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LEONARD SANDALL



Leonard Sandall was born in 1871 in Camberwell to Harry and Lydia Sandall, where his father was a surgeon.

He came to Lingfield in 1898, aged 27 and worked as a dispenser and bookkeeper to Dr Sydney Austin and his son Dr Neville Austin for the next 28 years.

By 1914 he was living in Talbot Road, Lingfield. Presumably due to the nature of his work he was at this time fortunate enough to have a telephone.
Telephone number – Lingfield 2.

In the mid-1920s he dispensed for Doctors Balme, Brand and Wilson in Dormansland, originally dispensing from a wooden shed on iron wheels situated between an old chapel in the Platt (now Lavender Cottage) and the lane leading to View Terrace.

When the old chapel was sold an alternative site had to be found for Mr Sandall's chemist shop. Henry Steer, the builder, offered to transport the wooden shed and place it at the edge of his builder's yard, (where the houses in Ladbroke Hurst now stand) where it remained for many years.

In the early years he was often called on to give treatment in emergencies and was remembered for his skill, helpfulness and cheery personality.

Leonard Sandall was an enthusiastic field-naturalist and microscopist. In 1904 he became a member of the Postal Microscopical Society and by 1906 had taken up office as Secretary to the Society; a post he was to hold for 30 years. At the time the Society had built up a large collection of slides, mainly made up of donations from members and the new Secretary sold off a number of the less interesting slides and with the money bought new slides which were of greater interest to the Society. In 1906 the annual subscription to the Society was five shillings (25p).

He was a dedicated microscopist, always ready to help other enthusiasts. He was also a prolific writer of notebooks, many of which are now preserved in the Society's archives. All his spare time was spent studying in his work-room and lab preparing and mounting slides, examining all kinds of material and preserving them in tubes and boxes. He also corresponded with fellow naturalists, regularly sending microscopic slides out to members of the Society, answering letters and pursuing his studies in fresh-water biology. From his notebook of 1914 it is interesting to see that when he sent a letter one day he received the reply the following day, (a sad reflection on the present-day postal service!).

In 1942, aged 72, he wrote a book 'Fifty Years a Microscopist' looking back on his studies and in which he hoped to 'excite a taste and create a stimulus for more serious work and interest in this most absorbing and delightful study'. In his 1948 notebook he mentions writing this book during war-time bombing raids. He could not send his microscopical slides out to members during the war because of the risk of being broken and so sent out his little note-books instead.

He records with fondness his work with the Postal Microscopical Society and the friendships he made. 'Thousands of slides passed through my hands and all kinds of objectives and apparatus was sent me for examination and an opinion – all this activity was a great delight to me'. He talks of the pond-life outings, photographic sessions, picnics, bicycle rides, car rides, train rides that he and his friends took, all concentrating on obtaining microscopical material.

Leonard Sandall pursued his studies in fresh-water biology and was still corresponding with a wide circle of fellow naturalists right up to the time of his death in 1959 aged 88.

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Sources:

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Postal Microscopical Society

Garry Steer