

## Mapping and Books on Moor Park – by Alan Jamieson

Maps are treasure - part of the archive of history - and Moor Park is no exception. However, maps of Moor Park are few - rare objects indeed. After the 'new' mansion, which is now Moor Park Golf Club, was built 300 years ago, the aristocratic owners - the Russells, Bedfords, Lord Anson and Pembrokes - sadly did not publish maps of their huge estate. They probably produced crude estate maps but they have not survived. .

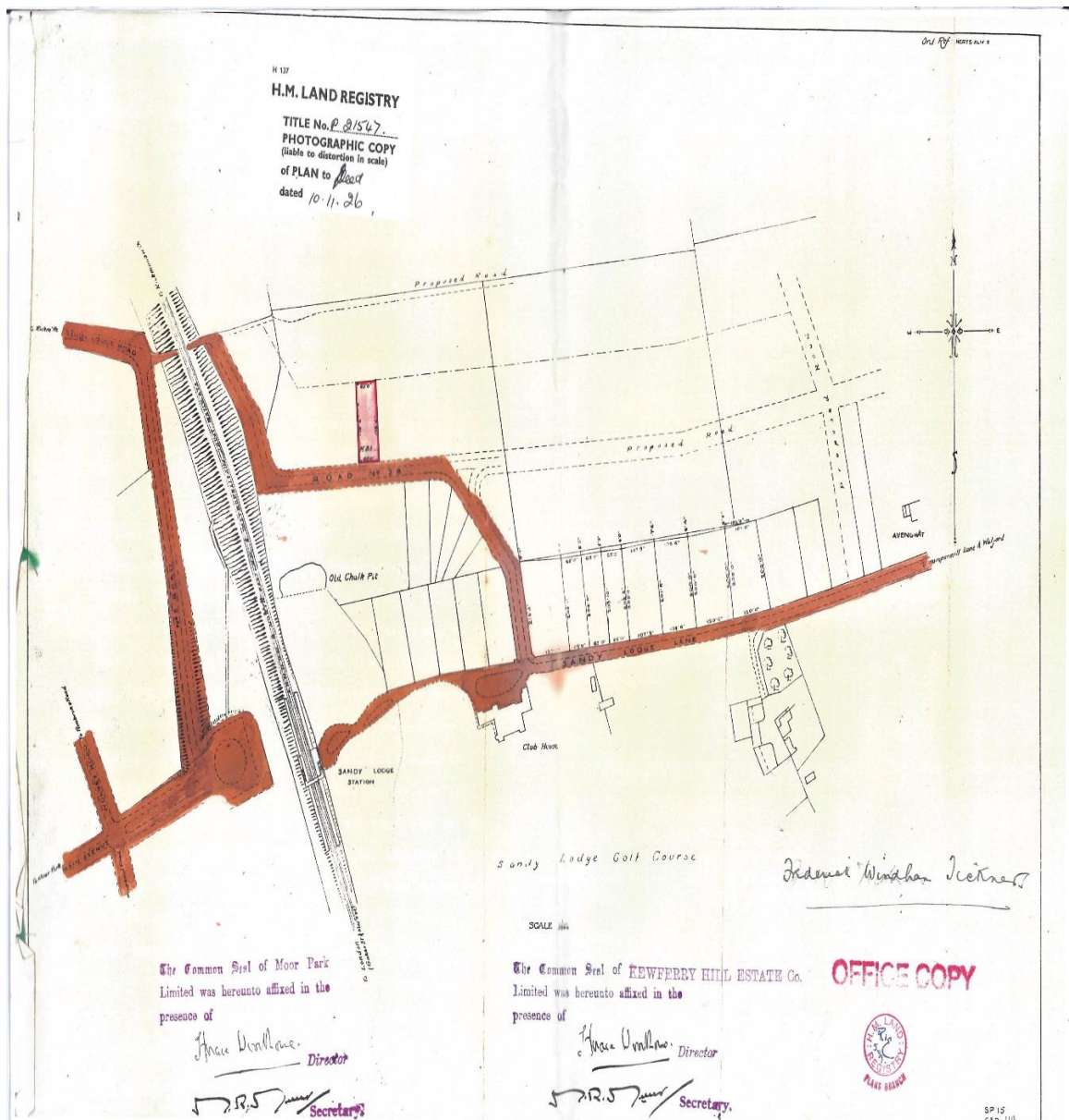
Maps of Moor Park before and after the purchase of the mansion and its vast estate by Lord Leverhulme are rare. So rare that any surviving maps are precious items. All we have in the years when the wealthy Grosvenor-Ebury family owned the mansion (from 1828 to 1920) is the sales brochure with drawings - and a map - showing the site of the mansion surrounded by its 3000 acres of a deer park, farms and woodlands stretching as far as Hampermill Lane.

In 1919 Lord Ebury put the whole of his estate up for sale with the agents, Knight, Frank and Rutley producing a detailed book of the mansion, ten farms, two public houses, the 'Roughs' shooting estate (now Eastbury Farm's houses), a 400-acre deer park and 240 acres of woodland. Accompanying the brochure is a map - this is the treasure, the map. Sandy Lodge Station is named and there is a Tolpits Cottage and Batchworth House, the home of Lady Ebury after the sale of the mansion. But, of course, there are no roads or houses. A path leading from the mansion to the railway station is marked: the track was for carriages taking Lord Ebury's golfing friends to Sandy Lodge Station. This path later became Main Avenue.

The dramatic revolution for Moor Park came in 1920 when Lord Leverhulme, who had bought the whole estate, began his 'development' programme. Lord Leverhulme set up two companies to run the mansion as a country club for golf and tennis and Moor Park Limited to sell plots to the east of the mansion for houses and roads. The first roads to be laid were Sandy Lodge Road, Main Avenue and Sandy Lodge Lane, with house plots identified and marked on maps to show their positions and access. Moor Park Limited stipulated that the 'parkland' aspect of the estate should be a requirement with open frontages, no front fences, grassy verges and substantial houses. An illustration on the Moor Park 1958 website shows a 1920s design for a grand house on Main Avenue - the company hoped this would set a pattern for other developers and builders. Which brings us to our map treasure.

We now have another map - or rather a 'plot illustration'. Mrs Arran Elkeles of Askew Road has donated a 'plot map' with a date - 10 November 1926 - to Moor Park 1958 and the company is grateful for this gift. The documents concern the sale by Moor Park Limited for £2,100 to a Frederick Windham Tickner of a plot on 'Road 28' (now Askew Road), with 'a dwelling house'. In the 1920s when a plot was sold and a house was planned the architect often added a drawing. Rarely was there a map. But we do have one here. There are few named roads: Sandy Lodge Station is named (it became Moor Park Station in 1950). 'Club House' also appears - it is Sandy Lodge clubhouse with its adjacent golf course. Along Sandy Lodge Lane are the dimensions of plots but without any houses on them.

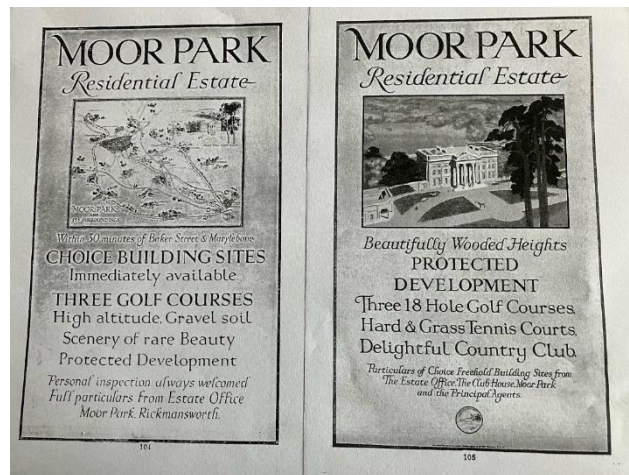
The documents or deeds for your house may have survived too. Maps and diagrams such as these occasionally accompanied the deeds and present-day owners of Moor Park's houses might find similar documents within their house deeds for purchases of plots and land in the 1920s and 1930s. There could well be treasures such as these hidden away. Detective work might discover an ancient map of your own plot or house. Your own investigations might uncover another treasure. Who knows?



Maps are important documents in the history of Moor Park - but so too are books. The earliest histories are about the Mansion because until the 1920s the present Estate was parkland and woods, dotted with farms. The aristocratic owners of the Mansion had for centuries used their parkland to chase deer, foxes and rabbits - the dead ones taken back to the Mansion to be cooked for dinner.

Most books on the history of the Mansion are out of print, secured on the shelves of reference libraries, although copies do survive in a few private collections. The earliest book of any quality is *Moor Park* by Robert Bayne, then a preacher at the Baptist Church in Rickmansworth, published in 1871. Bayne dedicated his book to Lord Ebury, at that time the owner of the Mansion and its estate and a generous benefactor to Rickmansworth - his name lives on as Ebury Road and Ebury Hall. Bayne's book describes the house and the owners when they lived in the first Mansion, placed as it was then in fields now part of the playing fields of Merchant Taylors' School. The owners were very grand - earls such as Russell, Bedford, Ormonde, Oxford, Pembroke and Monmouth, plus Cardinal Wolsey, famous in their time and now the names of Moor Park's estate roads.

Another vital book in the Moor Park story was written and published in 1989 by Martyn Pedrick who then lived in Sandy Lodge Road, It is a massive tome, describing again the Mansion's previous owners, plus a detailed description of the present-day house, built in the 1730s by another owner, Benjamin Styles, who employed a famous architect, Sir James Thornhill to design it, aided by Italian artists who decorated its rooms. Pedrick's heavyweight book, with the title of *Moor Park, the Grosvenor Legacy*, contains information, drawings and pictures of the Mansion and estate when it came up for auction in 1919, shortly after the whole area was bought by Lord Leverhulme. The shrewd businessman, whose commercial interests live on in Unilever, saw a profitable opportunity. He set up a company to sell plots for houses and so Moor Park Estate's development was born, with the first substantial houses "with a garage and spacious verandah" offered in a 1924 sales brochure at an attractive price of £3200.



Other books might be mentioned here: *A Series of Photographs of Moor Park* by Alvin Langdon Coburn, 1915 and *The History of Moor Park* by Hilary E. Armitage, 1964. Metro-land is described in *London's Metro-Land* by Alan A. Jackson, 2006. In recent times, Moor Park Golf Club has published booklets on its history. *Moor Park Mansion* by Susan Bennett can be obtained from the Golf Club, as can *Moor Park and the Battle of Arnhem 1944* - an account of how the air assault was planned by officers stationed, residing, and working in the 'Arnhem Room' and elsewhere.

Published in 2025, a new book, *Fifty Buildings in Rickmansworth, Croxley Green and Chorleywood* - written by Alan Jamieson and with over 100 colour illustrations - became the latest book on local history. It contains sections on Moor Park Mansion and the Estate: copies can be bought at local bookshops, from the publishers, Amberley Publishing, or through the Moor Park 1958 office. Moor Park 1958 has published its own booklet on the history of the Estate: copies are available free to members and a copy is enclosed in the Welcome Pack given to new residents.

