

# SELSDON WOOD SAVED FOR THE NATION

## Lord Mayor of London Opens Beautiful Nature Reserve

### LINK IN "GREEN BELT"

"This is an invaluable link in the Green Belt encircling London which we are all eager to create," said the Lord Mayor of London (Sir Percy Vincent, Kt.) when he visited Croydon on Friday afternoon to declare open the Selsdon Wood Nature Reserve and Bird Sanctuary, preserved for all time through the efforts of nature lovers with the help of the Croydon Council, the Coulsdon and Purley Council, and the National Trust. The Mayor of Croydon (Ald. A. Peters) presided at the ceremony.

A DISTINGUISHED company of guests were received at the Town Hall by the Mayor of Croydon and Mayoress, Mrs. Peters, the Bishop of Croydon (the Rt. Rev. E. S. Woods), the Chairman of the Coulsdon and Purley Council (Coun. T. A. Harrison) and Mrs. Harrison, the Town Clerk of Croydon (Dr. J. M. Newnham) and Mrs. Newnham, the Clerk of the Coulsdon and Purley Council (Mr. E. C. King) and Mrs. King.

#### PRESENTATIONS

When the Lord Mayor of London arrived there were presented to him the following representatives of Croydon Corporation: the Deputy Mayor (Ald. J. Trumble); and Mrs. Trumble, Coun. H. G. Lumsden (Chairman of the Public Services Committee) and Mrs. Lumsden, Coun. James Marshall (Chairman of the Open Spaces and Town Planning Committees), Coun. M. R. Stacey (Chairman of the Parks Committee) and Mrs. Stacey.

Representing the Coulsdon and Purley Council: Coun. F. G. L. Moir (vice-chairman), Coun. S. B. Gillespie and Mrs. Gillespie, Coun. J. W. K. Nichols (Chairman of the Selsdon Wood Management Committee) and Mrs. Nichols, Coun. Mrs. F. Hipwell and Mr. F. Hipwell and Mrs. White.

Representing the National Trust: Lord Ullswater, Sir Edgar and Lady Bonham Carter, Lt. Col. E. N. Buxton, Mr. and Mrs. Coker Iliffe, and Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm G. Sharpe.

The officers presented included: Dr. and Mrs. Newnham, the Croydon Borough Engineer (Mr. C. E. Boast) and Mrs. Boast, Mr. and Mrs. E. C. King, the Coulsdon and Purley Council Surveyor (Mr. G. A. Ballard) and Mrs. Ballard, and the Secretary of the National Trust (Mr. D. M. Matheson).

#### WEATHER INTERFERES

It had been arranged that the official guests should proceed to Selsdon Wood following tea for the opening ceremony

to be performed there, but this was considered inadvisable owing to the uncertain weather and the muddy ground. The formal opening of the wood therefore took place after tea in the Council Chamber.

In welcoming Sir Percy Vincent, the Mayor of Croydon said it was a high privilege to have him present, but he sincerely regretted that it had not been possible for the Lady Mayoress to accompany him owing to illness. They also welcomed one of the most distinguished members of the National Trust, Lord Ullswater, whose great work as Speaker of the House of Commons was remembered by everyone. It was regrettable that the weather conditions had made it impossible to carry through the programme as originally intended, but that part of the wood in which it had been intended to hold the ceremony was practically a quagmire.

#### "THIS LOVELY DISTRICT"

This lovely district in which Selsdon Wood was situated was not altogether unknown to the Lord Mayor, whose recent visit during the past few weeks, notwithstanding his immensely heavy duties, was abundant evidence of his interest. They were glad to know that his own home, and his friends and neighbours in Purley and Croydon, had not been forgotten.

At this interesting function it was proper that they should express a deep sense of gratitude to the small group of ladies and gentlemen who, some twelve years formed themselves into a committee with the object of saving, at that time, some sixteen acres of woodland from the devastating attentions of the speculative builder.

#### THE PIONEERS

These pioneers, who should be mentioned, were Miss Alice Bonus, Sir Lawrence Chubb (who had acted as honorary treasurer since the inception of the scheme and was unfortunately unable to be present through illness), Mr. Malcolm Sharpe, Mr. E. A. Earl, and Miss Hudson. The earliest efforts of this little group proved so successful that they were able to make gradual progress for the purpose of saving some 200 acres which had now been secured for all time. The splendid sum of about £11,000 was raised, there being something like 8,000 subscribers. In addition to the generous gifts by societies and public bodies, a member of the National Trust, who desired to be anonymous, had recently already added £1,000.

#### RESIDENTS' HELP

Ald. Peters continued by expressing gratitude to the members of the Selsdon Residents' Association, whose members

had assisted in the capacity of watchers at week-ends and holiday times.

"I trust," he said, "that not only residents of Croydon and Purley, young and old, but also generations to come, may find while walking through these delightful woods real pleasure and happiness. The preservation of these beautiful woods, with their lovely glades, as a nature reserve and bird sanctuary is an achievement of which the whole country may well be proud. I invite you, my Lord Mayor, to declare them open to the public for ever."

### WONDERFUL OPEN SPACE

The Lord Mayor said it had given him the greatest possible pleasure to open this wonderful open space, and he heartily congratulated all those public spirited people who had worked to make this wood safe for all time.

"Two hundred acres is no small space," said Sir Percy Vincent. It is an invaluable link in the establishment of the Green Belt encircling London which we are all eager to create. As Lord Mayor of London it is my privilege to declare this Natural Reserve and Bird Sanctuary open the public."

### DEEDS RECEIVED

The Lord Mayor then handed the deeds of the wood for safe custody to Col. Buxton of the National Trust, and he in turn handed the lease of the wood to Coun. Nichols, Chairman of the Management Committee.

Coun. Harrison proposed the vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor as Chairman of the Coulsdon and Purley Urban District Council, one of the joint authorities (with the Croydon Borough Council) who had made themselves responsible for the upkeep of this beautiful stretch of natural woodland. He recalled that it was only a fortnight since Sir Percy Vincent had visited Purley to open the Public Library. He asked the Lord Mayor if he would permit his name to be associated for all time with the wood.

### THE VINCENT AVENUE

The Committee of Management would welcome this suggestion that the main avenue of the wood should be called the Vincent Avenue. It had been arranged for the Lord Mayor to plant a tree at the wood; that young tree might wither, but if the main glade was named after his lordship his name would be remembered by their children's children.

Coun. Nicholls seconded the vote of thanks, which was carried, and associated himself with the suggestion of Coun. Harrison.

Sir Percy Vincent said he was delighted and proud that one of the avenues should be named after him.

The Bishop of Croydon proposed a vote of thanks to Ald. Peters for presiding.

### COMMUNING WITH NATURE

"We have realised," he said, "that unless an opportunity can be made for people to commune with nature, something essential falls out of life. It is a great problem for city dwellers. We are glad we have this wonderful Nature Reserve and Sanctuary, and we are very grateful to our own Mayor, and those who have made this possible."

Col. Buxton seconded, and said that when Sir Lawrence Chubb first told him he had signed the contract for the land he lectured Sir Lawrence about a man with a wife and children signing away his money! But when Sir Lawrence took the speaker to see the wood he would have forgiven him any "crime" he had committed!

### SAVING THE COUNTRYSIDE

After twelve years the final touch had been added, by Croydon and other authorities coming to the rescue. This was the only way to save the countryside for the people, for such bodies as the National Trust could not save the country alone; it had got to come home to every man and woman, and then, when the local authority took the matter up, they could hope for success.

Col. Buxton emphasised that although the keeping of parks was as old as Adam, the preservation of nature close up to the doors of civilisation was a new science.

They had to prove that man, who thought he could do as he liked with nature, could live with nature without destroying it.

If the citizens could be taught to live at peace with the wild creatures of Selsdon Wood, and the wild creatures with them, then they would have made citizens who could live at peace with all mankind.

"It is a great and difficult task," he concluded, "to develop a nature sanctuary in the midst of a heavily developed urban area, and we do thank you very heartily for undertaking it.

The Mayor of Croydon briefly responded.

### GUARD OF HONOUR

As he left the Town Hall the Lord Mayor inspected a Guard of Honour of Scouts and Guides, drawn from Purley, Coulsdon, Kenley, Sanderstead, Selsdon and Croydon.

In spite of the cancellation of the original plans the Lord Mayor proceeded to Selsdon Wood, in order not to disappoint those who had gathered there. In a clearing of the wood he planted a tree to commemorate the occasion.