

Hopkyttes : Forerunner of Eastcote House

A Brief Note

by Eileen M. Bowlt

Place Names

The Community Dig on the site of Eastcote House, under the direction of Les Capon of AOC, completed its third season on the 11 July 2015. Two more digs are planned for 2016 and 2017. A flint cill, first seen in 2014, has been further uncovered and is generally believed to be connected with the earliest documented house there, called Hopkytts.

The name is intriguing and people wonder what it might mean. Place names often refer to the topographical location of a site, the flora and fauna in the vicinity, or the type of settlement. There are usually two or three elements in a place name, one frequently being a personal name of an early settler. As seen from this Society's logo on the front of the journal, it goes without saying that names, their spelling and pronunciation, change over time, so to work out the original meaning, it is essential to start with the earliest reference possible.

It has to be said that the study of place-names is not an exact science and experts frequently disagree. The derivation of 'Ruislip' is a case in point. Ekwall in *Concise Dictionary of English Place Names* suggests that the word is composed of *rysc*, meaning 'rush' and *slaep*, 'a slippery spot' – a slippery spot where the rushes grow. However, the authors of *Place names of Middlesex*, whilst agreeing that the first element is *rysc*, consider that it is allied with *hlype* meaning 'leap' – a rushy crossing place of the River Pinn perhaps.

So what about Hopkytts? I have seen the word in six documents dated from 1494 to 1594.

1494 The earliest is a copy of Court Roll relating to a court held at **Ruysshlep** on the Saturday after the Ascension, 1494ⁱⁱ.

John Amery, 'lying in extremis' surrendered a cottage and two closes called **Hopkytts** and **Droker**, and 12 acres of land in the fields of **Ascote** (Eastcote) to the use of Joan, his wife, for nine years, and afterwards to Edmund, his son. There was a heriot (death duty) of one cow to the value of six shillings, to be paid to the lord

(Provost and Scholars of the King's College of Our Blessed Lady and St Nicholas).

It is not clear whether the name refers only to one of the closes or to the cottage as well. Since 1494, the name **Droker** has disappeared altogether.

1507 Copy of Court Roll of a court held at **Ruyshelep** on the Tuesday before the Nativity of St John the Baptist (24 June)ⁱⁱⁱ.

It records that Edmund Amery had surrendered out of court, a cottage with a close adjoining called **Hopkyttes** and 12 acres in the three fields of **Ascote** to John Waleston, Esq.

1527 Copy of Court Roll of a court held at **Russhlypp** on Friday the 26 June^{iv}.

John Waleston, gentleman, surrenders a cottage called **Hopkets** to the use of Ralph Hawtrey and Wenefrede his wife and their heirs legitimately begotten between them, with remainder in default to the right heirs of Wenefrede, together with a close adjoining the said cottage containing 4 acres and 13 acres of land and meadow in the three fields of **Ascott**.

There are other forms of Waleston – Walleston, Walaxton, Wallison and Wollaston. The exact relationship between John Waleston and Wenefrede is unknown, but he was probably her father or uncle. Ralph Hawtrey (c.1494- 1574) was the fourth son of Thomas Hawtrey of Chequers, Bucks and seems to have made an advantageous marriage in Ruislip.

1565 King's College Terrier ^v

Ralph Hawtrey holds one cottage called **Hopkytts** with an orchard and two closes containing 4 acres and it lies at Well Grene and abuts north upon Well Grene and it lies west against the close aforesaid and east upon the close of William Nelham. 13 acres of land and meadow in three fields of **Ascote** went with it.

William Nelham's close also abutted north upon Well Grene. The 'close aforesaid' was in Clay Hill (Field End Road), probably the present Park Farm.

In the Rental portion of the Terrier, Ralph Hawtrey's cottage is named as **Hopket**.

1575 Copy of Court Roll of a court held at **Ruislipp** 17 January 1574/5^{vi}

Ralph Hawtrey had died since the last court. John Hawtrey and his wife Bridget were admitted to Ralph's copyhold property, which is listed in the roll and includes **Hopketts** and an adjacent 4 acre close and 13 acres in the three fields of **Ascote**.

1594 Copy of Court Roll of a court held at **Ruyslippe** 5 November 1594^{vii}

Surrender by John Walleston, gent. Of all his right in **Hopketts** with 4 acre close and 13 acres in three fields of **Ascott** to the use of John Hawtrey.

John Hawtrey had died since the last court and was succeeded by his nephew, Ralph Hawtrey (1570-1638) who was to have the property after the death of Bridget, John's widow.

The holding These documents show that the cottage, enclosed land near the house and land (sellions or strips) in the open fields formed the **Hopkytts** holding from at least 1494. The two closes appear to have been thrown into one of 4 acres at some time and an extra acre was acquired in the open fields over the years.

Possible Meaning

The 'hop' element could refer to hops that may have been growing in the area. Hops may have been used for flavouring beer locally by the late 15th century.

Ekwall^{viii} suggests that the Old English *hop* 'a piece of enclosed land in the midst of fens' may have a more general meaning, such as 'dry land in a fen'. Hopkyttes was situated on the edge of the very wet area along the River Pinn between Fore Street and Catlins Lane, that was known in 1565 and later as 'Well Green alias Long Marsh'.

What about the second element, kyttles, ket, kete or whatever? A list of tenants of the Manor of Ruislip in 1421-22^{ix} contains, among the Eastcote names, one Robert Kitte.

Maybe Eastcote House Gardens are situated on Robert Kitte's 'dry land in a fen'.

The House

The 15th century cottage would almost certainly have been a hall open to the roof with a central fireplace and possibly with a two-storeyed crosswing attached.

Did Ralph Hawtrey modernise it and extend it, perhaps by adding a chimney and ceiling to the hall? Whatever he did, he retained the old name over the 47 years that he lived in Eastcote, as did his son after him. RCHM Field Notes^x written by G.E. Chambers, who visited in July 1936, suggest that the house was of 16th century origin and had crosswings on the north and south sides that had either been rebuilt or added in the early 17th century. In the 18th century the north wing was extended north and east and a new east front was built to enclose the space between the wings.

Any of the first three Hawtreys could have built a new house in the 16th century. John built the dovecot 'against the custom of the manor' (It was largely rebuilt in the 18th century) and the second Ralph obtained a licence for it in 1601^{xi}. He presumably erected the stables, since an archaeological report, carried out by AOC Archaeology in 2012, suggests a building date of c.1600. The early 18th century transformation was probably undertaken around 1725 by James Rogers, grandson-in-law of the last male Hawtrey to live there.

ⁱ J.E.B. Gover, A. Mawer & F.M. Stanton with collaboration of S.J. Madge, *Place names of Middlesex*, apart from the City of London, 1942

ⁱⁱ London Metropolitan Archives: Acc 249/5

ⁱⁱⁱ LMA Acc 249/6

^{iv} LMA Acc 249/7

^v King's College Muniments: RUI/182 (former reference R36), folio 26 and 47

^{vi} LMA Acc 249/64

^{vii} LMA; Acc 249/144

^{viii} Ekwall, *Concise Dictionary of English Place Names*, 4th edition 1960, p249

^{ix} King's Coll Mun RUI/186 (former reference R39)

^x English Heritage: National Monuments Record.

^{xi} LMA: Acc 249/183.