

SOUTHALL LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NUMBER FOUR

APRIL 1963

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IN our school days, cribbing was almost a capital offence and could be followed by even expulsion, but strangely, in later life, school time crime can be counted as adult virtue, for we admire the man who is not so self-opinionated that he will follow the written works of others. Thus we have the example before us of our friends of the Wembley History Society, in their Journal just received they make an excellent suggestion that may well commend itself to our committee. They are evidently taking up the "buildings of interest" inventory as enthusiastically as we are, and they are tackling it on the lines of a communal Australian "walk-about" and tramping their borough in small parties and noting their "finds". Certainly congenial company would make the task more pleasant.

Our Treasurer is still lacking a few subscriptions and burns the midnight oil trying to balance the books. How is your conscience? Virtuous or guilty?

A curious anomaly came to light recently. Of our Transactions for 1959 we sold 65 copies. The sales of the 1960 Transactions plummeted down to 27 copies, so there must be quite a number of members without the benefit of the latter issue. We wonder why. Speaking of members, our society, by comparison with others; has a good membership and meetings are well attended, but slacken not in your efforts to interest your friends and get them to join.

During and after the war, most of us had our "bomb stories" after the late severe winter we now have our "Winter 1963" stories. Jot them down and give them to the editor who hopes to print a collection of such anecdotes.

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NOTES AND VIEWS

Well, what has happened since our last issue? Most of us have not ventured far from our firesides if we have had the coal to warm us, but the outlook has improved with a couple of sunny week-ends.

As far as the Society is concerned, the year has got off to a very good start, with a high standard of lectures. January saw the welcome return, to the speaker's chair of Cyril Moore, our very good friend and member from Hayes; incidentally has anyone ever thought of inviting C.M. to join the Committee? What an asset he would be; we know that he has many and varied interests but perhaps one day, who knows?

I hear that Dave Neighbour has reluctantly, handed in his resignation to the Committee at their last meeting. This is due to pressure of other commitments, most of which seem to fall on the same night as ours. The thanks of the whole Society goes to Dave who has been a committee member, for some years now. Both he and Mrs. Neighbour are always counted amongst our most enthusiastic members.

It seems almost certain that the Society will be at the Southall Show this year as it seems that we may get accommodation, in the Park Arena. The Grammar School is not the attraction that it used to be, and who can blame the Committee for trying to achieve the best site for publicity. Incidentally, do please let us have some help; assistance, and suggestions for the membership.

Talking of help from membership, I know that the Chairman is going to disclose details of a project in which he requires the help of us all. Plans are under weigh for a street by street survey of the Borough by the Society. This will take place during this year and is under the supervision of Mr. Spencer and Mr. A. Hilson. Providing that all do a little, the job is not nearly of the magnitude as one first imagines.

We are all looking forward to the April Meeting when Michael Hilson is due to give his talk on the Southall and Norwood Charities.. This will be one of Michael's all too rare visits now that he is at Nottingham.

Let us hope with the warmer weather coming along, that we shall again be seeing some of our members who have had the misfortune to suffer, ill-health during the dreadful winter. Perhaps we may, I say may, get a good summer to make up for the agonies of frozen pipes and numbed toes.

From the recent accounts in the local press, the Southall Tape Recording Society has stolen a march on us by commencing to record the local scene in the form of extracts from various activities of local societies. I know that our Chairman has for some time had thoughts on a scheme such as this; perhaps our Committee can arrange an evening with the Tape Recording Society so that we can hear their efforts.

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EDITOR'S NOTE. Surely Mr. Chairman, the task of tape recording the local scene is a highly specialised one, and a society formed with the express purpose of achieving this purpose, is more likely to make a good job of it than a band of "academics" whose main interest lies in the past. I fully realise the weaknesses in this argument, but in addition, successful tape recording needs some technical knowledge, and this, I feel would be lacking in our "academics". However, there is very obviously a strong case for close co-operation between the, two local groups. Perhaps we could provide the material contacts and advice, and our technical friends the know-how in preserving the same for future generations.

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MIDDLESEX TALES

Throughout the ages man has sung whilst working, sometimes because the work gave pleasure, but more often because the song gave the rhythm for regular movement and enabled the work to go "with a swing". The Song of the Volga Boatmen as they pulled their boats along the great Russian River, and the songs of the negro slaves in the Southern States of America as they loaded cargoes onto the river boats are the types of music we have in mind. The B.B.C. programme "Music While you Work" often has the same effect!

In the year 1721, at the little Middlesex village of Edgware, on a wet and stormy day, a stranger stepped into the smithy to take shelter from the rain. The smith, a fine looking man, whose appearance was greatly enhanced by a clean shirt open at the neck and bright red cap, was beating a piece of iron which he had taken from the fire. As the blows fell upon the anvil, the smith sang an old song in which the beating chimed in exactly with the melody he sang. The stranger listened in rapture, and when the smith had finished, he said, "Where did you hear that song?". The smith thought for a moment, and then replied, "I don't rightly know, sir. I seem to have grown up with it and it is always running through my head, it goes so well with the hammer on the anvil."

"Well sing it again for me, if you please, before I forget the melody" requested the stranger, and the smith resumed his beating, and as the blows fell upon the anvil the visitor hummed the tune and beat time with his hand. The last notes died away, and the stranger, with a far-away look in his eyes, murmured "Thank you" and hurried away through the rain.

Thus was born one of the world's greatest musical masterpieces, for the shelterer was Handel, and the melody was elaborated into "THE HARMONIOUS BLACKSMITH".

The blacksmith was William Powell, who became Parish Clerk at Edgware Church during the time that Handel was organist there, and his memorial stone in the church-yard, where he was buried at the age of 78 when he died in 1780, was raised by public subscription in 1868. It bears a sunken medallion that shows a hammer and laurel wreath entwined with a bar of music.

The hammer and anvil were in existence in 1939, (and may well still be so) and the anvil when struck with the hammer gave forth the keynote used for Handel's music which has given pleasure to music lovers for over 200 years.

So we owe much to that typical English summer shower which drove a musician to take shelter in a village smithy, and for once, at any rate, We should be perhaps grateful for our climate.

W.J.G.

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THE MASTER ROBERT MOTEL

If we follow the B358 through Heston until we reach the Great West Road, .ire notice on our right hand side the MASTER ROBERT MOTEL. Nothing very odd about that you remark, except that it looks, is, a very inviting motel.

Probably many of my readers know that it was named after a racehorse, but why "Master Robert"? The story goes that in 1923, a racehorse of that name went lame, and it was suggested that his legs might be strengthened by his pulling a milk cart for a while. This he did, and so successful was the cure, that Master Robert won the 1924 Grand National at Aintree, the world's greatest steeplechase.

It is on the plot of land which provided the pasturage for this famous horse during his cure, that the Master Robert Motel now stands.

A.C.H.

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BOOKS

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS IN FACSIMILE edited by P.A. Kennedy.

Local History Council, Nottingham. 7/6

This is obviously of interest mainly to the good folk of Nottingham, although we know of copies that have found a home in the New World. However, mention of it is made here as it is perhaps one of the finest examples of the work of a local history group that has come our Way. The work consists of a good number of mimeographed documents illustrative of the type of material that rests in the local archives. What is most laudable is that the temptation to reduce the facsimiles to a very small format has been resisted, and the volume is of a small folio size and contains some dozens of reproduced documents. At 7s.6d. it is obvious that the main cost of the publication has not fallen upon any group that hopes to make a profit. If Michael Hilson has not yet seen a copy at Nottingham, then he should do so without delay.

MONUMENTAL BRASSES by James Mann.

King Penguin 5s.

It is not necessary that a book be just, published in order to qualify for your attention. Sometimes it is just the reverse, and thus it is in this case. We understand that King Penguins are to disappear as they go out of print, and this being so, we think the chances of obtaining copies of this invaluable little book will sharply decline with the passing of the months. Ninety nine per cent of books dealing with this subject are both expensive and very technical, whereas this volume, with its many illustrations, brings the subject within reach of us all.

JOURNEYS TO ENGLAND AND IRELAND by Alexis de Tocqueville. Edited J.P. Mayer.

Published 30s. remaindered at 12s.6d.

To fully appreciate local history, it is necessary to understand the national background, especially from the point of view of a discerning visitor. These journeys were made, in 1833 and 1835 and vividly recall a foreigner's impressions of England at that time.

OBITUARY

It is with very deep regret that we learn of the death of our great friend and member, Mr. P. Dalton.

Mr. Dalton, with his fund of local knowledge, and his willing assistance, was, always a source of inspiration to the Committee. In the last years of his life, he bore his ill health with a courage and cheerfulness that will long be remembered, by his many friends. We have lost a very dear friend who will be sadly missed.

MISS SCOTT has always been such an enthusiastic member of our society, that it is with a very real sense of loss that we record her passing. With her lively reminiscences and comments brightening our meetings, it is difficult to realise that she is no longer among us, and we are sure we echo the sentiments of all our members when we say how greatly we miss and mourn a friend.

PROGRAMME 1963

APRIL 8th. MICHAEL HILSON ESQ.
 SOUTHALL AND .NORWOOD CHARITIES

MAY 13th. C. MORRIS ESQ.
 THE ROMAN ROAD FROM ST. ALBANS TO LALEHAM

JUNE 10th. EVENING VISIT TO THE MANOR HOUSE

JULY 8th. H.V.RADCLIFFE ESQ. Curator, Gunnersbury Park Museum.
 ILLUSTRATIONS AND LOCAL HISTORY. With slides. 9th.

SEPT. 9th. SHORT PAPERS BY MEMBERS

OCT. 14th. A.C.HILSON ESQ.
 STREET NAMES OF SOUTHALL

NOV. 11th. R.F.HOLMAN ESQ. Area Planning Officer of South Middlesex.
 MIDDLESEX.THE CHANGING SCENE. COLOUR SLIDES

DEC. 9th. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. MEMBERS NIGHT.

WE WANT TO KNOW

SOUTHALL COFFEE TAVERN. This establishment was undoubtedly one of the most important centres of social and civic life in 19th century Southall, and we would like to gather together enough material to one day tell the story of what must have been, at least for North Southall, the first administrative Centre. But what do we know of the place? Precious little!

We know that it was situated on the site where the Central Hall now; stands, that it was destroyed by fire in 1885, and that it was kept by a Mr. Jervis. Was it a large establishment? Did Mr. Jervis manage it single-handed, perhaps with the help of Mrs. Jervis, or were there waiters? When did it first make its appearance. What did it look like? If anyone has even the slightest knowledge on the subject, do please, we implore you, write it down for Mr. Wheeler.

KING STREET. Towards the northern end of King Street stands the building housing the Ministry of Labour. What was previously on this site?

TOWNSEND HOUSE. This dwelling stood somewhere in the hinterland of Leggat's Forge. Does anyone know what the house looked like? We imagine it to have been a large house standing in its own grounds. Who lived there?

SOUTHALL PLACE, We have seen 19th. Century references to this locality. Where exactly was it?

PARK HOUSE, PARK VIEW ROAD. Does anyone have knowledge of owners or occupiers of this residence prior to the Moller family? In other words, at any time before about 1890.