

SOUTHALL LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NUMBER EIGHT

WINTER 1964 - 65

To the surprise of many 'doubting Thomas's, Southall Local History Society continues to go from strength to strength. The January meeting was very well attended and we were all held throughout the proceedings by Miss Cameron talking to us about the Pears family. The amount of research that must have gone into the making and presentation of this fascinating story must have been stupendous, and we are filled with admiration for the lady who carried out this task whilst fulfilling a full time job.

As was announced at the Annual General Meeting, the editor of the Newsletter attended the auction recently held at Ealing, and there acquired twenty seven water colours by our Mr. E.A. Ham. It is perhaps a pity that only one of these depicts a local scene and even that would be difficult to identify without the legend "Water-splash at Southall" on the reverse. Mostly the pictures depict scenes of various ports and holiday resorts round our coasts, obviously Mr. Ham took his easel with him when holiday making. The most important thing is that it is now assured that the paintings will remain in Southall, and they will always be available to all who have an interest in Southall's history.

In this issue we continue the story of the Church History of Southall with the story of the Barn Mission, and a very human story emerges in the telling of the foundation of this House of God. We are indebted to Miss Barnett for the research into this. The gathering of the facts are her work, the additional fancies must be blamed upon the editor.

There is still much to be done in this field of Church History. Up to the present we have the promise of the stories of Holy Trinity and St. John's, and we look forward to learning about these foundations. Unfortunately we cannot see signs of any articles forthcoming on, say, St. Anselm's, St. Georges, Western Road Baptist the Salvation Army or any other Southall religious houses. If we have among our number anyone willing and able to undertake work in this field, do please contact the editor. Alternatively if any member or reader should know of a likely person to approach with a view to having a history related will they please let us know.

Southall Local History Society. Treasurer's Report, 1964.

The Society's fiscal year ended on November 30th 1964 with a balance of £32.19.3d. As there are no debts outstanding the Society can be said to be in a reasonably healthy position.

The main items of expenditure were printing costs of Newsletter at £4.3.6d., and Publicity expenses at £3.5.0d. The production costs of this year's Transactions amounted to £60.15.0d., towards which Southall Arts Council made a grant of £50.

Income came from 54 membership subscriptions (£11.7.6d) and Sales of Transactions (£10.6.6d) In addition 109 copies of the Short History of Southall were sold during the year at 6d.each.

The Society's income would increase if members encouraged, others to join the Society, and also if more copies of the Transactions could be sold. In conclusion our thanks once again to Mr. Neighbour, for auditing the accounts.

(Another £3.9.0d. from the sale of Transactions has been added since Mr. Hanson presented the Accounts at the Annual General Meeting, therefore the balance now stands at a respectable £36.8.3d. -Ed.)

VERY IMPORTANT REMINDER

1965 Subscriptions are now due and members are requested to send five shillings as soon as possible to the Treasurer, 31 Sherborne Avenue, Southall.

Note: no subscription is payable by members who have joined the Society since September 1964.

MIDDLESEX UNDER THE PIRATES

In 1886, whilst workmen were digging in a gravel pit at Hanwell, just off the present Boston Road and where Oaklands School was eventually built, seven skeletons were found. They were clad in hempen garments with round bronze brooches plated with gold fastened on their breasts; nearby were found fifty iron spears.

This discovery was of the mortal remains of a party of West Saxon raiders from across the North Sea, and who had penetrated as far inland as Middlesex in the year 568, but who had met their deaths when they tried to surprise the Romano-British soldiers who guarded the outpost which stood on what is now known as Cuckoo Hill. Until about a century ago the battlefield there was called "Blood Croft"; Grove Avenue now occupies the site.

Middlesex suffered much during the centuries between the going of the last of the Roman legions and the coming of Duke from Normandy in 1066. The pirates from across the North Sea, Danes, Jutes, Norsemen and Saxons, brought fire and sword ruthlessly destroying all that was foreign to them and they obliterated Roman cities which could have survived, in part at least, the vagaries of our climate to delight the 20th century historian. They destroyed the ancient bridge over the Thames at Staines, and churches and villages were burnt as a matter of routine. They did not, however, have things all their own way. In retaliation for the barbarous cruelties practised by the raiders, the Middlesex men flayed captives alive and nailed their skins to the church doors. Ironically, the Anglo-Saxons who flayed the Vikings of the tenth century were the descendants of the pirates of earlier times, but by now they had become humble and industrious farmers who had come to learn to dread the name of the Vikings and defended their farms with deep ditches filled with water.

Among places where traces of such moated farms may be located is Northolt, (which incidentally it is hoped will be the subject of a visit in 1965).

Control of the County changed hands several times. In 780 and 781 the Synod or Church Council was held at Brentford and was attended by the powerful King Offa of Mercia who ruled (nominally at least) all England south of the Humber. In 880 it was under King Guthram but in 886 it passed to King Alfred the Great. In 993 once again a fleet of galleys sailed up the Thames as far as Staines, and no doubt the whole county was once more ravaged and flayed skins flapped in the wind. At last, in 1016 Edmund Ironside defeated the Danes at Brentford and destroyed their ships. After his own defeat some months later at Assandun in Essex he divided his kingdom with Canute and Danes and English began to settle down and live peacefully side by side.

Today in Middlesex there can be few, if any, relics of those invaders to be seen, but of course their influence is still heard in our every day Speech, and not just in Middlesex but throughout the world our language is rich in Anglo-Saxon origins. So, where-ever English is spoken, North, East, South or West (the four points of the compass themselves are Anglo-Saxon words) there is heard the tongue of our barbaric forebears.

DO-IT-YOURSELF LOCAL HISTORY

Recently Mr. Errington gave a talk entitled 'The past Decade' both to our Society and also to our friends in Hayes. The talk given on his "home ground" was based on actual changes occurring during the past ten years, but this was amended a little to suit Hayes when the talk was delivered in that town, as the listeners would not be so familiar with the events in Southall. The Hayes talk was therefore delivered as an Illustrative exercise in local history research that could be tackled by anyone with an interest in the subject, in fact the subject could well be considered as Do-It-Yourself Local History.

Without doubt, all who read this must have been witnesses of the events of the past ten years, so all that is requisite for him is a sheet of paper and a pen. Just go right ahead and note any changes in the town that come to mind. By no means attempt to complete the job in one evening, just keep the notes handy and add to them as and when fresh remembrances come to mind. All must have a wealth of personal experiences during the past decade to draw upon.

The overall result will be a collection of members' notes giving a vivid picture of local changes and developments. Just think how interesting this would be if we were reading the results of a similar exercise carried, out, say, some fifty or more years ago.

When the collection has been co-ordinated, the subject matter can be grouped under three main headings, viz:

1. GEOGRAPHICAL CHANGES –Natural and Artificial

Quite obviously it is unlikely there have been any natural changes, as these would involve earthquakes or other catastrophes, but man made changes such as gravel pits, embankments for railways or motorways, flood prevention works on rivers, etc., can very materially alter the face of nature.

2. FEATURE CHANGES

Housing and industrial estates, local factory development, road development, and, most important in already built up areas, redevelopment, particularly of shopping centres. The value of taking photographs before, during and after redevelopment has very obvious uses, but this is thinking ahead rather than remembering.

3. SOCIAL CHANGES

Population changes and effects, entertainment changes, working habits, traffic problems, social conditions in the home and at work, transport changes etc.

I feel that this should give readers food for thought, but do not just sit and think about it, let's have a few notes from YOU.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Although the Society has not actually been overwhelmed with old Southallians rushing to become Associate Members of the Southall Local history Society, the new form of membership has met some measure of success. It is to be hoped that present members will assist the Society by spreading the word and increasing our numbers during the year 1965.

Before this issue is in the hands of members, without a doubt the Annual General Meeting will be over and entered in the Minute Book. With perhaps a couple of very welcome newcomers, the same willing few will be on the Committee, it is a great pity that so many of us are unwilling to serve on the Committee for a year or so. I am sure that they would find the Committee meeting extremely interesting and certainly the company is congenial. The work is far from arduous and help and assistance (mostly vocal -Ed.) from other members is always freely offered. The Society will now be entering its seventh year of life and three of our officers have served continuously all this time without a break. (And whilst they continue to make such a success of their job they had better continue to serve - Ed.)

To touch on the topic of research, Reg Wheeler is collecting material on the Ham family; in particular, of course, Mr. A.E. Ham the artist, in the hope that one day he may be able to set down a short biography of this local worthy. Reg is starting from scratch so if you know anything, repeat anything about the family, please jot it down on a piece of paper and pass it on to our worthy editor. Archie Hilson is wrapping up the research on street names, and what an excellent job he has made of it! He has personally selected the subject of his next line of research - "The Inns of Southall". As you may well guess many have been the innuendoes slanted in his direction since his subject became known, and even volunteers have not been in short supply. No further remarks on the subject will be made here, except to print by request of the Hon (we hope) Treasurer, that research expenses incurred during the progress of the project will NOT be met by the Society.

In conclusion, a very happy new year to all our members.

VIEWER.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BARN MISSION

Southall is typical. Not that it loses anything the process of being typical, but being a typical example of suburban growth, it conforms to a fairly standard pattern in its history and its people. Thus we discover as we expected, the hamlet and the village, the landed gentry, the squires, and the farmers of past days, and although it is now fashionable to malign indiscriminately all members of the now passed "gentry class", many of them did, in fact, have the welfare of their workers constantly in mind. Whilst this attitude could be assessed by the cynical as a case of enlightened self-interest, as a hungry and ill clad labourer was an uneconomic unit, it must be agreed that many land owners genuine humanitarians.

Southall had its quota of "gentlemen farmers", and among them stood Henry Baxter who farmed an area now covered by the Le Grande Sutcliffe works and which is now fronted by a giant box of an office block. For many years Henry Baxter and his family cultivated the good Middlesex earth, employing Southall folk, and making their welfare his business. It must be remembered that in the nineteenth century drunkenness was a great social evil, and in the year 1862 Henry Baxter sought to provide harvest celebrations for his workers on temperance lines, with an evangelist conducting an epilogue. This celebration was held in Henry Baxter's barn and led naturally on to a weekly meeting for worship led by members of Evangelization Society. Man's old enemy fire struck and the barn was destroyed, but such is the stuff of faith that a new brick building arose - still to be seen in the grounds of Le Grande - and this was called "Baxter's Barn". The Bishop of London offered to consecrate it as a Parish Church but Henry Baxter humbly declined. The population of Southall was growing and the services were well attended. The Reverend Worseley (Rector of Norwood) took a great interest in the place and conducted many weekly meetings there.

When Henry Baxter retired and left the district in 1900 the Grange, his residence, was sold. This meant that the "Barnites" were to be on the move for many years. For a short time they rented a hall in Featherstone Terrace (site now occupied by the Working Men's Club). Eventually they were offered a small hut in the middle of a decorator's yard at the rear of 16 Norwood Rd (land now in the occupation of Southall Laundry). They remained in these drab surroundings until purchasing the site of their present Church, this was part of the orchard garden of "Beverley" in King Street, the home of Benjamin G. Hanson. Very soon this delightful playground for scrumping schoolboys was cleared of its fruit trees and a corrugated iron church arose with its frontage on Norwood Road. Later a hall was added at the rear.

The present brick building was opened in 1936 by Mr. Arthur Henderson M.P., the total cost being £1900.

Not until the year 1955 could the Church afford a full time pastor, thus the Reverend Douglas Hunt is the first to act in that capacity. A manse was purchased the following year in Ellison Gardens. Recently the interior of the Church has been modernised and one of the latest models in electronic organs, the first of its kind in Southall, has been added.

One of my favourite true stories concerns the Barn Mission. Some sixty or seventy year ago, a farm labourer and his wife (their descendants to the fourth generation still live hereabouts) attended the Mission periodically. Upon this occasion, as the couple entered the door, the husband was asked if he would come into another part of the building to "stoke up before the service". Thinking his, strong arms were needed to carry fuel necessary to keep the boiler going he readily agreed and followed his questioner. To his dismay he found that "stoking up" consisted of a small band of worshippers successively reading from the Holy Scriptures. The sum total of his schooling was two days attendance at North Road School and he was quite illiterate. His confusion was complete and confounding.

RECENT BOOKS.

How strange it is that books on a like subject seem to be published in waves, almost as if the publishers get together and agree to make it, say, Geography month. It is much more probable that one is fortunate enough to come across half a dozen new titles, all of personal interest and the situation just suggests itself. This is how things are with me just now. I seem to have run into a collection of the most interesting items that have come my way for some time.

A short time ago I noticed an H.M.S.O. announcement of a publication entitled "Laxton", and at 3s.6d. it seemed worth trying. Laxton, it proved, is the name of a village in the remote hinterland of Nottinghamshire, but it's claim to my interest is that it is the last English Open Field Village. The study of this village, made by Prof. J.D. Chambers, shows that time passed this village by. When every other place in these islands fell under the effects of the enclosure acts, for some strange reason Laxton escaped the notice of the "land grabbers", and today in Laxton it is possible to see what England looked like in feudal times. Fortunately it is going to stop that way. The pamphlet is well illustrated with plates and facsimiles.

The next book that came into my hands was Ronald Hamilton's "Now I Remember"; this is subtitled "A Holiday History of Britain" and it is a very good description of this work. When on holiday or on the odd week-end away in the country, we often stroll into an old church and find a wealth of interest, but then comes the frustration of ignorance; we see that the church was first consecrated, say, in 1363, but we are now at a loss to place this piece of local history within the grand pattern of our national heritage. This book supplies the answers. Arranged chronologically chapter by chapter, it gives a précis of England's story, it is profusely illustrated and issued by Chatto and Windus at 21s.

Jonathan Cape is now publishing a series under the title of "Jackdaws", the series being edited by John Langdon-Davies. They are, say the publishers, intended for the history instruction of children - I find them absolutely fascinating. Each issue consists of a large folder containing a number of exact facsimiles of original documents relating to the incident treated. Thus, in the Jackdaw concerning "Trafalgar found "The Times" for November 7th. 1805, the first account of the victory and of the death of Nelson; Nelson's Memorandum of October 9th. 1805 concerning battle tactics; a large plan of the construction of H.M.S. "Victory"; a plan of the battle, complete with the names of the ships; a portrait of Nelson when a youth; a colour plate of the flags used to make up Nelson's famous signal "England Expects..."; a painting of Nelson's death.; a map of Nelson's chase of the enemy; a portrait of Nelson in maturity; the whole accompanied by a short text. Other Jackdaws are "The Plague and the Fire of London", Magna Carta; "Columbus"; "The Armada"; "The Gunpowder Plot; and possibly others are available by now. At a price of 9s.6d. each, I thought they were reasonable.

The amateur historian has cause to be indebted to V.H. Galbraith for his helpful works in the cause of historical study. Four of his works, viz. "The Historian 'at Work"; "Historical Research and the Preservation of the Past"; "Research in Action"; and "Who Wrote Asser's Life of Alfred", with the addition of a Glossary and Notes, have now been gathered together into one volume entitled "An Introduction to the Study of History". To me the most rewarding section of the book is the final part in which is demonstrated the method of historical research in ascertaining the authorship of the Life of Alfred. The plates contained in this volume appear to be those that embellished the pages of the B.B.C. issue of "The Historian at Work", but in this book they are in half tone blocks. The book is published by Watts at 21S.

Routledge, on behalf of the Historical Association publish a small series called "English History in Pictures". These booklets, again, I believe to be intended for the instruction of the young, but as I find them extremely interesting I fear that the inference that my mental age is about twelve years. The two latest issues in the series are "The Early Middle Ages" and "Tudor Times", and consist mainly of well-coloured and black and white reproductions of contemporary paintings, documents, buildings etc. as well as modern photographs of existing remains. Each plate has a short explanatory note, and the whole collection is prefaced with a note defining the extent of the volume. They are published at 12s.6d. each.