

# *A High Street for a Garden Suburb*

## *The reason why the whole of Ruislip High Street is included in Ruislip Village Conservation Area*

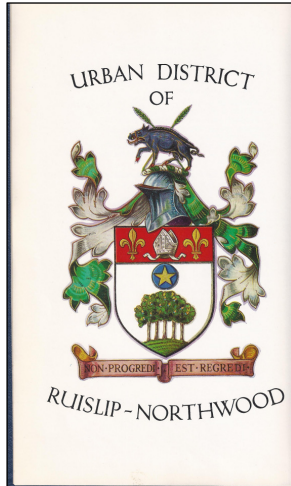
By Eileen M. Bowlt

'Le Highe Streete' mentioned in the 1565 Terrier, refers to the area around the entrance to Manor Farm and the church, the administrative and ecclesiastical centre of the parish that stretched north to the Hertfordshire border and south to Northolt. The modern High Street joins the medieval centre with Ruislip Station, the focus of suburban Ruislip. From Ickenham Road, south the lane was 'the way to London'. By the 19th century it was West End Road, all the way to West End at Northolt. The section between Ickenham Road and the Kingsend/Pembroke Road junction continued to be called West End Road into the 1930s, a point that has to be born in mind when consulting 1920s street directories!

### *PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT:*

#### *THE START*

Two events in 1904, the opening of Ruislip Station on the Metropolitan Line on the 4 July and the institution of the Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council on the 30 September, signalled the end of rural Ruislip and the start of suburban development. The station brought day-trippers, seeking recreation, and refreshment in the country.



Some thought that it would be an ideal place to live, delightfully rural and picturesque, yet within easy reach of work places in the West End and the City.

The major landowner, the Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge were of a similar opinion and were already selling land for building in Withycrofts, the fields that lay between Wood Lane and Ickenham Road. The first new house (now no. 15) was built in 1906-07 and a new road was driven through from the station to Great King's End. Originally named King's End Avenue, it was shortened to Kingsend after the First World War. Meanwhile the College was considering developing its land in Ruislip as a Garden Suburb, similar to the one being promoted by Henrietta Barnet at Hampstead. A new company, Ruislip Manor Ltd, became entirely responsible for the sale and development of the King's College Estate in December 1910.

Several of the new councillors and officers, especially Edmund Abbott, the Clerk, Louis Carr, Sanitary Inspector and Surveyor, and Frank Elgood, an architect and Chairman 1906-08 and 1912-15 were equally determined that the area should be developed according to a carefully designed plan with plenty of open spaces. They set up a Town Planning Committee in 1910 and made full use of the powers bestowed upon Local Authorities by the Town and Country Planning Act of December 1909, to adopt a Town Planning Scheme, whereby the area would be developed on Garden Suburb lines, just as King's College was adopting a Town Plan for its demesne (Copse Wood, Park Wood and the lands of Manor Farm). The two came together, resulting in the Ruislip-Northwood Town Planning Scheme of 1914.

Plans for new buildings had previously had to comply with building Bye-laws set by the Public Health Commission. Architects and builders now

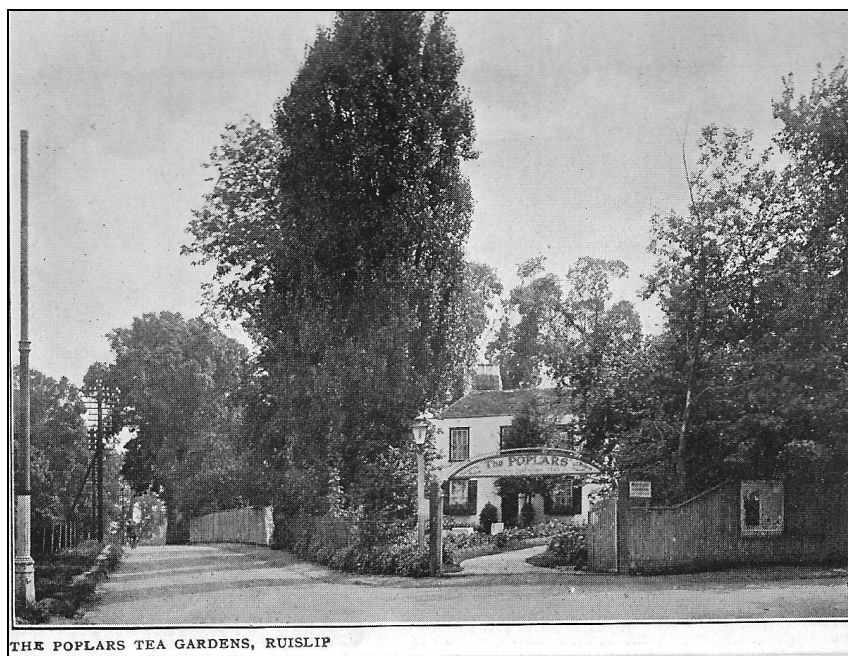
had to bear in mind the provisions of the Town Plan and the regulations made by the council and approved by the Local Government Board, relating to width of carriageways and footpaths, building lines, space around buildings, their height and character, the height of fences and erection of hoardings<sup>ii</sup>.

The owner of Ruislip Park died in 1906 and the estate was divided into building plots aligned along new roads, Manor Road and Church Avenue, both on the line of former footpaths, and King Edward's Road. The first sale was held on the 7 July 1906<sup>iii</sup>.

**The outside world was about to come to Ruislip. Where would the sophisticated newcomers shop?**

The handful of village shops clustered at the end of the High Street, a baker, butcher, newsagent, post office and general store, would clearly be inadequate to serve the eventual influx that was expected.

The first effect of the new station on commerce was to encourage the opening of tea gardens for trippers and modernisation of a couple of the village shops. An 18th century house called The Poplars (see below) on the corner of High Street and Ickenham Road was acquired by George Thomas Weedon about 1906. He turned it into a commercially successful Tea Gardens, attracting as many as 3000 visitors during long Edwardian summer afternoons. Others like Mrs Gooderson at the former post office on the corner of The Oaks, followed suit on a humbler scale (see below).



**Tea Garden attached to Mrs Gooderson's shop, fronting the High Street**



**Hailey's Shop 1970, now Duck house Restaurant**



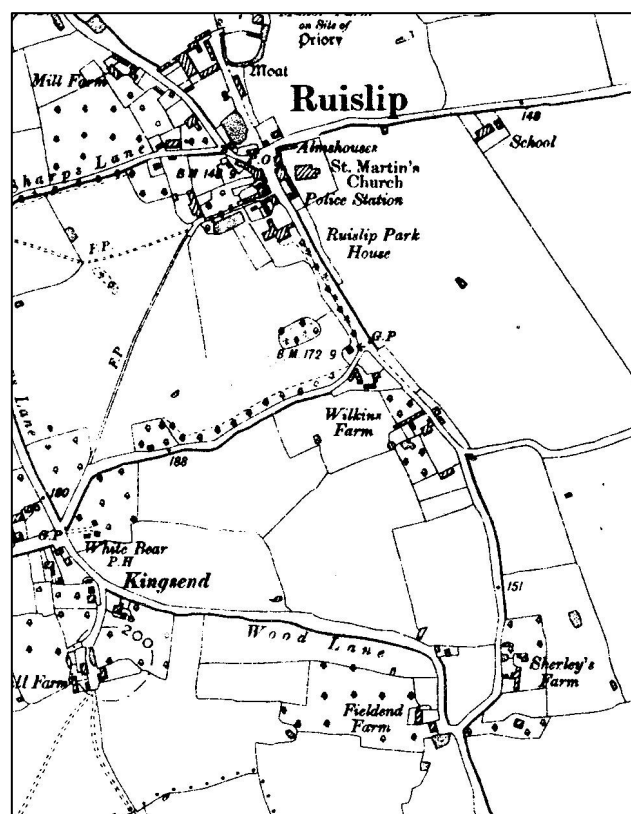
**Crookalls, now B S Hall, Estate Agents**

Mr Hailey married the owner of the shop beside the entrance to Manor Farm and in 1906 applied to have a new shopfront, replacing windows that were like the one on the left in the photograph above<sup>iv</sup>. It became the Post Office in 1908. Mr Crookall, butcher, at the end of the High Street, had the honour of serving the Dowager Queen of Sweden, when she stayed at Highgrove, hence the 'By Appointment' notice above his smart new door and windows. The alterations were made in 1910<sup>v</sup>.

### **THE BUILDING OF THE MODERN HIGH STREET**

By 1910 there were several new houses at the bottom of Sharps Lane and in Kingsend and others being planned (See Map). The time was ripe to consider extending Ruislip's shopping facilities.

**Who owned the High Street frontage and was willing to sell land for shops?**



**1897 OS 6 inch Map**

The western frontage between The Oaks and Ickenham Road was in the Park Estate and already being sold. From Ickenham Road, beyond The Poplars, most of the west side was part of Wilkins Farm, which was occupied by Edwin Ewer and after his death in 1914, by his son, Edwin Shatford Ewer, who purchased it from the Hilliard family in the 1920s. This land did not become available for development until 1927 when Mr Ewer went into partnership with Mr Prowting, the builder, Mr Lee, solicitor of the Covered Way, Sharps Lane, and F.H. Mansford, architect of 15 Kingsend, forming a group named PELM.

The end of the High street near Kings End was part of Withycuts, meadows attached to Manor Farm and owned by the Provost and Scholars of King's College.

Jason Wilshin, of Wilton Lodge, Hillingdon, owned the eastern frontage down to Brickwall Lane. In 1906 the graveyard was extended, taking part of one of Mr Wilshin's fields. Then he purchased a strip of land that was 400 feet x 50 feet narrowing to 33 feet, in July 1908<sup>vi</sup>, on the very edge of the street that had been a detached part of the Park Estate. Presumably, he did this to gain building space in front of the graveyard extension. He sold his frontage as building plots, between 1911 and 1923<sup>vii</sup>. The plots varied from 151 feet to 130 feet in depth and the building line was set back to allow for a pavement. There was a back road to give access to shops.

### **New High Street shops - Rate of building**

**Population figures cover the whole Ruislip-Northwood UDC area up to 1964 and thereafter to the former Ruislip-Northwood area of the London Borough of Hillingdon**

1910-19	16 new shops	Population 1911	6,217
1920-29	32 new shops	Population 1921	9,112
1930-39	60 new shops	Population 1931	16,035
1940-49	1 new shop	Population 1939	47,760
		Reg Gen estimate	
1950-59	7 new shops	Population 1951	69,640
		Reg Gen estimate	
1960-69	4 new shops	Population 1964	75,000
1970-79	10 new shops (redevelopment)		
1980-89			
2015		Population	80,204

A small group of new shops had been built near King Edward's Road and another at the station end of the High Street before the First World War, an event which brought the building trade to a virtual standstill. It recovered and was fairly brisk in the 1920s. Two council estates at Reservoir Road and Hills Lane were built and a few shops were erected on the High Street, singly or in pairs until the late 1920s when terraces of eight or more began to appear.

The rate of building really accelerated in the 1930s, when the population of Ruislip-Northwood almost tripled. Close to the High Street, the Croft Estate was begun in 1929 and there was building in Bury Street, St Martin's Approach, along Eastcote Road, Pinn Way, King's College Road and on Windmill Hill in the 1930s. The pattern of shop building reflects the pattern of domestic development

The 1930s influx encouraged the opening of more groups of shops on the High Street and multiple stores like Home and Colonial, and Mac Fisheries had arrived, at nos. 80, and 66 High Street, respectively by 1933. The value of the High Street frontage rapidly increased with the clamour for shop sites, leading to the removal of the Church of the Most Sacred Heart to Ruislip Manor in 1939, creating prime sites for large shops. Lytton, Ladies Outfitters, a local firm, already established at no. 104, seized the opportunity and moved across the road, where it became a department store. The Home and Colonial Stores followed suit and Burtons, another multiple store appeared on the scene.

According to the *Ruislip Where is it?* published in 1939 it had previously been quite usual 'to observe most of the Ruislip Housewives going to Uxbridge or Harrow for their weekend shopping', but this was no longer necessary. Married women generally had no outside jobs, but stayed at home to 'keep house' and look after their children and did all the household shopping. The High Street was a social centre, where neighbours exchanged news, bought fried fish (and presumably chips) at the Carlton Fish Buffet (no. 160) and had their hair done at numerous hairdressers (six in 1933) as well as shopped. Their opportunities for cups of tea and coffee were limited to Chalmer & Herbert's appropriately-named Refreshment Rooms (no. 42). Ladies would never have dreamt of patronising The George or The Swan. Even when new shops were built to serve George Ball's Manor Homes and the developments in South

Ruislip and Ruislip Gardens in the mid-late 1930s, the housewives continued to walk to the High Street for special shopping, as the other parades, had fewer and less diverse shops.

### **Redevelopment**

The Second World War, like its predecessor, halted building, but by that time the High Street frontage, was completely filled. Any new building must be redevelopment. This took place in the 1960s following the removal of the Police to The Oaks and the closure of the Rivoli cinema in 1966. In the 1970s Cromwell House was built on the site of the Express Dairy Shop after the removal of the depot behind to Northwood. The businesses on the corner of Midcroft were replaced by Jebson House in 1978, after Inwards closed down. Mr Brown's garage and workshop, nos. 132-140, were replaced by London Borough of Hillingdon's Social Services and Housing Offices in 1978. The Embassy cinema (formerly Astoria) closed in 1981 and was replaced by shops, now Linen Chest, MacDonalds and Iceland.

### **Offices**

Governments in the 1960s and 70s were keen to clear office workers out of central London into the suburbs, supposedly nearer to their homes; a quango called the Location of Offices Bureau set up in 1963 was axed in the 1970s. The effect can be seen on the High Street, as the living accommodation above the shops, where families had lived for years were converted into offices for solicitors and insurance brokers. Cromwell and Jebson House were built with offices above and office buildings replaced Mr Brown's garage and workshop. Ironically, more living accommodation is the Government's cry in 2015 and the offices at Cromwell house have been converted into flats and there are similar plans pending for the LBH Housing offices.

### **Social changes**

There had been social changes, especially in the 1960s and 70s when an increasing number of married women, even mothers of young children, began to go out to work and had less time to spend shopping. Modest supermarkets like the one opened by Sainsburys on the Rivoli site in 1968, where customers served themselves, rather than waiting patiently to be served by shop assistants, came into fashion. They became ever more popular as most households acquired first fridges and then freezers. Convenience foods that could be bought in bulk and stored at home

became very popular, especially as working women had less time to spend on food preparation. Supermarkets became larger; customers needed cars to carry the goods home, and car ownership was on the increase. Sainsbury's moved away from the High Street to a more spacious site with room for car-parking, not to mention petrol pumps, in South Ruislip. A smaller supermarket, Waitrose opened, just off the High Street at the bottom of Wood Lane.

Supermarkets in general have also diversified, selling newspapers, books and clothing as well as food, all of which has badly affected the specialised shops on the High Street.

As women gained confidence and spending power as they returned to work, men played a greater part in housekeeping and childcare. Sunday trading legislation came in 1994, allowing larger shops to open for six hours between limited times. It became common for families to spend Sunday mornings together at the supermarket. It is all a far cry from the time when Ruislip's early closing day was Wednesday and most smaller shops closed for lunch. All this changed in the 1970s and 80s, when hours became much more flexible, with shops staying open in the evenings, enabling people to shop on their way home from work.

### **South Ruislip**

Various business parks and retail parks in South Ruislip have hived off much retail business that was once transacted in High Street shops. Wallpaper, decorating, hardware, even shoe shops, are largely to be found in that area.

The diversity of shops on the High Street has been severely affected, leading to a huge percentage of pubs, cafes, coffee shops, restaurants and take-aways and a very large number of Charity Shops, which are being run ever more professionally, with the mainly second hand goods, arranged attractively in windows.

### **Online shopping and a modest revival of the High Street**

The ease of shopping online has affected the way that we shop once again and as heavy and bulky goods are now delivered to homes or offices or other pick-up points, there is a move back to more frequent trips to the High Street – if only for a cup of coffee. It can be no coincidence that large chains, Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Morrisons (briefly) have opened Convenience Stores. Sainsburys is soon to join this new rush when it



moves into the Old Post Office., only a few doors away from where it first opened in Ruislip in 1931. As it happens there has always been some kind of delivery service of food available from the High Street shops, originally by boys on bicycles and more recently by vans for goods worth more than a certain amount. Bulkier items like furniture and carpets have always been delivered.

The cafes and coffee shops have spilled out onto the street in recent years, perhaps because of the smoking ban, but encouraging a more sociable atmosphere. Two public houses have in some measure replaced the village pubs, The Swan and The George, which are now restaurants. On a busy weekend morning in 2015, with people chatting in the street, popping in and out of shops and sitting companionably on the plentiful seats provided by the council under the trees, one senses that the High Street is again a pleasant meeting place for the local populace. Let us hope that they look above the shop windows to appreciate the buildings.

### **Architects and builders**

Some local architects and builders were employed on the High Street. F.H. Mansford, 15 Kingsend, had come to Ruislip in 1907-08 and became very interested in the history of the area, interviewing local inhabitants and recording their recollections of life in Victorian Ruislip, and did some restoration work at St Martin's Church. He was an advocate of Garden Cities and Garden Suburbs and was clearly influenced in his work by the Arts and Crafts movement.

A.V. Gooderson, was a member of a local family. He was part of the Gooderson & Buckley Partnership, working from Priory Chambers in the early 1930s. His son followed him into the business. The firm moved to Cheyne Court as soon as it was built.

Otherwise, architects were drawn from all parts of the South-east. Robinson & Roods of Lincolns Inn were responsible for Barclays Bank and some of the early shops on the High Street, as well as houses on the Park Estate. They worked in the Arts and Crafts tradition. Allwork Bros were very active in the years before the First World War. Mr Allwork lived at the Park Lodge.

Prowting arrived in the area about 1912. He stayed with his sister who lived in Harefield and built his first house in 1912, in St Margaret's Road. It is now distinguished by a blue plaque. He progressed and had his builder's yard in Brickwall Lane in the 1920s, building the Catholic Church on the High Street and several groups of shops.

W.J. Collins was a Harrow builder, but he seems to have been living in Ruislip in 1906, having built the house called The Oaks, beside Park House, with grounds behind containing a pond, where he built a boat house in 1909<sup>viii</sup>. The Police houses are on the site of the pond.

### **Conservation Area**

**The modern High Street was completely built up between the medieval village centre and Ruislip Station by 1939. There has been some redevelopment since, particularly in the 1970s. Manor Farm, St Martin's and the village centre became a Conservation Area in 1969.**

**The whole street was included in 2009. Why?**

The modern High Street is very much a product of the first half of the 20th century, when the high-minded principles of the Garden Suburb movement - well-planned, attractive looking buildings for all members of a community, set in leafy and spacious surroundings - were being invoked. Ruislip's is a traditional High Street, built in a variety of styles, each characteristic of its period, with a great many pleasing architectural details, easily overlooked, if one's eyes are constantly seduced by shop window displays. Arts and Crafts, Art Deco and Classical design is all to be seen in Ruislip.

Such details are easily lost, when inappropriate windows are installed, when very large fascia boards are introduced and when signage is of poor design. It is to ensure that changes enhance the characteristics of the High Street, rather than detract from them, that it was given Conservation Area status.

**The 'Guided Walk' along the High Street that follows is designed to raise awareness of the buildings and their underlying qualities.**