

## Rushmere St Andrew. (The Parish with a difference)

by W. Tye.

It is of the old Ecclesiastical Parish I write and not only the Civil parish as we know it today. Under the Local Government Act of 1894 that part of the Parish of Rushmere St. Andrew (approximately the part situated within the ancient boundary, known as 'The Liberty Line') was created a separate Parish by the name of Rushmere, whilst the remainder retained its former name of Rushmere St. Andrew. (The Civil Parish of Rushmere disappeared in 1903, when Ipswich C.P., comprising the whole of Ipswich CB, was created.) The actual transference of this area, approximately 625 acres, including 22.1 acres of common land, was authorised under the East Suffolk Review Order of 1934 and the Ipswich Alteration of Boundary Order of 1952. As a result of these changes, and a minor one in St. Augustine's Parish, the original Parish of Rushmere St. Andrew was reduced, approximately, from 2142 to 1517 acres (in St. Augustine's 6 acres were involved.)

Rushmere St. Andrew, which has so often been described as a small scattered village, with a few hundred souls and a number of neat houses, is now a thriving, growing Parish, situated on high ground, about two miles N.E. of Ipswich. With its excellent situation, it has for long been the envy of its neighbours and the pride of its natives who realise that Rushmere, with its exhilarating air and close proximity to Ipswich, is a Parish where many choose to live and more still to play. And neither is the Parish lacking in scenery, the view over the Heath and the Valley Pond on a summer's day, when fleecy clouds race across the sky, when larks sing overhead and the gorse is in full bloom, is one not likely to be forgotten. Rushmere Road too, with its stately houses and well laid out gardens, its well designed villas, its dignified church and tall yew hedges, and last of all the quaint old 'street', complete with farmstead, shop, chapel, pond and smithy, make a scene unsurpassed in any Suffolk village. And should one look for unspoiled country, there is that delectable spot, known as 'The Alder Carr', situated partly in Playford and partly in Rushmere. This can be found at the end of a meandering lane, worn deep by time and erosion, and there, at its end one finds a quiet, peaceful valley, through which the narrow winding Finn finds its way to Martlesham Creek. Alongside its banks, where meadow-sweet and the green lush pasture grow, cattle feed in contentment. Overlooking it all is a dense plantation, where rooks by the hundred make their home, and underneath which the bluebells grow. The whole scene is restful and satisfying. A passing train makes the only jarring sound. In ancient times this Rushmere part of 'The Alder Carr' was known as the 'Freelands', which was sold to the Railway Authorities when the line was made. Should Rushmere have ever produced a Constable 'The Alder Carr' would have been better known.

Rushmere has a pleasant name, in Saxon times it was known as 'Rysemera', 'Ryse' meaning a reed and 'Mara' a lake. Today the parish has little justification for its name, for with the exception of 'The Alder Carr' and the Mill Stream, one can walk the parish through and not see a rush. Old inhabitants, however, say they can remember rushes growing on the fringe of the Valley Pond in the days when it took most of the surplus water from the Humber Doucy Lane. Others say the parish was named after the rushes that grew in profusion near the Bixley Decoy Ponds. But this is unlikely for Bixley in the olden days was a separate parish. The most feasible explanation comes from Albert Catling, formerly a groom to Mr. Robert Lacey Everitt, M.P., who said the parish was named after the rushes and mires that abounded in the fields situated between the Hall and 'Little Roundwood', the original home of Nat. Ablitt. The old tithe map of 1846 seems to support this view, in that two fields in that district are respectively named 'Rushmere Field' and 'Rushmere Long Field'. Incidentally, these mires were filled in some 70 years ago by Mr. Benjamin King of Hall Farm.

Another interesting feature of Rushmere is its extreme variety in soil, largely determined by varied outcrops of geological strata at different levels. Thus we find the heavy sticky land between the Tuddenham border and the church, where big trees, tall hedges and good crops abound. Then, between the 'Street' and the main Woodbridge Road, the land is lighter but eminently suitable for playing fields. East of the main road lay the Heath and the Lattice lands, where the soil is stony and sandy and of but little use for cultivation. Between the Heath and the Mill Stream the soil is extremely mixed, stony, light, stiff and boggy. Here are a few names of old Rushmere fields, taken from the old Tithe Map of 1846, which clearly indicate variety:- 'Crop Walk', 'New Delight', 'Dog House', 'Nonesuch', 'Claypits', 'Stable Field' and 'Pickpocket'.

It was in the more fertile part of the parish, near Bent Lane, that John Cobbold planted an eight acre hop garden, in which he built a fourteen roomed beer house, complete with bar, lodging rooms, dance floor and stables. From all accounts, this house, with its home brewed beer, and general accommodation was very popular with farmers, who often stayed there the night, on return from the Ipswich market. Quite recently this old beer house was pulled down to make room for a garage.

Just over a stone's throw from the Hop Garden was John Pell's and Sons brick kilns, where up to the eighties they made their well known white bricks. The clay pits, now overgrown covered some ten acres of ground, stretching over the boundary to the nearby Kiln Farm of Playford. The clay was ground in an ancient pug mill, drawn by a pony. Old inhabitants in the district, including the late Mr. Herman Biddle of Playford, often claimed that the white bricks of Rushmere were exported to America, and actually used in the building of the White House, Washington. After making close enquiries however, both here and in America, I regret to say that this proud claim is entirely without foundation. In fact, the White House is not built of bricks at all but of white stone.

Although of but little value agriculturally, the common, with its fuel, gravel, grazing and facilities for military manoeuvres, was for long a great asset to the people of Rushmere. Owing however to vast social and economic changes in the late Victorian times these facilities gradually lost their value. For all that the Common itself did not lose in either value or usefulness, although of an entirely different kind, viz. the provision of a vast open space, with potential facilities for recreation and games, for the local inhabitants and the ever growing population on its southern borders. Hence the letting of the heath to the Ipswich Golf Club in 1894, to the Rushmere Club in 1927 and the more recent layout of football pitches, etc, for the local youths. Incidentally, every householder residing in the Ecclesiastical Parish of Rushmere still ranks as a commoner.

The population of Rushmere St. Andrew changed but little in the last century, varying from time to time between three and seven hundred. I am indebted to the Registrar General for the census details of the parish since 1801. The rapid increases during the present century clearly indicate the popularity of the parish as a residential area:-

Census	Rushmere Parish (persons)	Part of Rushmere inside Ipswich borough
1801	287	n/a
1811	360	n/a
1821	437	n/a
1831	568	n/a
1841	864	223
1851	678	254
1861	678	240
1871	631	238
1881	630	229
1891	668	252

	Rushmere St. Andrew Civil P.	Rushmere Civil P.	Rushmere St. Andrew Ecclesiastical P.
1901 (a)	427 - 1523 acres	601 - 663 acres	n/a
1911	463	(b)	1028
1921	437		1682
1931	1133	(c)	2779
1951	1515 - 1517 acres (d)		8004

(a) Rushmere St. Andrew (C.P.) created out of Rural part of Rushmere Civil Parish (op. day 1894)

(b) Rushmere C.P. amalgamated with other CPs in Ipswich C.B. into Ipswich CP (op. day 25. 3. 1905)

(c) Part of Rushmere St. Andrew (EP) transferred to Ipswich St. Augustines E.P. (Op. day 14. 2.1928) (1921 pop.12).

(d) Part of Rushmere St. Andrew (CP) 6 acres transferred to Ipswich CB + CP (op. day 41 {sic}.2.1928)

The boundary line between Rushmere St. Andrew and the Borough is now definitely fixed and recognized. But this was not always so. Before the days of the Ordnance maps, difficulties often arose over the boundary between Rushmere St. Andrew and St. Helens. This was aggravated by the fact that persons living just beyond the border were inclined to claim "Heath Money", to which they were not entitled. Here is an account of how boundary difficulties were settled in 1843 (taken from the Rushmere Vestry Book). The officials concerned met on the spot, followed a specially prepared Map and 'beat the bounds'. They decided:- that the boundary ran from an ash tree on the N.E. side of the road, leading from Ipswich to Brightwell, by the fence of the first field belonging to Sir Phillip Brook and in the occupation of John Stannard. Then along the west fence of that field, which lies in Rushmere, and straight from the North corner of that field to the N.E. corner of Mr. Cobbold's cottage and buildings in Rushmere, and then in a straight line across the Lattice Lands of Mr. Ablitt to the large oak tree adjoining the part which is in the Cauldwell Hall land." All the same boundaries are particularly delineated on the map of the parish lately made by Mr. Ellis and show by a red ink mark on the said map.

The document was duly signed by the respective Vicars, Church Wardens and Overseers of the Parishes of Rushmere St. Andrew and St. Helens.

What tremendous changes have occurred along the Southern borders of Rushmere since the turn of the century. Old inhabitants still talk of the time when they could walk from the Roundwood Estates, along Cherry Tree Lane, past the Britannia Inn, and over the road to Lattice Barn, down by Lattice Lane by Smith's windmill then on to Dawson's windmill on the Foxhall Road, and scarcely see a soul, except a few inmates from the Workhouse and the Asylum. Fields in which old Rushmerians had daily toiled and known so intimately, are now intersected by the Ipswich by pass, already built alongside, crossed by Avenues and Streets, complete with Council houses, villas, shops and schools, with here and there a large open space used as an allotment. Old landmarks such as 'the boundary stakes', the windmills, the Roundwood Polo Park, the Lattice Barn and, last of all, the Pinetoft and Old Hall, with its trees and moat, they have all disappeared. The "Trafalgar Walk" too, once a part of the Common, has gone; now a pleasant building estate, situated between the Heath Road and the Golf House.

As for the changes in the County part of the old Parish, these have not been so drastic, building being mainly confined to the roads and fringes of the Common. In consequence, one can still enjoy that wide open view over the Heath, as seen from Bixley Hall, stretching over Woodbridge Road, and the trees that enshroud the Church and the 'Street'. For the preservation of this scene, we are indebted to

the Commoners of the last century, and in more recent times to the local Planning Authority, but for whom, the Common and its precincts might well have been built over, thereby destroying the main characteristics of the old parish. Furthermore, it is indeed fortunate that several Ipswich industrial firms, and the local Rugby Club, have recently acquired and laid out spacious playing fields in the parish, a sure acknowledgement of suitability of soil, exhilarating air and accessibility. These sites, along with the common and the vicarage meadow, now form an integral part of the Green Belt, an idea long envisaged by Mr. T. B. Oxenbury, the County Planning Officer of the East Suffolk County Council, before the expression was statutorily defined. Anyhow, whatever the future, it is hoped that the Commoners, and all those in authority, will continue to preserve the Heath and the playing fields as open spaces and places of recreation.

The recent purchase of the Heath by the Commoner's Committee, a transaction unique in the annals of common lands, augurs well for the future. All concerned are indebted to the Chairman, Hugh Law but for whose foresight and timely action, the opportunity for ownership might have been lost to the commoners for all time.

The total acreage of common land and private playing fields in Rushmere St. Andrew today are:-

a. The Heath (Common)	168.28 acres
b. Ransomes and Rapier	13.9
c. Mann Eggerton	3.9
d. Cranes	14.66
e. Fisons	11.26
f. Ipswich Rugby Club	10.15
g. William Brown Ltd.	6
h. The Vicarage Meadow	5.62
Total	233.79

Finally it is interesting to note there are still families living in Rushmere bearing names of bygone times, eg. Farrow, Everett, King, Mann, Clarke, Jordan, Potter, Rush, Dawson, Salmon, Catling and Foulger.

W. Tye