

John Swinnerton Phillimore (1873-1926)

The Lane

The lane runs deep in rabbit-riddled banks.
How many hundred years of wheel and hoof
And plodding feet that good cowhide makes proof
Have grooved this rut, which lurks and winds and thanks
The burly stools of oak, the lissom ranks
Of maple and spindlewood for eaves of roof
So large they almost fend high noon aloof?
Up in the hedge the wind may play his pranks;

Here the dead-calms of the after-sunset hour
Hold every scent afloat, immobilised,
Along the leafy-margin'd air-lagoon.
Briar-bush and honeysuckle and elderflower –
Each in his turn, you capture, analysed
In such retort, the essential sweets of June.

The poem is almost certainly about Sandy Lane which runs through the Estate and particularly one section between the Guide camp and Mohawk Cottages which is steeply banked and where the oaks provide a canopy pierced by shafts of the midday sun.

Jack Phillimore, was a great classical scholar who was at Oxford and went on to become Professor of Classics at Glasgow University. He published several books of poetry. In his 20s he pioneered a number of climbs in the Dolomites and his contribution to Alpine mountaineering is recognized by the resort of Cortina.

Jack lived at one end of Sandy Lane and he is buried in Shedfield Church. His grave is near the Old Tower.

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