

SOUTHALL LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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REREADING John West's 'Village Records' recently, I was impressed by the excellent advice contained in the Foreword, and for those who have not had the opportunity of reading the book, the following is, with due acknowledgement, freely quoted.

More than fifty years ago, the Board of Education expressed the view that the best approach to the teaching of history was through the history of the pupil's own locality, for one of the great attractions of local history is that it appeals equally to the intelligent schoolchild and the elderly retired manor woman.

Unfortunately there is a great dearth of qualified teachers, and professional historians have been of little help, making the subject sound too difficult. But what is needed is encouragement of people to know their own particular corner of England.

Dr. Hoskins makes the admirable suggestion that local records should be used for an ulterior purpose. They should be used, or those that are appropriate, to reconstruct the past landscapes of the parish or locality. There might be an Anglo Saxon landscape or even a Roman landscape if the local materials are there. There should certainly be a Norman landscape based upon the interpretation of Domesday Book. We may regard Domesday Book, looked at aright, as the first great Guide book to rural England, and use it to restore to the map the vanished landscape of the eleventh century. In no other country is it possible to do things like this.

The editor of the Newsletter does not suggest such an ambitious project for the Southall Society, but he does suggest that a start could be made if every member made it his or her business to find out the previous, use of the land upon which they now reside.

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CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW OF 1963

ONE feels that looking back over 1963 the Society has been stable, but unfortunately stable to the point of being static. Despite an active Committee, the overall effort of the Society cannot be said to be up to expectations. We have not lost any ground either in membership or, in standard of programme, but neither have we gained ground. Our membership figure remains at the same level as it was twelve months ago, and this is somewhat frustrating in view of the, increasing membership of other local societies. Twickenham has some 300 members.

More research too, is needed, and a poor response from members to support a research group has resulted in very little to show for a year's work. To serve a useful purpose in the Borough, the Society must do more than provide a monthly entertainment for a couple of dozen people who attend the meetings.

The programme over the year has again been of a high standard, and included many .highlights including our very great friend Cyril Moore from Hayes on "St.Paul's"; Messrs. Bawtree and Cox from West Drayton, Mr. C. Morris with an absorbing programme on Roman roots, Mr. Holman on "Middlesex-The Changing Scene" as a final to the year's programme. I must also mention Miss Cooke's opportunity to show us the colour slides of her trip to New Zealand. A mention too, of the only piece of research carried out this year that by Mr. A.C. Hilson on the street names of the Norwood Green Ward.

To complete the year, Michael Hilson took a night off from university studies to present his paper on Southall & Norwood Charities', which is now ready for publication in the Transactions. In July we welcomed, once again Mr. Radcliffe from the Gunnersbury Park Museum.

In June the Society explored, and believe me explored is the right word, the Manor House. This was at the request of several members who were not present at the previous visit.

No outings were organised during the year apart from the evening Manor House trip. This was for two very good reasons, firstly lack of support on previous outings would indicate a declining interest in such functions and secondly, the committee were fully occupied organising the two exhibitions staged during the year. The first, that at the A.E.C. was quite rained off, and a heartbreak to those who had put in so much thought and work. However, virtue has its reward, and the second show, that in the Park on the occasion of the Southall Show was an outstanding success, despite variable weather. The Society secured an individual marquee in the main arena, and this was crowded continuously during the three days of the Show. A booklet entitled 'A Short History of Southall and Norwood' was on sale at the Exhibition, price 6d and sold over 900 copies. The made our Treasurer very happy. The booklet is being reprinted and will be available again early in the New Year.

It is our intention within the next month or so to publish a series of local maps to be used in conjunction with Transactions No.3. These will date from the 17th century and will show the development of the Town up to the 1930's.

Already the Programme for 1964 is nearing completion, but we are hoping, depending upon our members support, to organise further meetings of small groups for research or discussion on mutual interests.

It was during 1963 that we lost three of our keenest members in the passing of Miss Grace Scott, Mr. Percy Dalton, and Mr. C.W. Wright. The Society has suffered a great loss in the deaths of these three friends.

I would like to pay a tribute to my committee who have worked hard during the year and have given me their utmost support on all occasions. My thanks once again to my secretary, Miss Cooke, for taking such a great deal of the load from me, and on behalf of us all, my sincere thanks to Mr. Jordan and the Library staff for their assistance and kindness during 1963.

A.J. Errington.

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SITES AND HOUSES

In a previous issue, we requested further information about King Street and also Townsend House and we are very fortunate in having members who promptly came to our aid. Miss E.M. Barnett contributed to our knowledge but we lacked space in our last issue to do justice to effort. We are happy to include it herewith.

KING STREET. The building which for some years housed the Ministry of Labour, and is now occupied by the Clinic was erected shortly after the conclusion of the First World War. Previously, on this site stood "Elmfield Lodge" a handsome building with a fine cedar tree gracing the front aspect. This can be seen in No. 49 of Mr. Ham's paintings.

The house had literary associations; Mrs. Challice, authoress of "Memoirs of French Palaces", "Distinguished Women of France", etc. was born here. Later Benjamin Armstrong, Chairman of the Bench of Magistrates at Brentford lived in the house, and after him the house came into the occupation of an Indian Officer named Muspratt.

The final resident of this part of Southall's history was Mr. George Goshey, oil-whom Miss Barnett has many personal recollections. Part of the original wall of the Coach House may still be seen at the rear of "The Victory".

Opposite the site, on land now occupied by the Co-operative Stores, stood the 'village stocks.(This is news indeed - Ed.)

TOWNSEND HOUSE. This was a three storey Victorian House situated roughly at the junction of Herbert Road and Orchard Avenue. It was surrounded by a high brick wall and secluded by many trees. It was, naturally, in close proximity to Leggett's Forge and cottages. I am given to understand that this was the last house before Hayes Bridge, but I cannot personally vouch for this, perhaps other members can supply information on the subject. Some of the elder residents of the Borough can well remember the two maiden ladies who were the last occupants of the residence; in the summer it was their custom to be taken for their daily drive in a "Victorian two-seater". These prim old souls always sat very sedately upright and were complete with lace caps and gloves. (Is this really a vision of Southall High Street? I can scarce credit it. - Ed.)

Miss Barnett has further promised help with a subject very close to our interest — The Southall Coffee Tavern. All the available evidence would point to the Tavern as the focal point of local politics, and many decisions must have been made over the fragrant cup, (at least I presume nothing stronger was served, such is the state of our ignorance - Ed.) The Tavern is so obviously a subject for intensive research, and Miss Barnett's offer will be taken up.

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NOTES AND QUERIES

Undoubtedly the most important period of Southall's History lies in that developmental age in the last quarter of the 19th Century when the transition was being made from a small country village to a thriving urban community bordering the metropolis. Recording part of the story of that time, we are indeed fortunate in having the "Southall Times"; but much of the information there is buried under a mountain of words. An index is needed, and ours is the Society to do it. Perhaps the Committee should discuss it.

Has any member ideas, or knowledge how the names of Gordon and Inverness Roads originated, and also the dates that these streets were developed? If you have any knowledge on the subject kindly contact Mr. A.C. Hilson.

The latest road to be named in the Borough is that of a cul-de-sac off Dormers dells Lane. The authorities have now approved the road's title as "Farm Close". No doubt future residents will wonder which farm has been thus remembered.

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CONFERENCE OF WEST MIDDLESEX LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES.

Once again the Southall Local History Society were host on November 18th to the Conference of West Middlesex Local History Societies. Delegates attended from the societies at Hayes, Ealing, West Drayton, Uxbridge, Hounslow and Twickenham, representing a total of some seven hundred members.

In his address of welcome, the Chairman, Mr. A.J. Errington, commented on the increasing interest in local history in the West Middlesex area, this being shown very clearly by the tremendous amount of activity within most of the societies and the ever mounting membership. Twickenham, he stated, was an outstanding example, having a membership of three hundred after only 18 months life.

The Conference gave the delegates, who were all officers from their respective committees, an opportunity to discuss problems arising from research and investigation and more important organisation.

A great deal of discussion took place on the amount of support societies received from their local councils, some received none at all, whilst others were supported wholeheartedly by the civic authorities, including contributions towards publications etc. Mr. W.J. Green, Press and Publicity Officer of the Southall Society stated that this Society was very fortunate in possessing a Borough Librarian in Mr. Jordan, who encouraged the Society in every way

possible, the result being that members had assisted in building up the stock of material in the 'Local Collection at the Library to the benefit of the Borough.

Great interest was shown when Dr. Toufar, Reference Librarian of Ealing, and Chairman of the Ealing Society, pointed out that all societies could apply to their local authority for financial grants provided they could show that the claim came within the appropriate act.

On display at the Conference, were examples of the publications issued by the societies, and these varied in size, typo, and frequency of publication. They ranged from duplicated News-sheets to printed books and maps, all recording the past and present of West Middlesex.

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NOTES AND VIEWS

First of all a "Happy New Year" to you all, and best wishes to the Society in 1964. Well, the sixth annual general meeting is now recorded history, and the committee have been voted back "en bloc", which is not surprising considering that they're a pretty hard working crowd, as Dave Neighbour stated in his Vote of Thanks.

I think the Chairman's Report sounded somewhat dismal this year, but perhaps this was due to the heavy cold he had at the time, but I grant that he did make a major point or two; the membership situation could be bettered, and perhaps research could be viewed with greater enthusiasm. Is it a laboured truism to quote that one new member each would double our numbers? This is a surely a worthy ambition even if it only serves to keep the Treasurer happy.

As for research, I wonder if the very word sounds too technical, conjuring up visions of advanced knowledge of latin documents and so on. In other words, is the sound of it "off-putting". There is no easy answer of course, a members interest must first be gained and then it can be, demonstrated just how easy a simple project can be. All that you really need is the one commodity we are all very short of - time. Let us look forward to the time when we are all retired, and instead of spending our days in the Panopticon in Southall Park, we will all meet in the Reference Library.

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NEXT MEETING

January 13th.1964.
MR. COX, Chairman of West Drayton Society.
THE HARMONDSWORTH WORKHOUSE.

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A member wants to know:
What do you know about Southall Workhouse Where was it? What was it like?
When was it built? When was it demolished?
(Was there one? - ed.)

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BIRTH OF THE SOUTHALL SOCIETY

There are probably amongst our members several who have wondered how the Southall Local History Society came into being, and it is with pleasure and with our Chairman's consent that I publish a copy of Mr. Errington's letter to the local press in 1957. I would add that originally the Society was named "Southall Historioel Society" and this style was altered in recent years to "Southall Local History Society.—

"Sir,

With the 'Coming of Age' of our Borough in 1957, there has undoubtedly been an increase of interest in local affairs, both present and past. The interest in the past has been greatly stimulated by the articles and lately appearing in issues of the "Times-Gazette".

Discussing these articles and Southall's history in general with a few of our local residents, I find there is a growing conviction that this history ought to be investigated, discussed and recorded. Therefore with this in mind, I had a talk with Mr. C.P. Abbott and we have subsequently decided to create the "Southall Historical Society". The Society would obviously embrace Norwood etc. and possibly Osterley. Indeed, although the prime subject would be Southall, it need not necessarily be confined to this. Should any of your readers be interested in this project, then I should be very pleased to hear from them.

Finally, I cannot over emphasize the help that some of our residents can give us with the loan of photographs documents etc., not just plain facts and figures. No one in the Borough possesses anything like comprehensive notes, so any facts or local knowledge about our past history would be very welcome.

A.J.Errington."

Thus a progressive society was born, and may we go from strength to strength, and. take as our motto:

LITERA SCRIPTA MANET

Which being translated, means "what is written down is permanent."

— A.C.H.