

## The Founding of the Roehampton Estate Garden Society

Exactly 100 years ago the Roehampton Estate (now the Dover House Estate) looked very different than it does today. The show-piece cottage garden estate being built under the Homes Fit For Heroes programme was two years into construction and the lovely gardens which we witness in 2022 were some way off.

Instead, the open spaces resembled a bomb site. As the Roehampton Estate Gazette reported,

***‘Barbed wire entanglements, concrete pill boxes, lumps of old iron, enough bricks to build a home and a few old boats made up the rich and varied assortment of litter with which the ground was impregnated.’***

**Richard Sudell**

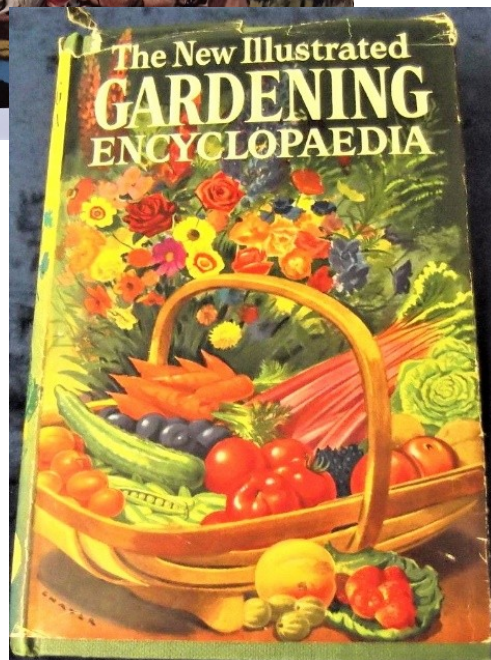


This is where Roehampton resident Richard Sudell took action. Richard, a Landscape Gardener, and his first wife Emily Daisy, moved into 65 Huntingfield Road. In January 1922 he became the first ever tenant chairman of the Roehampton Estate Garden Society (REGS). Sudell did more than anyone else to encourage his neighbours to take those barren garden spaces, which many tenants had never experienced before, and turn them into things of beauty.



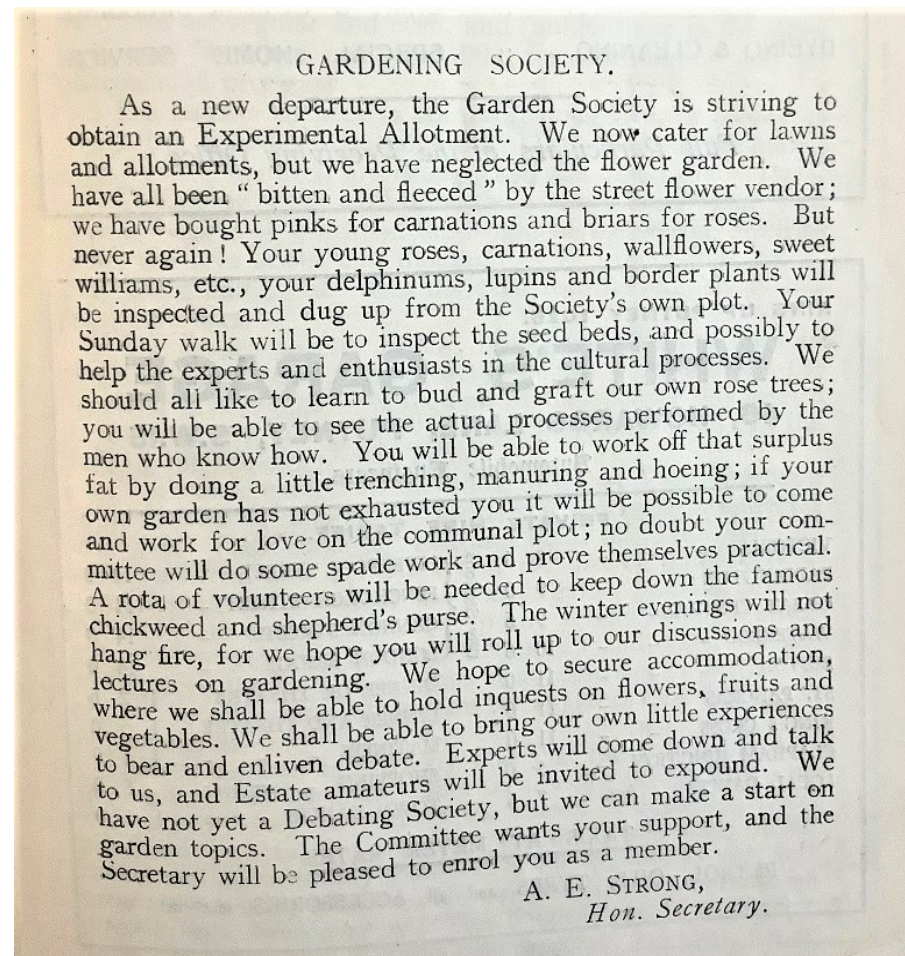
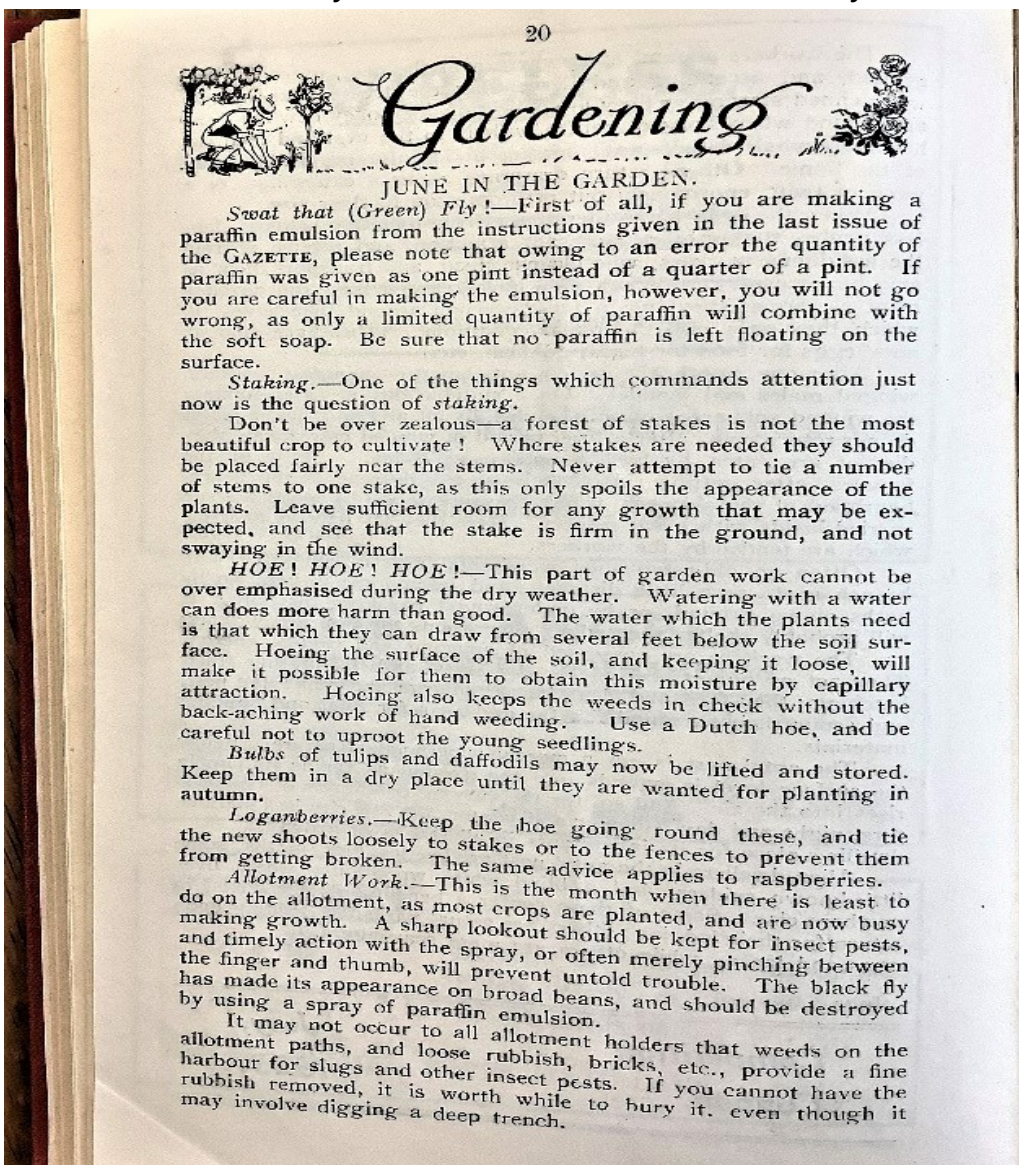
A working class gardener since the age of 14, Sudell was a remarkable character, an imprisoned World War One conscientious objector who would, against the odds, go on to play a leading role in the foundation of professionalised landscape architecture and build a following of millions for his practical horticultural instruction. On Roehampton he was a grassroots evangelical with passionate views that everyone, not the privileged few, should have access to open space, fresh air and horticultural beauty.

He quickly established gardening competitions as a way of inspiring his neighbours, front and back gardens, flowers, fruit and vegetables coming under the eye of scrupulous judges much as they still do today.



Sudell was a staunch advocate for the Garden City movement, which promoted the uplifting nature of green space for all, and would carry that belief for his entire life. In the interwar years his experience of gardening instruction in Roehampton, both written and with neighbours in the gardens themselves, helped him become one of the most influential garden journalists of the age, writing for millions every week in the Daily Herald newspaper and writing 47 books on the subject. Almost every gardener in the country had a Sudell volume on the shelf.

In just a few short years, through gentle encouragement, instruction and tireless organisation, Sudell presided over a remarkable transformation. The estate burst into astonishing colour. Garden fever swept the estate, hundreds joining REGS to take advantage of his teaching, bulk buying of bulbs and the communal use of gardening equipment including a lawn mower. Three allotment sites (two of which are still in use today) were provided. Sudell insisted that at least part of one of these was used for experimentation, tenants coming along to learn how to grow an incredible variety of vegetables, knowledge that they would take back to their own back gardens. Sudell wrote the Gardening Column for the Roehampton Estate Tenants Association Gazette for several years, even after he moved away from the Estate.



At Roehampton and in other interwar housing developments we were witnessing the birth of the British suburban garden as we know it today, the start of a passion that earned us our reputation as a land of gardeners.

Richard Sudell also found time to found the Institute of Landscape Architects (now the Landscape Institute) which campaigned for proper landscape planning of post war Britain and attracted landscape giants such as Geoffrey Jellicoe, Brenda Colvin and Thomas Mawson.

He built his own garden and landscape practice although much of his work remains unknown. His most visible remaining work is the courtyard garden at **Dolphin Square, Pimlico** which was saved from developers by campaigners last year and is worth visiting.



**Richard Sudell**, who died aged 76 in 1968, is in many ways the forgotten man of garden and landscape history. On the hundredth anniversary year of the Society he founded we can help to begin to change this.

## CIGARETTE CARDS

Richard Sudell wrote the descriptions on the reverse of Wills ***“COMPLETE GUIDE TO GARDEN FLOWERS”*** Cigarette Cards in 1939.

***“Cultivation of champion blooms to amaze neighbours”***

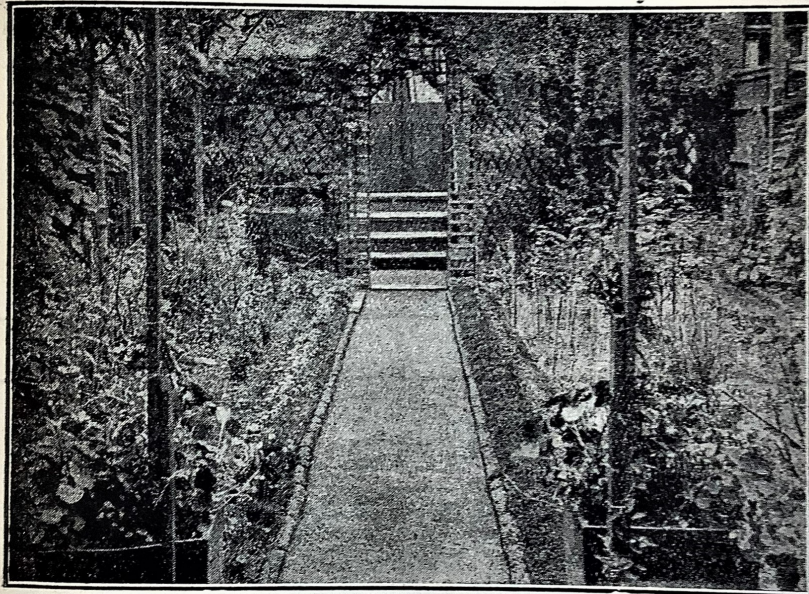


With many thanks to Michael Gilson, whose book *Behind the Privet Hedge: Richard Sudell, Suburbia and the Beautification of Britain* is to be published by Reaktion Books next year

## GARDENING.

### DESIGN AND CULTIVATION.

*Designing.*—The first consideration in planning the garden is its aspect. Wherever possible paths should be made to run North and South. The design should be as simple as possible. It is a good plan to make a little sketch before commencing operations. The existing features will have to be studied, such as a shapely tree or well-grown bush, as well as the previous arrangement, where the garden is an old one. If special features, such as arches and trellises, are desired, these should be noted on the sketch plan and measured according to the size of the garden.



A few wooden pegs are useful before digging is commenced, for marking out the paths. It is obviously a waste of labour to dig where a path is intended. The designer should remember the following general rules:—

Make straight wide paths if washing has to be dried.

Contrive that views of special features shall be seen from the windows, and possibly from the street.

Consider the position of flower borders, and whether sunny or shaded.

Decide whether a lawn is desirable, and prune or remove overgrown trees.

Discover where creepers will be needed to cover unsightly walls or trellises.

## Join the Roehampton Estate Garden Society.

\* \* \*  
*Affiliated to the London Gardens Guild and  
the National Union of Allotment Holders.*

\* \* \*

**OBJECTS.** The objects of the Society shall be to promote the planting and tending of gardens on the Estate by means of Lectures, Flower Shows and Garden Competitions.

**BENEFITS.** The use of Lawn Mower and Roller at very low charges. Seeds (both Vegetable and Flowers) may be purchased at reduced prices.

\* \* \*

### MEMBERSHIP FORM.

*I (we) the undersigned, wish to become members of the above Society, and enclose the sum of.....*

Name(s).....

Address .....

Subscription, 1/6 for first member of household, and 6d. others, payable in advance. All subscriptions to be forwarded to the Hon. Treasurer, A. C. Turner, Esq., 72, Putney Park Lane.

**Minutes of the first meeting of  
THE ROEHAMPTON ESTATE GARDEN  
SOCIETY  
JANUARY 26<sup>TH</sup> 1922**

*"Calling the tenants together in respect  
of  
beautifying the Estate by means of  
planting  
and tending their gardens"*

The meeting was held in the estate office and Mr M. Berry (manager of the LCC Housing Dept) Chairman and Richard Sudell (Secretary of the London Gardens Guild) spoke about the benefits of forming a Garden Society. 50 tenants attended the meeting and 15 of those were elected to serve on the committee.

Minutes of General meeting to form a  
Garden society by the tenants of the L.C.C.  
Rochampton Housing estate: Held at the estate  
office on Thurs. Jan. 26<sup>th</sup> 1922.  
About 50 were present  
Chairman. Mr. Berry Esq. manager of the L.C.C.  
Housing dept.

The chairman in opening the proceedings  
described the object of calling the tenants  
together in respect of beautifying the estate  
by means of planting & tending their gardens  
& of the interest he personally took in such  
matters.

Mr. R. Sudell Sec. of the London Gardens  
Guild then spoke of the advantages of a Garden  
society & the help that could be given by means  
of lectures, competitions, flower shows,  
leaflets, & co-operation of seed buying & of the  
schemes that were already in existence on  
the various L.C.C. estates.

The following resolution was then carried  
unanimously. That this meeting form themselves  
into The Rochampton Estate Garden society.  
It was then agreed that the officers should  
consist of President, Chairman, sec. & treas.  
& 12 to form a committee.

The committee selected were:-  
Mrs R. Clark. Mrs. Greaves Messrs H. W. Gray.  
H. Berry. J. Burbidge. J. N. Edwards. W. Guckan.  
C. Hobbs. Mr. Erlace. J. C. Jones. R. Sudell.  
W. S. Thomas. H. E. Valentin. E. O. Williams  
F. G. Williams (15)

# Minutes of the Second meeting of THE ROEHAMPTON ESTATE GARDEN SOCIETY

1<sup>st</sup> FEBRUARY 1922

Richard Sudell is elected Chairman and Mr Valentine elected as Vice Chairman.

There are two Sub-Committees for Allotments and for Gardens.

Fees are decided on and arrangements made to discuss competitions and lectures.

The first member in a household would pay 2/-, the second 1/-, the third 6d, and children under 14 yrs. 3d. It is decided to canvas orders for seed buying.

The Society would become affiliated to the London Gardens Guild and the National Society of Allotment Holders.

It was decided to hold over rule making to the next meeting.

Report of 1<sup>st</sup> committee meeting held at the estate office on Wed. Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> 1922.  
Members present Mrs R. Clark. Mr Greaves. Messrs R. Sudell. H.W. Bray. H. Berry. J. Burbidge. J.M. Edwards. Alb. Gelliam. C. Hobbs. J.C. Jones. H.E. Valentine. W. S. Thomas. F.A. Williams & E.O. Williams  
Pro. by F.A. Williams sec. by. H. Berry.  
Mr. R. Sudell as Chairman. cas. usam.  
After discussion the following was re-arranged:-  
Messrs J. Burbidge & Alb. Gelliam as Secs:-  
Vice Chairman. Mr H. E. Valentine, as  
Allotments sub-committee. Messrs C. Hobbs. Edwards. Jones. Thomas. & E. O. Williams.  
Gardens sub-committee Mrs R. Clark. Mrs Greaves. Messrs H. Berry & F.A. Williams.  
The sub-committees to arrange their own meetings. to canvas orders for seed buying arrange competitions & lectures.  
The formation of rules was held over till next meeting.  
It was then unanimously agreed. The 2<sup>d</sup> annual sub. should be for the 1<sup>st</sup> member of the household. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1/- 3<sup>rd</sup> 6<sup>d</sup> children under 14 yrs. 3<sup>d</sup>.  
The committee desired that the society should become affiliated to the London Gardens Guild & the National society of Allotment holders.  
H.E. Valentine  
Chairman 3 March 1922

Roehampton



# LONDON GARDENS GUILD

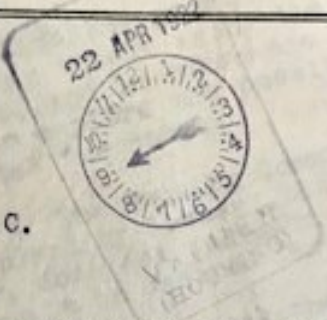
OBJECT: To promote the planting and tending of gardens in the industrial districts of London, and to initiate and encourage Garden Competitions and Flower Shows.

Vice-Presidents: THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON, THE RT. HON. ARTHUR HENDERSON, M.P., THE RIGHT HON. G. N. BARNES, M.P., REV. F. B. MEYER.

Chairman: Mrs. NOEL BUXTON.  
Hon. Treas: Miss M. STUBBS.  
Sec: RICHARD SUDELL, A.R.H.S.  
Organizing Sec: Mrs. E. D. SUDELL.

LONDON GARDEN SETTLEMENT  
61, PENROSE STREET  
WALWORTH ROAD, S.E. 17.

Phone: Hap 433.



April 21st 1922.

4175

H. Berry Esq.,  
Housing Manager L.C.C.

Dear Sir,

You will be interested to know that the Gardening Society on the Roehampton Estate is making steady progress. We had a well attended meeting at the school on the Estate, and Mr W.H.Jenkins of the Board of Agriculture gave a very useful lecture on gardening subjects.

At the close of the meeting a Sports Committee was elected, and it was suggested that I should see you as to what land could be used by the tenants for games and sports. Perhaps you could give me a ring, and make an appointment.

Yours faithfully,

*R. Sudell*

Secretary.

*Will call 11-30 Monday 8 May*

*Called 8-5-22*

*[Signature]*

Letter to M Berry Esq (the housing manager for the LCC) from Richard Sudell in April 1922 praising the Garden Society on the Roehampton Estate for the progress they are making.

Richard Sudell writes using his LONDON GARDENS GUILD notepaper, where he is secretary.

The **LONDON GARDENS GUILD** was set up to promote the planting and tending of gardens in London and to initiate Garden Competitions and Flower Shows. The Roehampton Estate Garden Society was an exemplary member!