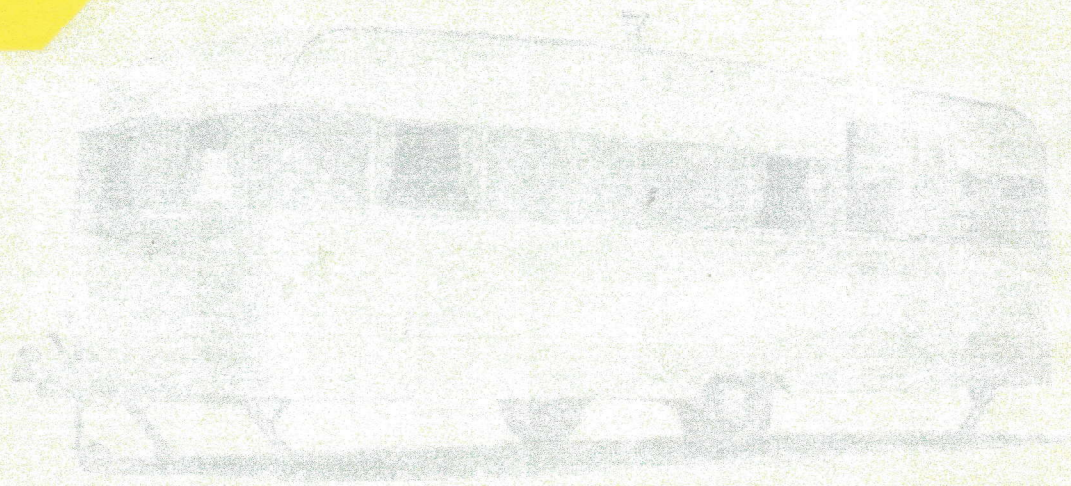


**DUNTON PARK CARAVAN SITE**



*Lower Dunton Road • Laindon • Essex*

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## DUNTON PARK CARAVAN SITE

### *HISTORY*

(Note: This history has been compiled from information given by persons who have a long and intimate knowledge of Dunton Park, either as past employees of the former Labour Colony or as old residents living near to Dunton Park. The information given has been checked as far as possible with documents, records and plans left behind by the L.C.C.)

At the beginning of the century (round about the year 1900) Fels Trust acquired Dunton Park, then known as Sumper's Farm, several hundred acres in extent and entrusted the same to the Poplar Board of Guardians.

It was then an ordinary private farm but within a short space of time it was completely transformed: the old farmhouse remained (and still remains) but there sprang up what was virtually a small but complete and self-contained rural village, the idea being to set up a Colony where unemployed, sick or distressed people could live and rehabilitate themselves in pleasant surroundings and in good conditions become fit and socially useful.

All the services and facilities were installed for such a self-contained community and these included various substantial buildings (both of brick and timber on solid foundations) some of considerable size, most of which are still standing; these buildings comprised the following: Two large dormitory buildings (one of brick and tile construction, both being 150ft x 50ft approx.), General Store, a Clothing store, Workshops of all kinds (including Tailors, Cobblers, Carpenters, Plumbers), Stables, Piggeries, Chicken & Poultry Houses, Cow Sheds, Milking Parlour, Dairy, Slaughter House, Laundry, Boiler House (a modern version of which still supplies Hot Water for use and Heating to all the main buildings), Clinic and Dispensary, Sick Bay (which a Dr. Henderson attended on 2 days every week). There were also 3 large dormitories, Dining Hall and large Kitchen together with several offices. The General Store on the site supplied cigarettes and tobacco to the inmates, it also sold Fruit, Vegetables and Dairy Produce, etc., to the inmates to take with them on the week-end when they were given passes and allowed to go home. Local Residents were also allowed to purchase goods from the store.

The Colony also had its own sewage plant and a good wide road was driven through the entire length of the area in which the permanently sited buildings stood.

The large permanent staff lived in cottages on or near the Camp.

The inmates numbering between 200/300 were housed either in the dormitories or in movable huts in and around the Farm and Orchard: one of these movable huts (a wooden structure 14ft x 10ft on iron wheels and in which six to eight persons presumably lived) still remains at Dunton Park. There must have been about a dozen or more of these movable dwellings because in a dump on the site a dozen or more sets of wheels of the type on the hut still remaining, were found a few years ago. Another of these structures was in fact destroyed by the present owners in 1960.

During the daytime the inmates were employed either at Dunton Park or were sent to other Farms, Hospitals or similar Institutions, even as far as Brentwood.

The produce of the Colony was used for its own inmates and staff and the other Institutions and any surplus was sold through the markets.

When the Poplar Board of Guardians was disbanded (believed to be 1928) the L.C.C. took over the Camp and continued to run this self-contained community on similar lines until 1941.

In 1941, owing to the hostilities, the Colony was cleared of its inmates, who at that time, according to the Records numbers 175. The Permanent staff however, remained in occupations.

The Camp was then immediately taken over by the Civil Defence and prepared and equipped as a Hospital for local Air Raid or war casualties; but fortunately the occasion to use it as such did not arise.

In 1942 the Military Authorities took the whole Camp over from the Civil Defence Authority and every available building or accommodation was used to house troops and more camped out under canvas in the fields and Orchard.

Early in 1943 the Army Authorities moved out and the Royal Air Force moved in and remained until the end of 1944.

During all this time the permanent staff of the L.C.C. had remained in occupation and they did so right until 1956. Early that year the main batch of the permanent staff was drafted to various Hospitals, etc., leaving Mr. P. Hibbard the Gate-keeper and Mr. Goldingay, Accountant and Superintendent in occupation: they retired in June 1956 and in the same month Mr. C. Gray took over the Colony and changed the name to Charles Caravan Park.

By the end of June 1956 he had 4 residential Caravans sited on the Camp and by the end of October 1956 this number had increased to between 12/20 Caravans.

In June 1960 the Camp was acquired from Mr. Gray by the present owners and at that time there were approximately 120 residential caravans stationed on the site, some of which Mr. Gray took with him. By the end of August 1960 the site had accommodated 148 residential and holiday caravans.

In September of the same year the number of Residential Vans was 121 for which the present owners have a Site Licence.

During Mr. Grays' ownership the Authorities felt compelled to complain of conditions on the Site and indeed issued various enforcement notices in an endeavour to close down same. The following pages will indicate the present conditions of the site and the amenities and facilities enjoyed by the residents.

## **LIFE ON DUNTON PARK CARAVAN SITE**

The site has many and varied activities which are all run by the management and the residents without the assistance of outside help.

The Dunton Park Country Club is run by the owners and all the profits from the sale of goods are given to the social activities. This Club has a membership of 250 persons.

The Social Club is divided into several sections with each section running its own affairs. The following gives a general precis of the general activities.

### **I. General Activities**

1. Outings to coastal resorts are arranged. There were four trips last year and two have already been booked for this coming summer. Trips to the local shows and theatres are arranged throughout the year.
2. Dances and special social evenings are arranged and held on Saturdays every sixth week.
3. A Bingo session is held every Thursday evening and is run on a NON PROFIT BASIS.
4. Once a year and usually on the second Saturday in July an outside Garden Show is held and on the following Saturday a Flower Show is held incorporating a competition for jams, cakes and special dishes. Both these shows are judged by experts. On the evening of the Flower Show a Carnival Night is held when there is a presentation of the prizes.
5. Twice a year there is entertainment for the Old Age Pensioners when they are given a Tea Party and followed by a Dance.
6. A Christmas Party is given for all the children on the site with invitations extended to orphans and other poor children in the area. In all there are approximately 150 children who sit down to tea and who each receives a toy, sweets and fruit from Father Christmas. This is followed in the evening by a Christmas Party for the adults.
7. Every Friday night there is a Cinema show.
8. Last year a course of First Aid classes were given and it is anticipated that these will be resumed.
9. For the last two years an entry in the local Town Carnival has been made and on both occasions the 1st Prize and Special Trophy have been awarded to us for Best Decorated Float in show.

## **DUNTON PARK CARAVAN SITE**

### **II. Men's Clubs**

1. The Football Team are members of the Essex Football Association and played the runners-up to the winners of the Basildon League, beating them seven goals to four. The team is greatly respected and has joined the League for the 1963/64 season.
2. A Cricket Team is in formation for the coming season.
3. There is a Darts Team which holds matches at home and away.
4. There is a Table Tennis Team in which competitions are held.
5. There is a Chess and Draughts Team which hold competitions.
6. For those in training there are gymnastics and weight-lifting classes twice weekly.

### **III. Women's Clubs**

1. Dart Teams are formed for inter site matches.
2. Table Tennis is a favourite game.
3. A Gymnastics class is held one evening a week, during which indoor sports are practiced, i.e. Netball, Running and Jumping.
4. Afternoon meetings are arranged when film shows and lectures are given by many various bodies. Addresses have been given from such as the Chief of the Fire Brigade, a Medical Officer of Health from the Essex County Council.

### **IV. Children's Activities**

1. General boys' sports.
2. General girls' sports.
3. Joint outings and rambles under supervision.
4. A babies' afternoon is held on Wednesday in the Social Hall when some of the mothers take charge and all sorts of games are played and various indoor toys are available such as slides, cars, horses, etc.

## **DUNTON PARK CARAVAN SITE**

### **V. Religious Life**

The CHURCH OF ENGLAND hold a Sunday School meeting for children (although all and any age are welcomed) every week at 3 p.m. in one of the rooms of the Cottage, or in the Club Hall. Evening services on Sunday are shortly to be commenced.

The ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH hold a service on the first Sunday of every month at 11 a.m. in the Club Hall. The service is for all age groups and Holy Communion is given.

## **DUNTON PARK CARAVAN SITE**

### **VI Health**

The rural setting of the site, its open planning and the high standard of amenities have conduced to a healthy community at Dunton Park.

A large number of the residents came to the site for health reasons ; they can say they are now enjoying life as they never did before.

Childen have particularly enjoyed good health. A report on the children's general health is given by the local schools headmistress—see letter attached.

Over 40 babies were born on the site in 1962 without a single fatality.

Only two deaths have occured in the last two years.



**ESSEX EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

School Dunton County Primary  
Lower Dunton Road,  
Postal Address Nr. Brentwood.

Date 1st April 1963

Dear Sir,

With reference to your recent letter, there are at the present date 27 children from the Dunton Park Caravan site attending this school.

Their attendance and health on the whole is good, their ability, character and behaviour varies to the same extent as that of any similar number of children living in houses in this district. In other words, they are an integral part of the school population, indistinguishable from the other pupils.

Yours truly,

*M. Haysnover*

Headmistress.

## **DUNTON PARK CARAVAN SITE**

### **VII Travelling Facilities**

Dunton Park is most conveniently and pleasantly situated being one mile from the Southend Arterial Road.

Dunton Park is on the Laindon to Brentwood Bus route. Buses stopping at the entrance of the camp every hour from either direction, Laindon being 3 miles or 12 minutes travelling time and Brentwood 7 miles or 20 minutes travelling time.

By an easy single change almost any important neighbouring town, industrial or shopping centre can be reached, including Basildon, Southend, Chelmsford, Brentwood, Grays, Dagenham, Romford, Ilford, etc.

There is a fast and frequent train service to and from Laindon on the main electrified Railway between London (Fenchurch Street) to Southend—28 minutes to London.

Dunton Park is one mile walking distance from Laindon Town and Station.

## **DUNTON PARK CARAVAN SITE**

### **VIII. Road Safety**

Every endeavour is made to ensure the prevention of road accidents and so maintain the record. No accident has ever occurred, to our knowledge, on the site Road, at the entrance of the Caravan Site and the Lower Dunton Road or, in Lower Dunton Road itself, being connected in any way with the residents of the Caravan Site.

A speed limit of 10 m.p.h. is imposed on our private road, for which we have ample road signs posted.

At the entrance of the Site we have carried out the Model Standard for sight lines at road junctions as laid down by the Essex County Council.

## DUNTON PARK CARAVAN SITE

### IX. AMENITIES WHICH HAVE BEEN INSTALLED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS (BEING THE PERIOD OF OWNERSHIP).

1. Thousands of feet of paths and roads have been laid.
2. Water supply has been taken around the site.
3. Electricity supply has been taken around the site.
4. Fire points have been installed in accordance with the Licence.
5. A new Bath and Lavatory block has been built.
6. The existing lavatories have been cleaned and made usable.
7. The existing sewerage system has been completely overhauled and much renewed.
8. A completely new second sewerage system has been installed. (The work attached to items numbered 7 and 8 has been carried out to the entire wishes of the River Board.)
9. New car parks have been installed.
10. The entrance and road into the Caravan Site have been shaped and curbed.
11. Carried out the proper sight line regulation to the entrance of the Site—not under instructions but part of the safety campaign.
12. Numbered and named the three site locations, fixing sign boards accordingly.
13. Fixed Speed Limit sign boards.
14. Street lighting taken around site.
15. Provided small hall for the children to play in.
16. Provided the very large hall for training and indoor games.
17. Provided Club Hall (this entailed repairs, alterations and furnishing same, including gas heating).
18. Provided and run a Licensed Bar, including a cigarette licence. This is run on a Non Profit Basis.
19. Provided a Committee Room in the Cottage.
20. Set aside lawn areas for the Children's Play Grounds.
21. Provided dustbins (approximately 60).
22. Owing to the Council's collection inability and for health reasons, we have a refuse collection and disposal appliance. We believe in hygiene, hence our daily collection of refuse saves the number of dustbins standing around, thus keeping the site cleaner and healthier.
23. A telephone kiosk has been built and the telephone installed.
24. Laundry facilities have been provided.

*DUNTON PARK CARAVAN SITES LTD.*  
*STATE PROUDLY AND CONFIDENTLY THAT*  
*NO CARAVAN SITE OR PARK IN ENGLAND*  
*HAS MORE SOCIAL LIFE OR FACILITIES THAN ARE*  
*PROVIDED AT DUNTON PARK.*