

EARLIEST RUISLIP

BY HUGH BRAUN, F.S.A.

THE material which forms the subject of this paper has been collected during the course of many exploratory visits to Ruislip extending over nearly fifteen years. On the earlier occasions I had the honour to be assisting the late Mr. G. E. Cruickshank, F.S.A., in his investigation of the line of the Middlesex Grimsdyke. At the time of his death in 1925, which deprived our County of perhaps its keenest field archaeologist, Mr. Cruickshank had traced the Dyke to within the parish of Ruislip and had, at the same time, incidentally discovered many of the earthworks which will be referred to in the course of this paper. Although I am sure that Mr. Cruickshank had more than an inkling of the probable significance of these works, he was never able to publish his opinions and thus it has been left to my far less experienced researches to attempt to elucidate the possible purposes and probable dates of the various enclosures, the original discovery of which, however, we owe to his indefatigable efforts in the exploration of the fast disappearing antiquities of this County.

In the first portion of this paper it will be my intention to lay before this Society my views as to the probable origin of the settlement which eventually became the village of Ruislip. In order to commence the study of the factors which led to the adoption of the site by the first settlers, it will be necessary to consider, firstly, the *primaevae* aspect of the district. The village is situated towards the north-western fringe of the vast expanse of London Clay, which covers practically the whole of the County, and which, it seems generally agreed, must have been covered, in early days, with a

great forest of oak trees, rising in profusion from a dense jungle of thorny scrub. Penetration into such a district must have been a most unwelcome prospect to the early settler of, say, the Stone Age, and any permanent occupation a tiresome business, with the ever-encroaching forest to be continually kept in check, lest it overwhelm the settlement completely and drive out the inhabitants to seek more congenial pastures. For the same reason, also, it would have been exceedingly difficult to provide, and keep open, any inter-settlement communications.

If a geological map of the County is studied, it will be observed that there are, however, scattered throughout the vast clay area sundry small patches of less heavy soil of the sand or gravel type. I have been in consultation with several gentlemen connected with the Geological Survey, including Dr. W. Kennedy, F.G.S. of Ruislip, and these all seem to subscribe to the suggestion that, where such lighter patches exist, there would have been, in these areas, a thinning of the forest growth. Possibly the oaks would give place to lighter trees, or the undergrowth would be less dense or hardy. Indeed, everything considered, it would seem that these gravel areas would be the best places to explore for traces of the earliest settlement of the County.

The gravels are of two main types. It will be obvious that there will be beds of alluvial gravel along the courses of the streams, which, it must be remembered, were, in the days of the great forest, much larger owing to the increased rainfall due to the trees. There are also, however, on the summits of some of the hills, "plateau gravels" and, in some places, Eocene deposits of sandy soils. Obviously, therefore, while the river valleys would provide excellent natural highways through the forest, it would be on the hill-top gravels where one would expect to find the earliest settlements, as being on sites more suited to the defensive requirements of primitive man.

Thus it is that such isolated hills as Horsendon and Uxendon display to us, in their names alone, clear evidence of defended Celtic settlements on their summits. Other notable examples of the preference of hill-top sites are the settlement, afterwards romanised as Sulloniaca, situated on the Brockley Hills above Stanmore, and, of course, what must have surely in ancient times been the forest capital, the lordly hill of Harrow.

When we pass on to consider the valley gravels, however, it would seem almost unreasonable to expect to find any trace of early habitation of the areas which they cover. They must have been very damp and even miry in winter, and lamentably unprotected by natural scarps compared with their loftier neighbours. No early name remains to betray to us the secret of the pre-Saxon foundation of any village. It remains, therefore, to explore the river valleys in search for any traces in the soil of, for example, early earthwork. For it was often the custom, in early days, in places where a village was inadequately protected by nature, to fortify it with a dug ditch, having the earth from this thrown up within it to form a rampart which would add to the efficiency of the fortification thus constructed by doubling the height of bank to be scaled by would-be attackers. In wild forest districts, such as ancient Middlesex, such a protection would have been greatly desirable, not only against enemy tribes, but also against the wild beasts of the forest surrounding the village. The greater defensive value of the work might have been attained by surmounting the bank with a palisade of tree-trunks, easily procured in the forest, or even by a quick-set thorn hedge, after the fashion of an African *boma*. With the possibility of such earthworks to be found, therefore, it would seem worth while to explore the low-lying gravel areas of the district.

If the vicinity of Ruislip is examined on the geological map, it will be observed that there is a point where the valley of the Pinn Brook expands, for a distance of

about a mile, to form a considerable expanse of gravel, in its widest part perhaps a quarter of a mile across. This gravel patch will be found on the site to have been completely enclosed by a large oval earthwork, considerably larger than the gravel area, but clearly having this as its focus.

This earthwork (Fig. 1*a*), which encloses some 350 acres, extended between the Eastcote Road on the south, Bury Street on the west, Fore Street or Frog Lane on the east, and curved round through the heart of what is now Park Wood in the northern part of its course. Until the widening of Bury Street and the Eastcote Road a few years ago, it was complete except for a small portion of its western side, shown with a broken line on the plan. It seems to have been obliterated at this point quite early during the Middle Ages by a small holding, known, at any rate since Elizabeth's reign, as Harry's Croft, bordering on Bury Street. It is a work of quite considerable scale apart from the area which it encloses, for, although the earthwork has never been properly sectioned, it is clear in some portions that the bank and ditch are at this day each six feet or more in height.

It will not be possible, until a proper examination of the earthwork has been undertaken, to state conclusively either the date or purpose of this interesting enclosure. It is clearly too large to be the defence of a settlement, and, moreover, I am told by experts that, in early times, the gravel area which it surrounds would have been extremely swampy, owing to the mass of vegetation brought down and deposited there by the stream. No objects, so far as I am aware, have been found which can be connected with the earthwork, and the recent discovery of a plano-convex flint knife of the early or middle Bronze Age by a chance visitor from Bristol, Mr. A. Lees, at a point near the centre of the enclosure, cannot be said to have any bearing on the question of the date of the earthwork.

The only clue as to the possible significance of this oval enclosure would seem to be the reference, in the Domesday survey of 1086, to the existence, at that time, of an unusual feature connected with the Ruislip manor, that of "a park of wild beasts of the forest."

Our President, in his invaluable work on the early antiquities of the County, has referred at some length to this park at Ruislip,¹ and there is no need for me to describe the manner in which this enclosure was used. I wish, however, to draw your attention to what Sir Montagu has to say concerning the probable antiquity of this Domesday park. He points out that, in all probability, there had been a park at Ruislip long before the survey of 1086, before the Conquest, most probably even before the Saxon invasion of the country, and suggests that the origin of the park may date from away back into the days of the Catuvellauni who probably hunted this country during the years immediately preceding the Roman invasion.² Whether or no this is true has yet to be proved, but it would seem, at any rate, that the park was in existence during Roman times, as the remains of a building of apparently Romano-British origin, having walls of flintwork interspersed with Roman brick, associated with fragments of pottery of this period, have recently been exposed by building operations in the south west portion of the oval³ (Fig. 1 *b*). As no other remains of the period have been discovered at Ruislip to suggest that there has been any sort of settlement of the village in Roman times, it would seem a possibility that the building in question was connected with the park, and may have been the residence of an official connected with its upkeep. Sir Montagu Sharpe tells us⁴ that the Great Forest of Middlesex was a favourite resort of the sportingly inclined Roman officials from Londinium, and that the enclosed park was an essential feature of the properly preserved hunting forest.

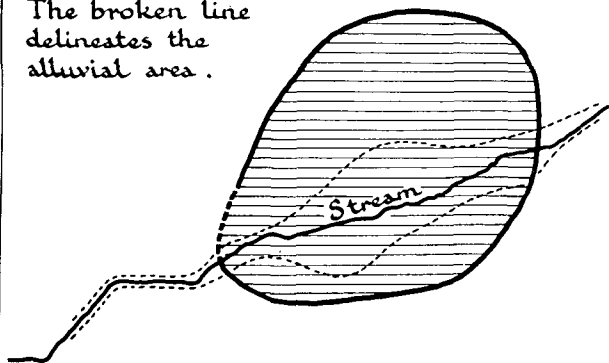
Whether or no this Ruislip park was enclosed by the Catuvellauni tribesmen with their own native ingenuity,

or by them under the supervision of their Roman masters, is a point which has still to be settled. The main fact which seems clear is that the oval earthwork precedes the Normans, and, with almost equal certainty, the Saxons, these last being no great adepts at the science of earthwork. In this connection it may be remarked that the British tribesmen of the period of the Roman conquest were masters of earthwork, as the great works in the vicinity of their capital near St. Albans and even the Grimsdyke, which may in all probability be attributed to their efforts, remain to remind us to-day.

Let us suppose, therefore, that this oval enclosure at Ruislip is of considerable antiquity, and was in existence in prehistoric days, at a time when the great forest of the Thames valley was an almost uninhabited jungle, feared and avoided by all except those seeking the pleasures of the chase. Originally there would have been very few trackways through its sylvan fastnesses. The northern part, containing the Ruislip enclosure, would be known to the Catuvellauni of the Hertfordshire district, who would not desire to provide any permanent roads through the forest to the Thames, leading, for them, nowhere, and a potential source of weakness on their southern borders, to protect which, in all probability, they had constructed the Middlesex Grimsdyke. There would probably have been some sort of route along the valley of the Pinn, however, and, sooner or later, possibly not until the *Pax Romana* had opened up the country and enabled communications to be improved, trackways would have been made from north to south as well.⁵ It would seem probable that such a large and important landmark as the Ruislip enclosure would have been of considerable utility to persons attempting to traverse the forest, and thus we might expect to find the early trackways passing through the district would make use of the earthwork as a guide, approaching its line at an acute angle, passing along it for a short distance, and

a. The Oval Enclosure.

The broken line delineates the alluvial area.

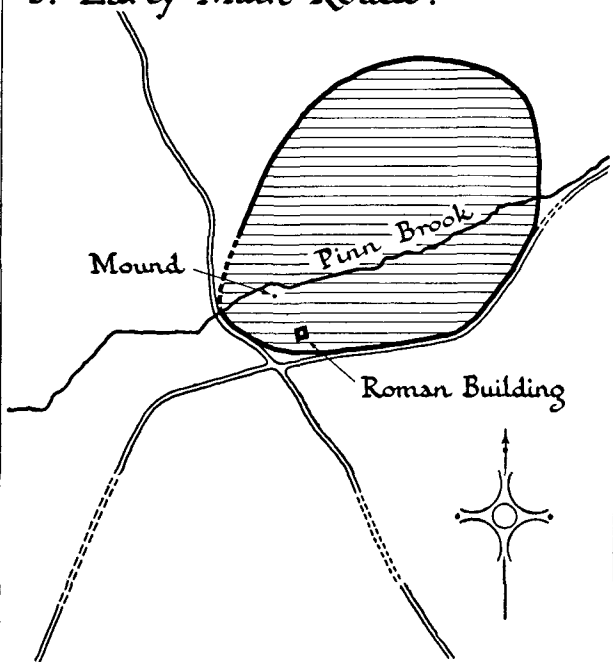


The Suggested Origins of the Village of Ruislip. ❖❖

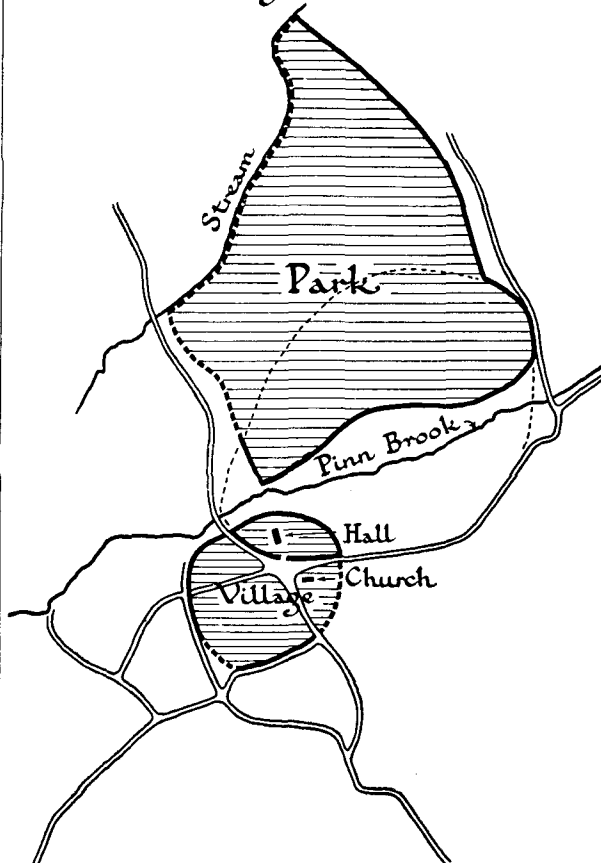
"There is a park of wild beasts of the forest." Domesday Book.

One  Mile

b. Early Main Roads.



c. The Village Enclosure.



Hugh S. Braun. 1933.

Fig. 1.

then leaving it again to continue along the intended line of route.

One would expect to find, therefore, and for this very reason, that the courses of the main roads of to-day which pass through the vicinity of the oval enclosure would actually touch it, and show in their otherwise apparently inexplicable curvature its influence upon their routes.

In point of fact this is exactly what has happened at Ruislip. The Pinn valley route and the north-south road passing through the village have both been diverted by the earthwork (Fig. 1*b*). The original course of the former trackway westwards of Ruislip is mostly lost, for reasons to be suggested later in this paper, but the line of road from Ruislip to Eastcote to-day shows most clearly how it still sweeps round the southern limits of the oval. More clearly still is the effect seen in Bury Street, the north-south road, where the influence of the oval shows most plainly on the aerial photograph (Fig. 2).⁶

I have suggested that these two routes first came into general use some time shortly after the Roman conquest. Sir Montagu Sharpe tells us that at this period was being undertaken the survey of the country by the Imperial *agrimensores* and that, for this purpose, the surveyors were laying out the land into a "grid" of great squares or *pagi*, subdividing these again each into twenty-five smaller squares, the whole arrangement forming a network of base-lines from which to set out more detailed work.⁷ He has explained to us also how it was the custom of the surveyors to mark the intersections of the more important base-lines by providing artificial landmarks, such as large stones, earthwork, and so on.⁸ At especially important points a large mound, called a *botontinus*, would be thrown up.⁹ The first base-line for the commencement of a series of *pagi* would often be a reasonably straight road, such as, for instance, was the

north-south road through Ruislip. It is therefore interesting to note that, at the point where the *line* of this road crosses the Pinn Brook—the road itself, diverted by the earthwork, passes some hundreds of yards to the west—there is a large mound, surmounted to-day by a tree. Sir Montagu Sharpe, to whom I have shown this mound, has noted its position on the remarkable plan which he has recovered, from the investigation of similar



Fig. 2. Aerial view of part of village and surrounding country.

landmarks, of what he considers to have been the Roman system of quadration in the county, and has found that, in all probability, the object is a *botontinus* of the surveyors.¹⁰

To return, after this slight digression, to the subject of the main roads passing through what is now Ruislip, it will be observed that the effect of the "organising" of the Pinn Valley route and the north-south road by the oval earthwork was to create, at the position of

their intersection, a nodal point of some local importance (Fig. 1*b*).

This point is what is now the centre of Ruislip village.

Apart from the slight evidence provided by some scattered potsherds and the remains, as yet unexplored, of one building,¹¹ there is not enough information at our disposal to state whether or no there was any real Romano-British village settlement at Ruislip. What is clear, however, is that the site had become adopted in Saxon times and, by the time the Normans came into the story, the village had become a place of some importance, one of the largest manors in the County, and the property of no less a person than Wulward the White, a thane of Edward the Confessor, and a very considerable landowner in the south of England.

It may be, therefore, to this period of its history that we may assign the next in order of its early antiquities, the earthwork which surrounded Ruislip village, of which enclosure we are so fortunate in possessing quite considerable portions at this day.

It would seem that the oval enclosure must have fallen into disuse at the time when the district was being overrun by the Saxon invaders during the sixth century. It may be, however, that the Saxons did observe the earthwork, and, moreover, realised for what purpose it had been constructed. This is suggested by the consideration of the name of the stream which forms its main axis—the Pinn Brook. This name seems inseparably connected with that of the village near its source, Pinner. Until recent years this name was spelt "Pinnore," the pronunciation of which word would, of course, have been the same as at present. "Pinnore" is an abbreviated form of the mediæval word "Pinnora," which seems to have been the original form of the name of the village. The suffix *-ora* means "bank," so that there can be little doubt that the name of the village is derived from its situation on the bank of the Pinn Brook, and not *vice versa*, as has been suggested. The

name of the river, therefore, is the earlier, and would probably have been one of the first Saxon place-names in the County, natural features, especially the all important rivers, providing the water supply for the invaders, being given names before any settlements were formed to be named in their turn. Now the word "Pinn" suggests to me such modern words as "pen," "pinfold," and collectively speaking, the penning-up of animals in an enclosure, the root being, I believe, the Anglo-Saxon *pyndan* "to shut up." It would seem to me possible, therefore, that the Saxons may have named the stream from the chief feature connected with its course, and that the purpose of the enclosure was appreciated by them.

Towards the middle of the ninth century the district came within range of the disastrous Danish raids. It may therefore have been at this time and for this reason that Ruislip became provided with the approximately circular entrenchment, enclosing some ninety acres, the centre of which is the cross roads at the hub of the village (Fig. 1c).¹² Part of the line of this enclosure may be appreciated by examining the aerial photograph (Fig. 3). Much of the work still remains, although a considerable length was destroyed as a result of the widening of the Ickenham road some years ago. With the exception of about a fifth of its perimeter at the south-east, however, its lines can still be traced along the courses of roads and hedges. There can be little doubt as to the period to which it may be assigned, as it is later than the oval earthwork and earlier than the Norman Conquest, as will be seen later. Its genesis may have been in that section which is so prominent to-day, visible at the extreme top edge of the aerial photograph (Figs. 3, 4), the curved section passing across the south-western portion of the ancient oval enclosure,¹³ and separating from it a vesica-shaped portion which was to become the manorial area of the village (Fig. 1c, see also Fig. 4). In this portion of the village, presumably,

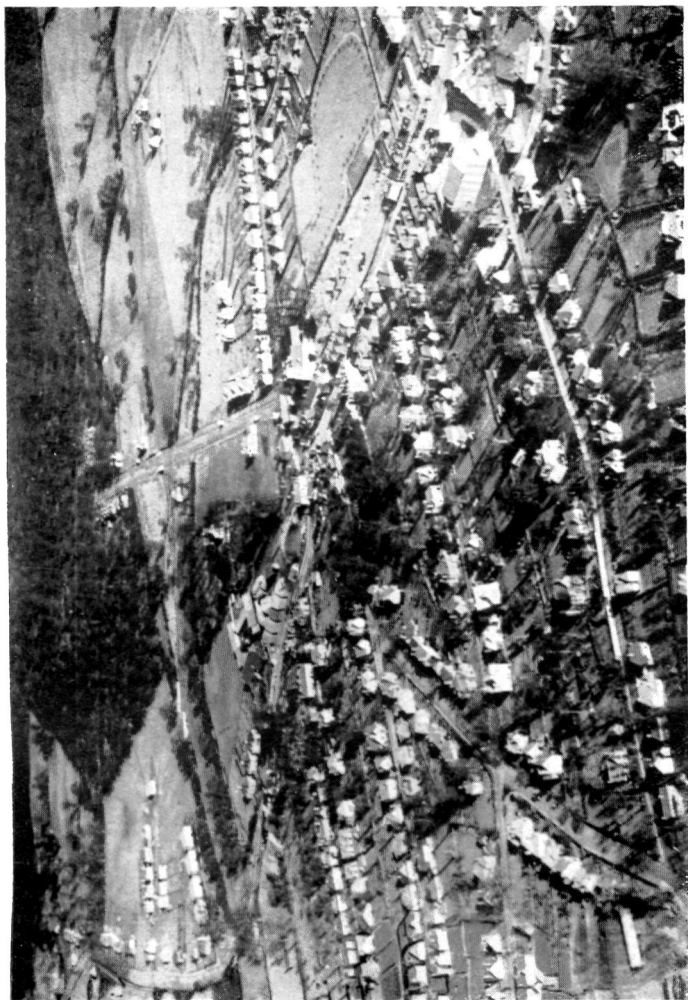


Fig. 3. Aerial view of village.

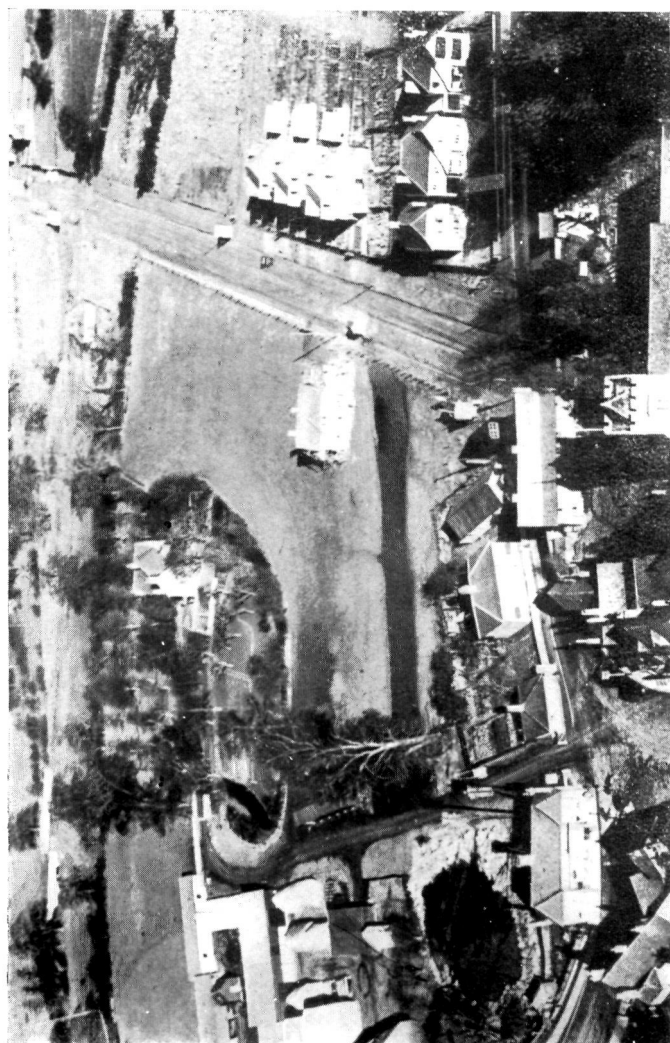


Fig. 4. Aerial view of farm and earthworks.

the timber Hall of the Saxon thane was erected, to give place later to the palisaded castle of the Norman usurper. Still later the monks of Bec built their home on the almost erased site of the castle of their benefactor, and, to-day, the manor-house of Tudor days, albeit sadly changed in appearance, maintains still the tradition of more than a thousand years of Ruislip history.

Whether or no the north-eastern section of the village enclosure was the germ of the whole, it is quite obvious, from an examination of the site, that this fine line of earthwork was once carried round the whole village. Passing westwards from the present termination of the rampart at Bury Street, the line may still be detected forming the southern bank of the little water-course, remnant of the mill-stream of the monks of Bec. The fosse may clearly be seen sweeping round to the south¹⁴ to join the narrow passage between hedges which continues the north-south portion of Sharps Lane towards the Pinn. The eastern side of this lane shows the bank of the work in a spinney, and it may be seen affecting the contour of the front gardens of some of the houses on this side of the lane. The straightening of the road and subsequent building beside it have obliterated all traces for a space, but, when the Ickenham road is reached, this shows, in its curvature, the effect of the village rampart on its course.¹⁵ Until a few years ago, when the road was widened, the bank was clearly visible at the front gates of the houses on the northern side of the road. From the end of the Ickenham road to the end of the north-eastern earthwork at the Eastcote road, all traces of the village enclosure are lost, but it would seem reasonable to suppose that the two ends joined roughly as shown (Fig. 1c).

One of the results of the construction of the village earthwork seems to have been the modification of the local road system at the village. The north-south thoroughfare remained unaltered, possibly because it had become, by reason of the improved conditions resulting

on the clearance of the forest for agricultural purposes, of more importance than the old river valley route, which would have been less comfortably traversed, especially during the winter, owing to the swamps which must always have been a feature of the Pinn until it was properly conserved in comparatively recent times. It would appear, anyhow, that while the eastern portion of this latter route, passing from Ruislip towards Eastcote, was retained in its old course along the southern side of the oval earthwork, its continuation westwards from the village was abandoned, possibly for the reason that its course, not being similarly marked, became, during the Dark Ages, lost and forgotten. At some time, however, a new road, coming from the Saxon settlement of Ickenham, was formed in its stead, and this met the southern side of the village enclosure at an acute angle in the usual manner, passed along beneath the rampart until it came to the south road, and, with it, entered the "south gate" of the village. And thus it is to-day that there is no direct east-west road through Ruislip, but this cranked route has to be followed (see Fig. 1c).

After the national defeat at Hastings in the October of 1066, the main army of the Conqueror marched on London. Arriving at Southwark, however, and not caring to force the passage of the Thames and assault the city forthwith, he contented himself with burning the southern suburb and then marched with his host westwards along the right bank of the river. Crossing, eventually, at Wallingford, he marched eastwards along the Icknield Way until, at the end of November, he had so cut off London from all hope of succour from the Midlands and North that the citizens, appalled also by the devastation he was causing, decided to surrender to his forces at Berkhamsted.

While this great march was taking place, however, a flying column from the Norman army had been detached from the main body to hover near the city to keep an

eye on movements thereat. It has been shown that the movements of this column, as well as those of the main army, can be followed with the help of that wonderful achievement, the Domesday Book of 1086.¹⁶ If the value of a manor as it was in the time of Edward the Confessor is compared with that noted as received by its new owner at the settlement following the Conquest, it will be found that, whereas the value of some manors remain more or less unchanged, others may show a large depreciation. This, it has been suggested, was due to the latter manors having been visited by troops from the invading army in search of supplies, as any destruction, after the hostilities were over, by the new owners is an incredible thought. The fact that lines of these ravished manors can be shown to stretch across the map suggests the probability that these lines mark the route of a party of Norman troops. As one such line of depreciated manors stretches from the vicinity of Slough towards Berkhamsted, passing through Ruislip—which fell in value from £30 to £12—on the way, this would appear to mark the route of the flying column of November 1066. Possibly the villagers were so unwise as to man their “town wall.” Anyway, the place seems to have suffered rather heavily from the Norman conquerors.

It may have been for this reason that, when the lands of the vanquished were portioned out amongst the victorious followers of Norman William, Ruislip was fortunate in receiving as its new lord a man of more than average worth amongst the fierce tyrants to whom must have fallen many less favoured villages. Ernulf de Hesdin, mystery man though he is still to a great extent, has left behind him enough which has been recorded of his character to leave with us a very pleasing picture of a great and kindly warrior of olden time. William of Malmesbury says of him that he was remarkable for the skill with which he farmed his lands and the liberality which he displayed to his poorer neighbours. From

other accounts he appears to have been a man of great girth and stature, and a very doughty fighter.

Ernulf came from Hesdin in Picardy, not the modern town of that name, but its predecessor situated nearby, which, having had the misfortune to find itself midway between the battlefields of both Crecy and Agincourt, and thus suffering sack and destruction on both these occasions, was at last abandoned and has now disappeared. He was a tenant there of Count Engelram, and, when the expedition to England sailed, joined it in the train of Archbishop Odo, with whom he remained as his tenant after the Conquest.

He was married twice, the first time, apparently, to a Norman lady, whose name has not come down to us. He seems, however, on settling in this country, to have married a Saxon lady of royal blood and a considerable heiress, one Ethelswytha. By this means he managed to increase his property in England until he had acquired a very considerable estate. He is shown by Domesday book to be holding at the time of the survey property in the counties of Middlesex, Kent, Gloucester, Wilts., Bucks., Staffs, Hants., Berks., Dorset, Somerset, Hunts., Oxford and Bedford; in all over 28,000 acres of land. With this amount of English property, it is not surprising to find him giving away, in 1094, all his holding in his native place of Hesdin to the priory of St. George in that town.

He seems to have been all his life a true son of the Church, for both he in his lifetime and his widow after his death gave, from time to time, much of his English property to religious bodies.

After the death of the Conqueror, he was accused of favouring the unsuccessful conspiracy of 1096 against Rufus in favour of his brother Robert of Normandy, possibly because of his known connection with Odo, one of the conspirators. He was appealed of treason and chose to undergo the ordeal by combat. It is pleasant to record that his champion was victorious and that

Ernulf was in consequence acquitted and restored to favour by Rufus. Whether or no the charge was justifiable we do not know, but Ernulf professed himself disgusted with his treatment by Rufus over the matter of the conspiracy, and, despite the latter's entreaties, gave away all the lands he held of the king in England to the Church and left the country. It is to be noted that he thereupon rather compromised himself by joining the Crusade which was at that time being prepared by Robert of Normandy, the baulked pretender to the English throne.

Little is known of the doings of Ernulf during the course of that dreadful campaign, but it is to be expected that he wrought as befitted a man of such parts. But he seems to have realised, when he left his home, that his course was run. In the spring of 1098 he fell sick beneath the walls of beleaguered Antioch, refused, perhaps wisely, what medical aid was available, and so, in the tented field, yielded his sturdy spirit as became a warrior lord of olden time.

One would have expected that such a great landowner would have been honoured with a title, and it may be that Ernulf was created the first Earl of Perche, but there is some confusion among authorities as to this. If so, it is not clear as to what was his relationship with the second Earl, who married an illegitimate daughter of Henry II and went down, in illustrious company, in the great disaster to the White Ship.¹⁷

The bulk of Ernulf's vast estates passed to the three daughters of his second wife, Ethelswytha, or, as her name was afterwards anglicised, Emmeline. The first of these heiresses, Sybil, married Edward of Salisbury, and their descendants were the Earls of Salisbury. The second daughter, Adeline, married the son of Alan Fitz Flaald, thus becoming the foundress of the great house of the Fitzalans, Earls of Norfolk and lords of stately Arundel. The third, Matilda, married a Norman, Patrick of Cahors, who, however, settled down in this

country and founded the house of Chaworth, the anglicised form of his name.

Although, therefore, the direct line of Hesdin has not descended to times nearer our own, it is at least interesting to note that we can trace his blood in that of such great houses as those of the *Fitzalans*.

Possibly one of the contributory causes of the early failure of the line of Hesdin was the following regrettable accident which befel a son of Ernulf, his namesake, a child, apparently, of his first wife. This son, it would seem, was a warrior much of his father's calibre, and, during the anarchy of Stephen's reign, would appear to have favoured the cause of the dispossessed Empress Matilda. Thus, in 1138, when William Fitzalan, son of Adeline de Hesdin, was holding Shrewsbury for the Empress, he recruited his uncle Ernulf to be his second in command. On the approach of a besieging force under Stephen himself, however, William was so exceedingly base as to retire with his wife from the beleaguered town and leave his poor old uncle to carry on the defence, giving him strict orders to hold out at all costs. This Ernulf accordingly did, rejecting with scorn repeated offers of clemency as a reward for surrender, despite the dissensions among his most inadequate garrison. Stephen, patient and kindly monarch though he was, at last gave up hope of avoiding bloodshed, stormed the place, took it easily, and hung the unlucky Ernulf and ninety-three of his men. It may be noted that Stephen found, henceforth, few captains opposed to him as staunch as *Ernulf de Hesdin II.*¹⁸

The first Ernulf had at least one other son, William, of whom nothing is known save that he grew to maturity and is found as signatory to charters, but, apparently, did not survive his father.

We have seen that the bulk of Ernulf's property passed to his three daughters. A considerable portion of it, however, had been given away to the Church, especially in 1096, when he left for the Crusade. At

that time he gave away all that he held of the king in this country, among these manors being that of Ruislip, which was given to the Abbey of Bec Herlouin in Normandy.

Such was the Norman lord of Ruislip, who, about the year 1067, took his place as the latest tenant of the old manorial site in the north-eastern portion of the village. Let us see what traces of his dwelling remain to-day.

The present manor-house of Ruislip, represented by a sadly altered Tudor farmhouse, stands beside a remarkable horse-shoe shaped earthwork, always waterlogged, and which is generally considered to have been a portion of the mediaeval moat surrounding the manor house (Fig. 5). Although it must be admitted that, at first glance, the object resembles a moat, a closer inspection reveals that it has several features which it does not share with the majority of moated sites in this country. For example, the other sites in the Ruislip district—and there are a number, one at Southcote, three at Ickenham, three at Northolt, two at Harrow, within the radius of a few miles—are all rectangular. These moats, moreover, all have properly constructed water-holding ditches, with vertical sides. They are good wide water-defences, whereas the Ruislip “moat” is just an ordinary ditch, with sloping sides (Fig. 8)¹⁹ shallow and in places so narrow that an active man might easily jump it. The local moats have islands which are large flat platforms for the erection of buildings thereon. The remnant of the island at Ruislip is a bowl-shaped hump (see the section displayed by Fig. 7). It would appear, therefore, that the Ruislip “moat” has entirely different characteristics from its neighbours, all of which, however, seem to agree among themselves as to the proper form which a moated site should assume. Thus it is at once tempting to wonder if the Ruislip earthwork is perhaps not a moat at all, but something else, altogether unexpected and somewhat mysterious. Let us attempt to unravel the mystery.

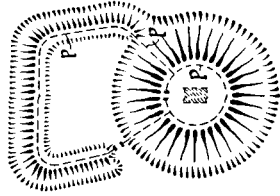
Let us consider, firstly, the social position in Ruislip of its newly acquired Norman lord, and the sort of dwelling he would be likely to need in the village. He had come, in effect, as a conquering invader into a community which had but recently been seriously injured by his compatriots. It is to be supposed, therefore, that he would have been to his new tenants, originally, in any case, decidedly unpopular. Indeed, he would have been, in all probability, in such a position that, with the exception of his personal retainers, every man's hand would have been against him, hated as an usurper and feared as a potential tyrant.

He would scarcely have considered himself safe, therefore, in an unprotected timber hall such as had been the abode of his Saxon predecessor. He might have expected to have it burned over his head on any night. It would be necessary for him to construct such a house as he could defend in case of the revolt of his tenants, best of all, to provide himself with a dwelling of such obvious strength as to deter, by its mere appearance, any intending attacker. In short, he would need a castle.

The castle could hardly have been of stone. The times were too early for there to have been any efficient masons other than the few who would be mainly engaged in the construction of ecclesiastical structures, and would know nothing of castle building. The method employed, therefore, by these Norman lords was to have recourse to the ancient science of earthwork and to dig a circular ditch, throwing the earth taken from this into the centre of the circle and deepening the ditch until a lofty mound had been thus raised. The summit of this would then be surrounded by a palisade, the destruction of which by fire would present difficulty owing to the scarp at its foot. Inside this enclosure the owner could erect his timber house and hope to occupy it with some measure of safety. The building would, of necessity, have been small, owing to the confined space at the

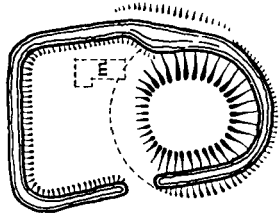
Ruislip Castle in the County of Middlesex. ❖ ❖ ❖

a. As Founded by
Ernulf de Hesdin
after 1066.



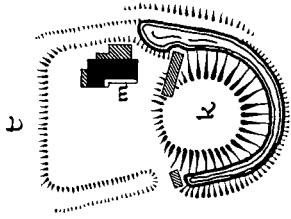
A timber house within
the palisaded summit of
an earthen mound and
having a ramparted
court appended.
pp. palisades ...

b. As Altered by
The Monks of Bec
after 1097.



The ditch between court
and mound filled in
and the remaining
ditches allowed to
become waterlogged
to serve as a moat. ...

c. As Existing at
The Present Day
1933.



The ditches surrounding
the court filled in to
make a tennis court 1888.
m. Tudor manor house.
t. tennis court.
k. kitchen garden.

500 Feet

300

400

200

100

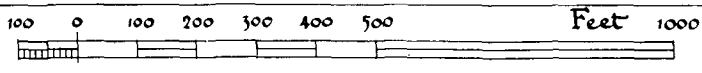
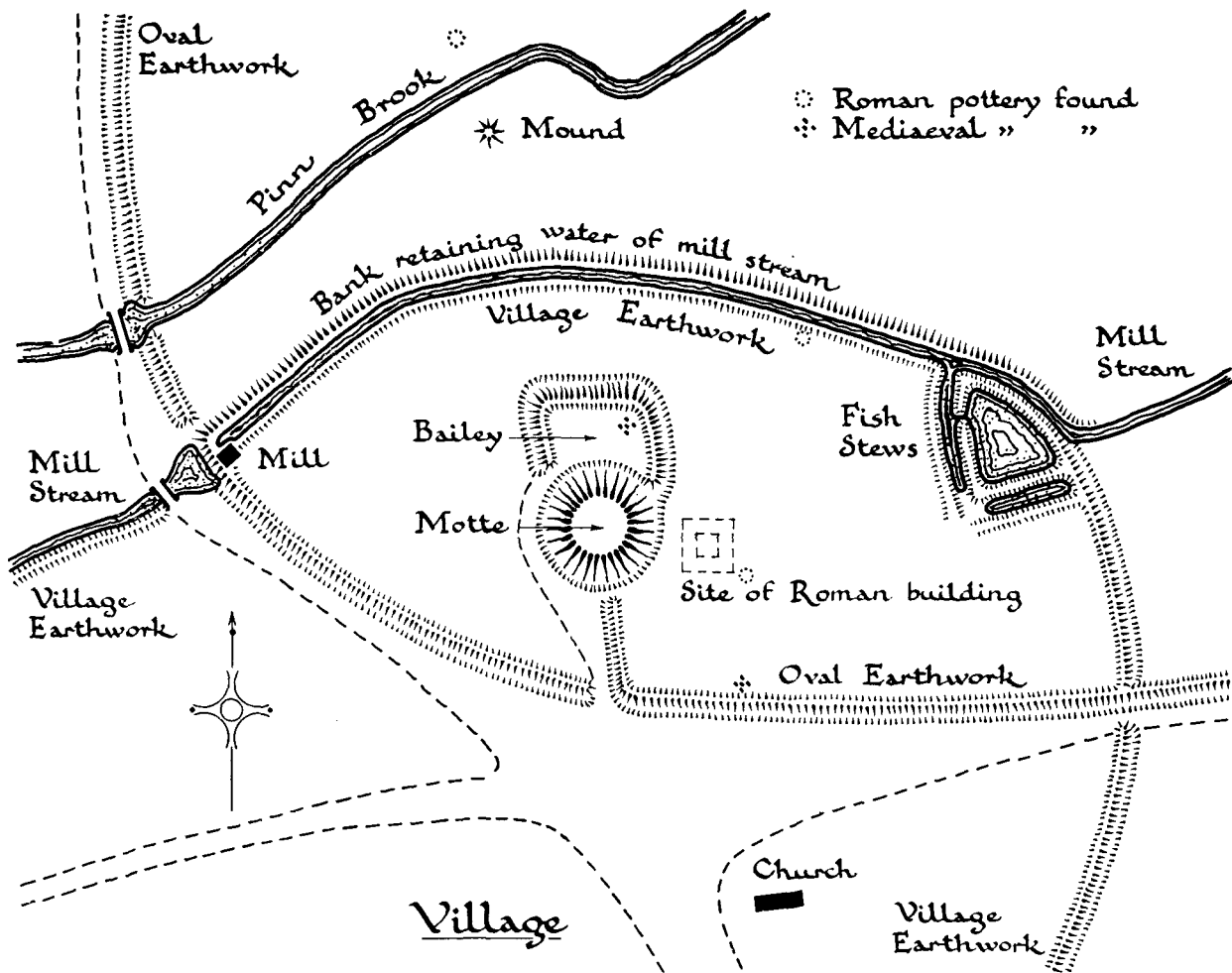
50

0

Hugh S. Braun, F.S.A.

Fig. 6.

Ruislip ⋮⋮⋮ Earthworks in the Manorial Enclosure. ⋮⋮⋮



Hugh S. Braun, F.S.A.

Fig. 5.

summit of the mound. It was necessary, therefore, to provide some additional accommodation at the foot of the earthen "motte" for the housing of the lord's personal retainers and their all-important horses; for the Norman never fought on foot if he could help it. This was done by constructing a small enclosure, or "bailey" at the foot of the motte, taking the form of a rectangular court surrounded by a dug ditch and earthen rampart. crowned in its turn with a palisade.

These "motte and bailey" castles, as they are called, were the common defence of the invading Norman lord against his hostile tenantry, and were improved and multiplied afterwards to such an extent during the course of the continual struggles between the feudatories in their various jealousies and their rebellions against their feudal lord, the king, that after the anarchy of Stephen's reign, they were so numerous that the next king, Henry II, was forced to give orders for their wholesale destruction.

It will be seen from the annexed plans (Figs. 4 and 6) that I believe the Ruislip "moat" to have been one such castle, although it is difficult to appreciate the fact until the plan of the earthwork has been drawn and dissected and its subsequent vicissitudes followed (Fig. 6).

Thus the humped kitchen-garden enclosed by the present wet ditch I believe to be the remains of the mound or "motte" (see Figs. 5 and 6c). The width over the motte ditch is about 220 feet, which is a very usual diameter for the smaller castles of the period. The little castles which were erected by William during his march round London are of about the same diameter. The "bailey," which is roughly rectangular, extends, with its ditch, about 150 feet to the north of the motte ditch, and the breadth, over the bailey ditches, is about 250 feet. This would seem to give an effective space within the bailey palisades of about 100 feet by 180. The original entrance was probably, as now, in the south-west corner of the bailey, adjoining the motte ditch

(Fig. 6*a*, also Fig. 8). The motte has been so much lowered that it is to-day impossible to determine either the original height of this feature or the area of the space which used to occupy its summit.

Such was the castle of Ruislip. It is interesting to note that there is only one other earthwork of this kind known to exist in this County, the castle of Geoffrey de Mandeville at South Mimms, on the north-eastern border. This was a much larger castle of later date, being of the time of the Anarchy, and has a very large bailey to accommodate the large garrisons popular at that terrible period in our history. Few of these earth and timber castles had a long life. Once abandoned or taken, they were easily destroyed by the simple process of throwing down the palisades. Fortunately for antiquaries, however, their earthworks often remain, for, even when the plough has levelled the ramparts of the bailey, the motte, too large a feature to be erased in this fashion, usually remains to show us where the Norman lord of the eleventh or twelfth century has built himself a castle.

The castle at South Mimms has remained in excellent preservation, but our Ruislip example has suffered badly from the deliberate alteration of the earthwork by its subsequent owners. These vicissitudes may be followed with the aid of the annexed plans (Fig. 6).

When in 1096 Ernulf de Hesdin, for the good of his immortal soul, gave to the monks of Bec his manor of "Rislepe," it meant, of course, that the day of the castle there was over. The men of peace would have no use for it. Some time after this, possibly not until 1149, when the monks of Bec founded a priory at Great Ogbourne in Wiltshire, a small priory was established at Ruislip, which was governed as a "cell" of the Wiltshire house. As there has been much romantic matter written concerning this priory, and the parish church of Ruislip has even been described as the "Priory Church," it might be as well to mention at this point that the cell

probably accommodated two monks, a senior who was called, *ex officio*, prior, and one companion monk, with whose assistance he farmed the manor lands. Their cell, with its tiny chapel, mentioned in an Extent of 1294,²¹ stood, in all probability, on the spot now covered by the lawn of the manor farmhouse. Everywhere beneath the turf are the foundations of thick flint walls, and Gothic tracery and other stonework is sometimes turned up. The present tenant of the farm, Mr. Ewer, has himself excavated some fifteen feet of the mediaeval boundary wall, which took the place of the Norman palisade, on the summit of the northern rampart of the one-time castle bailey.

It would appear to have been as a result of the occupation of the monks of Bec that the chief alteration to the original earthwork of Ernulf de Hesdin was effected. The "motte and bailey" earthwork plan would, of course, have been useless to the new tenants of the manor site. The motte, especially, would have been an obstruction rather than serving any useful purpose. They lowered the summit of this feature, therefore, and utilised the soil so obtained for the purpose of filling up the ditch between the motte and the bailey, thus providing themselves with a single large enclosure, instead of two smaller ones. By slightly recutting the east and west sides of the motte ditch so as to bring these into line with those of the bailey, they were thus able to turn what had been a motte and bailey castle into an egg-shaped moated site, as the ditches, cut, as they were, in the London Clay, soon became waterlogged (Fig. 6*b*). They were not, however, able to disguise the origin of their moat from the eyes of the archaeological investigator, as their alterations are still visible to-day as such. Thus, at the western side of the one-time motte, we can see the sloping sides of the original ditch (Fig. 8) with the straightened-out wet ditch at its foot. On the opposite side, the ditch has been moved in an outward direction, and the excavated earth has been thrown

outwards, instead of inwards, as would have been the case when the ditch was originally dug (Fig. 6c).

After the dissolution of the Priory in 1414, the manor of Ruislip passed into secular hands, eventually becoming the property of King's College, Cambridge. In Tudor days a new manor-house was erected on the site of the priory buildings, and this building, somewhat altered and added to, remains to us to-day. It was still surrounded by its moat until 1888, when the ditches surrounding the northern half of this, the one-time castle bailey, were filled in, the site of the northern ditch becoming part of a tennis court (Fig. 6c). The remains of the old rampart can still, however, be detected. (Fig. 9 shows this from the tennis court.)

There is yet another interesting earthwork connected with the manorial area. The portion of the ancient village enclosure forming the northern boundary of the site was utilised, probably by the monks, as a leat for their mill, the foundations of which were discovered a few years ago near where the earthwork crosses Bury Street. To effect this alteration another bank was thrown up on the outer edge of the existing ditch so as to keep in the water (see Fig. 4). This enormous bank is the best preserved of all the earthworks described in this paper, and an excellent view of it may be obtained from the bridge over the Pinn at Bury Street.

A word must be said concerning the subsequent history of the park. We have seen that the oval enclosure was abandoned, probably at the time of the Saxon invasion. A park existed, however, at the time of the Domesday survey in 1086, and was, moreover, still enclosed in 1436. The existence of part of the village earthwork and of the Norman castle within the area of the original oval seems definite proof that the park of Domesday must have occupied a new site. Eighteenth century maps show it as occupying the same district as the present wood known as Park Wood, and it might reasonably be supposed that this wood

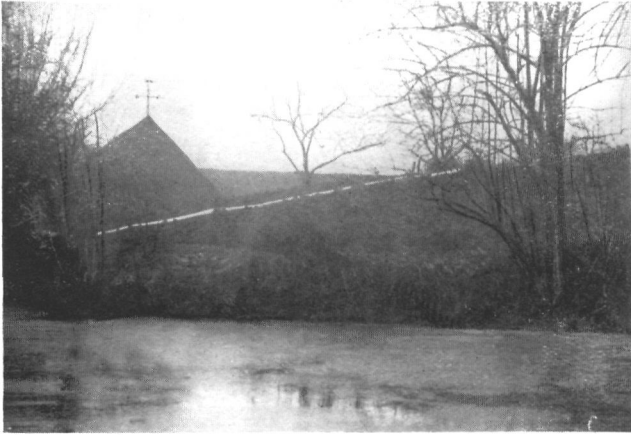


Fig 7. Silhouette of motte.



Fig. 8. View of entrance and motte ditch.



Fig. 9. Bailey bank from tennis court.

represents the site of the revived park of Ruislip. The eastern boundary can, indeed, actually be traced, as a point may be found where the oval enclosure is joined, just to the north of its eastern extremity, by a large, later, earthwork running northwards, parallel with Fore Street. I am indebted to Mr. John Saltmarsh, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, for kindly providing me with a copy of a survey of the college property in Ruislip in 1566, from which I have been able to work out, by comparing areas of fields, that the southern boundary of the park was the same as it is to-day. Roadside cultivation has obliterated the western boundary, and the northern has vanished beneath the waters of the reservoir of the Regent's Canal Company. The stream which feeds this may have been the limit of the park in this direction (Fig. 1c).

The last chapter in the history of the vicissitudes of the manor of Ruislip is perhaps the most pleasant of all to record. In 1932 King's College, Cambridge, gave to the village of Ruislip, for the perpetual enjoyment of its inhabitants, the ancient manorial site of the village as well as the beautiful stretch of woodland which marks the site of the mediaeval park. This most notable example of generosity has enabled some of the most interesting of Ruislip's antiquities to be preserved and, in all probability, the enthusiasm of the residents, reflected by that excellent Society, the Ruislip Association, will result in the careful exploration of the sites thus placed at their disposal. Already a movement is on foot to excavate the Roman remains, and possibly, the site of the priory. It is hoped to restore the old manor house and to convert it into a local museum. Thus the generosity of the College, supported by the undoubted local interest in Ruislip's antiquities may have results which will make that village an example to others in our County, the traditions of which are so frequently neglected by those who dwell therein.

In conclusion, I have to record my thanks to many

who have assisted me in the compilation of this paper. Some have already been cited, but I must mention also our Chairman, Mr. Harold Sands, F.S.A., who has helped me with the castle problem and also lent me some of the slides with the aid of which I have been able to compare the Ruislip earthwork with others in the country. My gratitude is due to those gentlemen of the Ruislip Association who have assisted me in the preparation of the photographs, and the slides made from them by Mr. Luscombe Toms. In particular I have to thank Mr. J. H. A. Whitehouse for the aerial views, taken specially for this paper. These and the other Ruislip photographs are all the property of the Association and have been kindly lent to me for this occasion by that Society, to the enthusiasm of whose committee for the exploration of their local antiquities the preparation of the material for this paper was originally due.

NOTES.

¹ *Middlesex in British, Roman and Saxon Times*, by Montagu Sharpe, 1919, pp. 14, 74, 82, 145, 158-9.

² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³ These remains were originally discovered as a result of building operations, subsequent aerial photographs exposing something of the plan, traces of which may be detected by studying Fig. 5.

It is interesting to note that a Roman brick appears among the flint facing of the east wall of the present church, a few feet from the ground.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 82.

⁵ It is interesting to note, in this connection, the prevalence of the title "Street" in Ruislip road names, such as Bury Street, Joel Street, Cheney Street. "Street" is supposed to denote an ancient paved road.

⁶ Bury Street is the road which may be seen curving up the right-hand side of the photograph, the western limit of the oval enclosure coming rather above the centre of the picture.

⁷ *Middlesex in British, Roman and Saxon Times*, by Montagu Sharpe, Chapter IX.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁹ *Ibid.*, see illustrations of *botontini*, p. 70.

¹⁰ There is evidence from the state of the mound that it has been excavated at some time, but as to when this was done, by whom, and what was found, there is no record.

¹¹ At the time of going to press, excavation is commencing, and a considerable length of a curved wall of good flintwork, two feet or more thick, has already been exposed. Exploration is to continue under the auspices of the Ruislip Association.

¹² Fortifying the village after the fashion of a "burh." Cf. Bury Street.

¹³ In the aerial photograph, Fig. 4, a portion of the oval enclosure, water-logged, may be seen in the middle distance running horizontally across the picture.

¹⁴ This portion of the earthwork is very clearly seen in the aerial photo, Fig. 2, sweeping across the centre of the picture and cutting the line of Bury Street at the western limit of its curve.

¹⁵ Ickenham Road is the lowermost road on the aerial photograph, Fig. 3. The effect of the curvature on this is spoilt by the foreshortening effect of the aerial view.

¹⁶ "The Conqueror's Footsteps in Domesday," by F. Baring. *English Historical Review*, 1898.

¹⁷ For much information concerning the mysterious Ernulf, consult a paper in Vol. VI of the *Herald and Genealogist*.

¹⁸ *The Foundations of England*, by Sir J. H. Ramsay, Vol. II, p. 374.

¹⁹ The white lines in some of the photographs are wide tape-lines laid at right-angles to the line of earthwork to show up its section.

²⁰ Donat. MS. Brit. Mus. Addit. MS. 6164.