the Station Master's house (see Fig. 2) was built on the land attached to it. The station and line opened in 1904 with steam trains running until January 1905, when the electric power that had been available since the previous October came into use. The first station-master, Mr Smith was in charge of the Ickenham and Uxbridge stations as well as Ruislip. The house was the first in Ruislip to benefit from electricity, supplied from the live rails, but visitors were disconcerted to find that the lights dipped whenever a train started from the station. The family eventually resorted to oil lamps in the evenings when the problem was exacerbated because the sub-station staff at Ickenham were off duty. Master's Court, the other block of retirement flats was constructed in 1994 on the site of the Station Master's house.



**Fig. 2 - The Station Master's House**

Walter Morford bought 74 Sharps Lane and completely remodelled it, doubling its size and making the former small cottage a suitable residence for the type of person who moved into



Ruislip as suburban development started in the early years of the 20th century. It was known as The Laurels for a time and later White Lodge. It was split into two houses in 1927. The old portion is called Old Orchard. See Fig. 6.

The trustees sold Sherley's Farm (Fig. 4) to Henry James Ewer of Manor Farm in April 1902, along with the Beddingfield Place Cottages.<sup>xii</sup>

Mr Ewer was a member of a prolific and long standing family in Ruislip, so it is perhaps surprising that Mr Sherley's name remained attached to the farm throughout his ownership. One might have expected it to have become known as Ewer's Farm and then we might have had a block of retirement flats named Ewer's Court.



**Fig. 3 - The Old Barn Hotel (Sherley's Farm) 2012**



**Fig. 4 - Sherley's Farm c.1910 with members of the Collins family outside**



**Fig. 5 - Garden Flats were built in 1936-7.  
They stand on the site of Elm Grove that was built by Mary Ann Sherley  
on land left to her by her husband.**



**Fig. 6 - No. 74 Sharps Lane  
The old portion is on the right.**

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- <sup>i</sup> London Metropolitan Archives: DRO19 E2/29-30 (Ruislip Parish Rate Books)
  - <sup>ii</sup> The following information about Frederick Sherley's life, comes from Ancestry (Electoral Rolls, Census Returns)
  - <sup>iii</sup> LMA, MDR 1846 11 143 (Middlesex Deeds Registry)
  - <sup>iv</sup> LMA DRO 19 A1/21 (St Martin's Parish Registers)
  - <sup>v</sup> LMA. MDR 1902 11 923
  - <sup>vi</sup> Civic Centre, Uxbridge, RNUDC Planning Applications
  - <sup>vii</sup> In the early 19th century there were 452 acres of wheat, 439 acres of beans and 38 acres of barley, oats, potatoes and peas growing in Ruislip. In 1866 4221 acres out of 5014 acres were permanent grass. Information from , Kiddle DFA, The Changing Landscape of NW Middlesex, 1974 (unpublished thesis) copy in Hillingdon Archives at Uxbridge Library.
  - <sup>viii</sup> LMA, Acc 289/61
  - <sup>ix</sup> LMA Acc 289/64
  - <sup>x</sup> LMA, DRO 19 E2/54-58
  - <sup>xi</sup> LMA, MDR 1901 28 682
  - <sup>xii</sup> LMA, MDR 1902 11 923