

## OFFENCES IN THE PARK

BY BETTY MAY

This is one of the most numerous entries in the indices of the Minutes of the Park, Estates and Buildings Committee of Sutton Coldfield Borough Council. The minutes date from 1880, and in those early days the most frequent offence was small boys taking birds' nests and youths lighting fires. They were brought before the Courts and fined 2/6d or 5/-, which, though it sounds little enough, made inroads into a weekly wage of 20/- or 25/-.

Between the wars leisure activities changed - ladies occasionally galloped their horses, and were admonished. A more frequent offence by both sexes and all ages was the stealing of plants and ferns; the Town Clerk was then instructed to write to the miscreants and point out the error of their ways.

A more unusual case was that of Mr. H. or J. Levy, at least it was unusual then, but sounds more familiar now. The Minutes are as follows:-

17.7.34. Resolved that Mr. H. Levy be asked to pay the cost of replacing lock on main gate

30.10.34 Resolved that the Town Clerk take proceedings if necessary to recover the cost of repairing the gate.

1.3.35. The Town Clerk reports that a summons has been issued against Mr. J. Levy in respect of the damage done to the Town Gate on the 31st July last (sic) when he broke the lock in order to get his car out of the Park at 11.30 p.m.. "I have since heard from the Court that the bailiff has been unable to serve the summons as Mr. Levy has left the address given. I have Mr. Levy's business (sic) and am arranging for a successive summons to be issued and will endeavour to effect service as soon as possible"

1.4.35. A successive summons has been issued against Mr. Levy in respect of damage to the Town Gate and efforts have been made to serve it on him at his

business address. Mr. Levy is engaged outside his office very considerably and no information can be obtained about him.

May 1935. The summons against Mr. Levy was heard on 17th April at the Birmingham County Court. Mr. Levy did not appear, and judgment was given for 10/6d., the sum of 5/- being allowed for witness fee, payment to be made in 14 days. "Payment has not yet been made and I propose to issue a judgment summons in due course. "

7.10.35. A judgment summons has been issued against Mr. Levy in respect of the claim for damage to the Town Gate and will be heard at the Birmingham County Court on 20th November next.

15.11.35. The Town Clerk reported that efforts to serve Mr. Levy with a judgment summons had proved unsuccessful.

Resolved that the account be written off as irrecoverable.

However, there were some virtuous people about. In March 1935 there is the following entry: Minute 380 -*Keepers Pool Alterations*. In connection with the alterations at Keepers Pool, one of the workmen found a ring in the mud near the landing stage. The matter was reported to me and I was able to trace the owner who had reported losing the ring two years ago. The ring was handed to the owner by His Worship the Mayor. I have since received a letter from the owner expressing her delight at the recovery of the ring and enclosing a reward for the man who found it.

In March 1937 a lady living in Handsworth Wood wrote to the Committee as follows: Sirs, Having joined the Oxford Group and having decided to base my life on the standards of Absolute Honesty, Absolute Unselfishness, Absolute Purity and Absolute Love, I am enclosing herewith Postal Order for 2/- to atone a little for the times I have been in Sutton Park without paying.