



**RUSHMERE CHURCH HALL**

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**RUSHMERE  
ST. ANDREW**

**Our Village  
Past and Present**

*By* T. CHEVALLIER

**PRICE - SIXPENCE**  
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## RUSHMERE ST. ANDREW

### OUR VILLAGE, PAST AND PRESENT



THE picturesque name of our village, Rushmere (Riscemara, from Saxon risc = a reed and mara = a lake, as it is spelt in Domesday Book), seems to-day to have little justification, for where are the rush-fringed pools which in Saxon times made it most fitting?

Forty years since, rushes grew in the small pond in the valley on the heath and it is probable that over a thousand years ago the water draining the slopes and running down from the high land above what is now the Woodbridge Road may have formed meres there.

The Bixley ponds, once used as duck decoys and now part of the Ipswich Golf Club Estate, are said to account for the name but as Bixley is mentioned apart from Rushmere in Domesday Book and the ponds are about two miles from Rushmere village, the former theory seems credible.

On the north, Rushmere includes the low meadows in the valley of the little river Finn, which forms part of the boundary between Rushmere and Tuddenham, where the soil is light.

As the ground rises some 150 feet to the southward, it becomes heavier and a sheet of boulder clay stretches to about 150 yards south of the Rushmere Road and almost to Humberdoucey Lane on the west. The rest of the soil to the south and west is lighter, as the extensive heaths and the sand and gravel pits worked near the Playford Road and also near the western limits of the parish testify. Brickearth and glacial loam occurring near the Kesgrave boundary were used for brickmaking in the last century.

All these deposits are Pleistocene but the differences of character in the geography of Rushmere make for variety in the plant, bird and beast life.

To take the plant life first : willows are found in the Finn valley and watercresses used to grow in the ditches where rushes still abound. Of smaller plants, wild mignonette (*reseda lutea*) has been discovered near the railway line there.

On the heavy land, the number of well-grown trees is noteworthy : elms, beeches, oaks, chestnuts and limes, etc. Mistletoe used to be parasitic upon one of the limes.

Among the less common field flowers, the following have been found : chicory (*cichorium intybus*), great broomrape (*orobanche major*) and musk mallow (*malva moschata*).

The heathland has its own peculiar plants, conspicuously gorse, bracken and heather, and milkwort (*polygala vulgaris*), hare's foot clover (*trifolium arvense*) and the round-headed rampion (*phyteuma orbiculare*) have also been discovered.

Eighty-nine species of birds have been noted. In winter wild duck, heron, snipe and green sandpiper, etc., may be seen in the low meadows. The woodlands are frequented by the various warblers and on the heath, whinchats, stonechats, skylarks and meadow pipits are numerous, while wheatears may occasionally be observed. The cuckoo's egg has been found in the nest of wagtail, hedge-sparrow and meadow pipit.

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In the Finn and ditches near it, the water vole has its home ; fieldmice, shrewmice, moles, stoats, weasels, hedgehogs, rabbits and hares dwell in the fields. The red squirrel has disappeared within late years, probably owing to the increase of building. The slowworm is commonly found in the churchyard.

The moths and butterflies are those common to the rest of Suffolk, the rarest of the latter being the Clouded Yellow (*colias hyale*), seen on two occasions in the hot summer of 1928, and perhaps of the former the " Figure of Eighty " (*cymatophora ocularis*).

Rushmere parish may be taken as divided roughly into three parts, viz. : the village proper, Rushmere St. Andrew, consisting of the church, of the " Street " with its chapel, and of outlying farms and houses ; the Bixley neighbourhood, and Rushmere, Ipswich, which was incorporated in the Borough in 1902.

Bixley once had its own church as a former resident tells me, but it is not mentioned in Domesday Book and no trace remains.

Rushmere Church, dedicated to St. Andrew, reminds us of our long history, for a church estate here is recorded in Domesday, and the beautiful south doorway with its twisted pillars and chevron mouldings suggests that there was a building here in Norman times.

Whatever the outward appearance of the church in the Middle Ages, it must have been bright within when the fresco of St. Christopher (which has long since disappeared from the north wall) was fresh, and pictures and images of the saints gave it colour. Bequests show that such images existed. Margaret Benab willed in 1462, that a cloth be placed " before the Image of St. Margaret," and in 1476, Robert Brewster left a coomb of malt and half a coomb of corn to " St. Mary's light," while Robert Cook, in 1523, desired his executors to " make a Tabernacle to place the Image of Our Lady in at their discretion."

In the early sixteenth century, the present tower was built. Richard Canning, Vicar from 1734-56, has copied into one of the Church Registers the will of Catherine Cadye, 1521, part of which is as follows :—

" If the Parishoners of Rushmere be disposed to make new their Steeple in like Fashion, Bigness and Workmanship as is the Steeple of Tuddenham Then I will that my Executors in discharging fulfilling and performing my Husband William Cadye's Will bear all the costs of the Masons' Wages so that the said Parishoners find Stuff Meat and Drink for the said Masons."

William Cadye was a kinsman of Wolsey. Catherine Cadye also directed that certain moneys payable to her by her son-in-law, Robert Cook should be " disposed towards making the said Steeple."

That there were once numerous pictures in the church is evident, for the notorious William Dowsing wrote in his Journal for January 27th, 1643, " We brake down the Pictures of the 7 Deadly Sins, and the Holy Lamb with a cross upon it, and 15 other superstitious Pictures."

An etching of the church from the south side, made by Henry Davy in 1842, shows how it must have appeared before the " restoration " in 1861.

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The tower with its western doorway, with the arms of the Cadyes engraved upon one of the spandrels, stands to-day as it was in 1842, except that a west window has been made, and emblems of the Evangelists and pinnacles have been added to the battlements, and clock-dials placed on the west and south sides. The removal of the seventeenth century porch was no great loss for the Norman doorway, with its fine oak door, makes a dignified entrance. (Incidentally, a small so-called Mass Dial, cut into the stonework of this doorway, may be mentioned.)

Lancet windows in the Early English style replaced the old Perpendicular ones and the Chancel was rebuilt by the 2nd Marquis of Bristol, while a new north aisle was added.

Some still remember the gallery of 1838 and the box-pews, which were all removed in 1861. Fifteenth century carvings are reproduced on some of the modern benches. Specially interesting are the angels carved upon two benches near the south door as they hold models of the tower and of the chancel, and the arms of the respective benefactors, the Cadyes and the Marquis of Bristol, are shown on the finials.

The font and the carvings on the pulpit and north wall of the chancel are all modern.

Of the bells, three were cast about 1450 and two in 1675.

The fine yew hedge surrounding the churchyard dates from 1856.

The list of Vicars shows that the first recorded was Alexander Trapet, 1304. Till after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the vicarage was impropriated to Trinity Monastery, Ipswich. There is a copy in the Church Register of the Latin deed by which it was granted by Henry VIII. to a certain Doctor Augustinus de Augustinis. To-day, the Marquis of Bristol is the patron.

1582 is the earliest date in the Church Registers, but as the original Register was "very ill-written and obscured by age," Vicar Canning made the present copy.

To the north-west of the church is Rushmere Hall, standing on the site of a moated building, itself very old in part with king posts in certain rooms.

Olde House, formerly Heath Farm, and Hill House Farm may date from the seventeenth century.

Rushmere Mill, the picturesque sails of which have lately been removed, is Dutch and about 150 years old. It stands on land once called Cherry Pightle.

In the grounds of "Pinetoft" there are ruins said to be from Wolsey's ill-fated College in Ipswich.

"The Limes," a modern building, is so-called from its fine trees. Tradition says that these were planted by the poet, Milton, but he is apparently confused with his brother, Christopher, who certainly lived in Rushmere when he became Deputy Recorder of Ipswich in 1674, the year of the poet's death. His house stood on a different site from that occupied by the present building, and was called "The White House," the name given it in Bryant's Map of 1821.

Rushmere Heath has for centuries been considered common land by the villagers and traditions of the nineteenth century show that from time immemorial they must have grazed their cattle, killed game or cut turf or whin upon it.

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The fact that it was used as a drill ground by the soldiery during the Napoleonic Wars has had special consequences, but as far back as Tudor times the territorials of the day were trained there. Great feasting used then to take place. In 1595, so much wine and food were supplied to the Muster Master by the Greyhound Inn, presumably the predecessor of our present Inn, "The Garland," lately called "The Greyhound," that the Burgesses of Ipswich grumbled that more was spent on food than on gunpowder !

It was in 1813 that about 10,000 men were reviewed on the heath by Lord Paget. The same year the War Office paid to the Vicar, the Rev. J. Edge, £227 for the use of the heath in the past.

By 1819 the sum had accumulated through investments and further payments to over £740. The Vicar and Churchwarden then applied to the famous Counsel, Lancelot Shadwell, to know how to distribute it. "As every inhabitant had a right of unlimited feed and also unlimited fuel, the money must be regularly parted," was the decision and it was accordingly obeyed.

This was the first occasion of the distribution of heath money, now a yearly event for all occupiers in Rushmere, as the records in the "Book of the Commoners" show.

During the last century there were many quarrels between the Commoners and the Lord of the Manor, the Marquis of Bristol, over their respective rights.

When attempts were made by the Stewards of the Manor to dig for coprolite on the heath, the Commoners filled in the holes, and they deliberately disobeyed orders forbidding the removal of sand from certain pits. In 1861, after they had "proved custom," many asserting that they had taken sand from the pit for forty, fifty, or sixty years, a tablet recording Lancelot Shadwell's judgment was affixed to cottages in the Street as a lasting witness to their rights. It bears the signature of N. Ablitt who was the people's champion at this time.

Disputes in the eighties over the claims of the Lord of the Manor that the heath was waste of his manor led to legal action on his part when his notice boards warning trespassers were thrown down by the Commoners.

At the Special Session held by the Woodbridge Bench, the Marquis' representative withdrew the case, but refused to allow the Commoners' claims. This is still considered a victory by the latter, witness the words of a Women's Institute member, "they all went in waggons trimmed up with whin blossom lent by the farmers," and afterwards they "got the day and had a joyful celebration at night in the village."

The heath has happy associations to-day as there are golf links there and football is played on the old drill ground, but in the eighteenth century the gibbet stood above the slopes on the Ipswich side of the valley.

The tradition that "the last witch was burnt on Rushmere Heath" must refer to Margery Beddingfield, who was strangled and burnt in 1763, for persuading a servant, Richard Ringe, to murder her husband, and was the last woman to die there.

Some people still remember the stories told by their great grandparents of executions and how men were hanged for stealing.

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Of the field-names found in Rushmere, "Pope's Field," "Norman's Hill," "Cook's Hill" and possibly "Rudd's" may recall former owners. "Tythe Barn Field" commemorates a building now forgotten: "Clappets" is a corruption of "clay-pits," "Foxes" may recall those animals and "Shepherds' Bottoms" suggests sheep-runs, but "Buffins," "Plusters," "Gobbits," "Mangers" and "Cranky Hill" seem inexplicable.

The Toll Bar, still remembered on the high road near the Kesgrave boundary, gives its name to "Toll Gate Lane." "Humberdoucey" may be derived from the French "ombre douce," sweet shade, on account of its trees, but the origin of "Timbers" and "Lamage" Lanes is obscure.

Till recently a post remained standing on land opposite the Hall, the last of the fencing of the village "pound."

The most considerable roadside ponds are "Potash" and "Smugglers," the latter connected with the doings of a certain "Rummy Rush."

Some stories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have become traditional. One was given me as follows:—

"A man stole a sheep and when the constables went in the evening to search the house, he had sent his wife and baby to Tuddenham and put the sheep in the baby's cradle and was rocking it when they went to search for it. He told them they might go anywhere as long as they didn't touch the cradle so they went all over the house and never found the sheep."

In 1885, tales of Parmenter of the White House were repeated to Mr. R. L. Everett. He was considered the "great man" of the village, and when he came late to church every one rose, or went out till he was seated. One related how he wanted to enclose a piece of land, thought to be that now called "New Delight," in opposition to the villagers. He carried the case into Court at Bury, and though the decision given was that it was a "free common," he hurried to Rushmere to try to make the people believe that he had been successful, riding about the village swinging his stick and crying out that it was a free common.

Mr. N. Ablitt, already mentioned, was an eccentric character. In the words of a member of the Women's Institute, "He had his coffin made from a tree cut down in his grounds and laid in it and had his daughters come and see how he looked. He kept his coffin hung up in his barn till he died and was buried in it."

The same informant says that the villagers used "to keep Whitsuntide in the old days. They used to take their families and have country dances at the Falcon Inn, and after the harvest they used to have a harvest supper at Rushmere Hall, where their wives and families used to go."

Another member recalls "rent suppers." Such festivities belong to the past and the social side of village life is now promoted by the Men's Club and Women's Institute. Their Village Hall, opened in 1921, is the centre for their activities and those of Scouts and Guides.

The only crafts still carried on in the village are the blacksmith's and the carpenter's for the lads who do not find work on the land or the golf links, seek it in Ipswich.

Contact with the town has probably influenced our forms of speech and many words

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and expressions are dying out. A few remain. "Dag" meaning "dew," "dorzelled" (dazed) and "whully stammed" (utterly dumbfounded) are still used.

The pitne or pitman means "the smallest" (of a litter of pigs, for instance) and a young girl has been known to declare on a winter's day that she felt "like a from ranny" (frozen shrewmouse)

"Duzzy" may be used in annoyance as in "a duzzy old thing." "Together" can be tacked on to a sentence, e.g., "I'm sorry together!" The word "do" is commonly used for "or else."

The plural form "en" occurs in "neasen" (nests) and "housen" (houses).

"To squander" means "to wander" and the verb "fare" is occasionally used.

There is still a tendency to employ strong forms in the past tense, e.g., "I hew" (not hoed), "I shew" (not showed), "I wed" (not weeded).

Many surnames found in the Church Registers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have disappeared: Bacon, Day, Parmenter, Bumpstead, Grimsey and Walford, to mention but a few.

The following are names of families living in Rushmere to-day, of which the first three are of French origin:—

Beaumont, Boast, Chevallier, Bye, \*Cooper, \*Cook, Crapnell, Everett, \*Farrow, Fisk, Goodchild, Goodwin, \*Green, Grimwood, Howard, Jay, \*Keeble, \*King, Mann, Mason, Meller, \*Naunton, Potter, \*Rush, \*Scarlett, Spurling and Webb.

Those marked with an asterisk occur in the Church Registers for the eighteenth century.

Rushmere played its part in the Great War, and the names of thirty-nine men who fell are engraved upon the War Memorial. In several air raids bombs were dropped in the fields, but happily most failed to explode.

Although Rushmere folk may be unaware of their history they are attached to their village and proud of its beauties. They feel that they have a common life as villagers and as this spirit of fellowship is shown towards others who come to make their homes here, the corporate life should be strengthened while the old independence of character is preserved.

T. CHEVALLIER, 1930.