

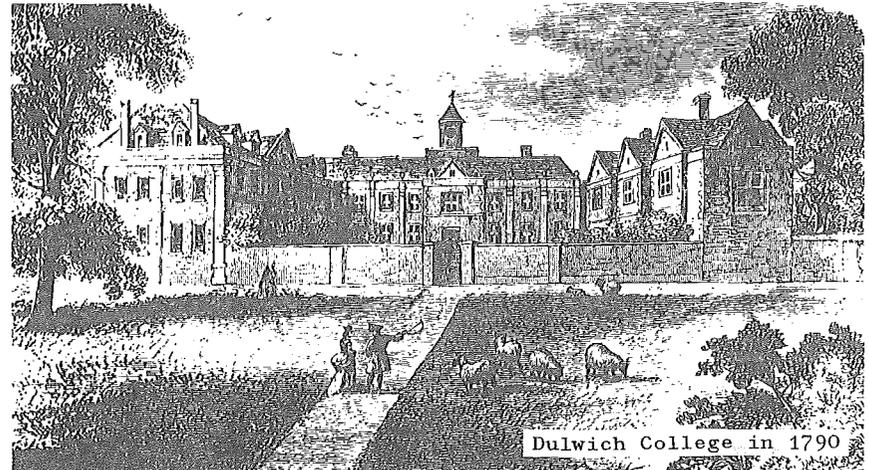
The Dulwich Society

TO FOSTER AND SAFEGUARD THE AMENITIES OF DULWICH

Newsletter 33

July 1976

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The Estate Governors

The Estate Governors came into being under an Act of 1882 when the separate administration of the Dulwich Estate as part of the Foundation was provided for. Previously the administration was undertaken by the College Governors. Originally there were 19 representative Estate Governors but this was increased in 1962 to 25. Since 1882 there have been 173 Estates Governors representing and appointed by the Beneficiaries including Co-optative Governors from the Estate. Some of the original Parishes associated with Edward Alleyn and appointing representatives were later included in Metropolitan Boroughs and are now part of London Boroughs. All the Beneficiaries are represented with 2 from St. Botolphs Without Bishopsgate, 8 from Dulwich College, 4 from the London Borough of Southwark, 2 from the London Borough of Islington, and one each from St. Olaves and St. Saviours, James Allens Girls School and the Central Foundation Schools of London.

Originally there were 3 Co-optative Governors and there are now 6. The Chairman is elected by members of the Board and re-appointed annually for a term of 3 years. Since 1882 the Estates Board has been made up of men and women from all walks of life, some having household names and distinguished careers while others have given many years of service to Local Government and voluntary organisations. Their services to the Board have brought no payment or reward except a certain knowledge of impartial devotion to the interests of the Estate and the Beneficiaries concerned. The present Chairman is Mr R.W. Brown, JP, MP, and the Deputy Chairman Mr H. Peace, MC.

G.V. White, Secretary & General Manager

MEMBERS MEETINGS

7 October: Wild Life 8 pm St. Barnabas' Hall

This programme will comprise talks on foxes, hedgehogs, birds and plants. The subject matter will be illustrated with both slides and recordings. Light refreshments, tea and biscuits, will be served.

4 November: A Joint Meeting with the Arboricultural Association and Dulwich Society Trees Sub Committee 8 pm St. Barnabas' Hall

The meeting will take the form of a panel with representatives from various interested parties. Fuller details later.

16 December: The combined meeting with the Dulwich Choral Society has been deferred to 16 December to allow the Choral Society to recharge their batteries after their major concert on 27 November. It will be in St. Barnabas' Hall.

PLANNING

87-89 College Road

After much discussion between the Estates Governors' representatives and the London Borough of Southwark, the latter has now rejected the proposed development of this site, on which we have reported in earlier newsletters. The main grounds for the rejection are incompatibility with surrounding development and excessive density. The latter is of particular interest to us. It has been strongly suggested in the past that planning applications for developments which do not fill sites to the maximum permitted development will be rejected on the grounds that all available sites should be fully developed; and we have therefore not felt free to oppose on 'excessive density' grounds developments that do not go beyond permitted densities. The proposals for 87-89 College Road were of this kind, and it is perhaps fair to say that had the Society been fully aware of the local authority's view as now expressed in their rejection of this development, we ourselves would have adopted a more critical attitude towards it. However, the message has now been received and understood, and future proposals of this and other sensitive sites in the area will receive our close and critical attention.

2 Dulwich Wood Avenue

We reported proposals for development on this site in our newsletter no. 31. At the same time, we reported the reactions of some Society members to alternative proposals. Although we recognised the forces of these objections, the Town Planning Sub-Committee and subsequently the Society's Executive Committee decided not to oppose the development. We now hear that, the local authority having failed to determine the applications within the statutory period, the developers have appealed to the Secretary of State for the Environment. We in turn have been asked whether we are content to rely on written representations to the Secretary of State or whether we would wish to have a full public enquiry, and we have stated that written representations should be sufficient. Meanwhile, the local authority have told the Secretary of State that had they determined these applications in time they would have rejected them on the grounds of over-intensive use of the site and the loss of trees; and we now await the Secretary of State's decision.

5 Alleyn Park

As we have reported on previous occasions, the redevelopment of individual sites in Alleyn Park and Alleyn Road present great difficulties because of the

distinctive nature of much of the surrounding property. Although we have frequently been able to decide without difficulty that a proposed development is unacceptable, we have found it less easy to suggest the kind of development that would be compatible with surrounding properties.

A new application has now been submitted to the London Borough of Southwark in respect of this site. This proposes the construction of five 3-storey houses with integral garages. This appears to be a standard 'town house' development entirely unsuited to this area. We have made representations to this effect to the London Borough of Southwark and await the outcome.

Crystal Palace High Level Station

This is another site with a long history. Members will recall that while some other local amenity societies have said that no decisions about the use of the site should be taken until the long-term future of the Crystal Palace site itself is settled, the Dulwich Society have supported the GLC in its proposal to develop the site for permanent housing (a number of 'mobile homes' have stood on the site for some years now).

We have now seen plans for this site by C. H. Elsom, Pack and Partners, Architects - Mr Elsom is a Dulwich resident - and we hope that it will be possible to display the plan at a members' meeting in the near future. We think that members will agree with the Chairman of the Society and the Chairman of the Town Planning Sub-Committee in thinking that this development will be a distinguished addition to the architectural quality of the area and that, consisting as it will of low-rise buildings projecting for the most part only one storey above the level of the Crystal Palace Parade, fears that such a development would dominate the adjacent lower-lying areas will be shown to be groundless.

Crystal Palace Forum

A further meeting of the Forum is to take place on 8 July and at the time of writing the papers for the meeting have just reached us. They show that the numerous ideas for 'improvements' of the Crystal Palace Park and the Exhibition site - including an arts centre, restaurants, a TV 're-run' theatre, a museum and many other facilities - are almost without exception regarded by the GLC as either inappropriate or inopportune. This tends to confirm our own feeling that in present and foreseeable financial circumstances there is virtually no prospect of any significant improvements to the Exhibition site, and that continued regular meetings of the Forum, attended as they are by a considerable body of GLC officials, are likely to prove something of a waste of time and

public funds. Our representatives will attend the meeting with this in mind, and we shall report again in the next newsletter.

Multiple Occupation

Concern has been expressed by some members of the Society about the increasing tendency to convert substantial Victorian houses for multiple occupation. Members will be interested to know that the Estates Governors have also been giving some thought to this problem and that they have reached the conclusion that there are some roads in the area where such changes would be appropriate. These include: Eynella Road, Stradella Road, Croxted Road, East Dulwich Grove, Half Moon Lane, South Croxted Road and Winterbrook Road.

TREES

Dulwich Wood Avenue

The Trees Sub-Committee has been keeping a watchful eye on the site to the rear of 22-28 Dulwich Wood Avenue since applications were made in 1973 to build on an area which was thickly wooded with trees in variable condition. Along the Dulwich Wood Park side there were some fine oak trees with more oaks and various other specimens of attractive trees on the site itself.

With the acute land shortage, and other factors, neither we nor the Planning Committee felt that we could object to building taking place on the site provided every effort was made to protect and retain as many trees as possible.

When therefore we saw the final plans in May 1975 members of the sub-committee visited the site where we received confirmation that a careful study of the trees had been made in a clear attempt to retain as many as practicable. Assurances to this effect were also received from Southwark Council. Having received such assurances your Committee felt that all that could be done had been done.

Recently a member living nearby reported that the trees there were in a bad state. On visiting the site it was confirmed that many trees has been destroyed and large oak trees mutilated in the course of the building operations. This was reported to the Governors and to Southwark. The Governors, while acknowledging our letter have not yet commented on it while Southwark have said little more than that they are '... most concerned about the manner in which work has progressed and have repeatedly stressed to the Architect that the trees should be adequately protected.'

What are the lessons to be learned from this? It is hardly possible for your Committee to visit all building sites regularly and frequently to see that contractors are doing their work without harming the trees. Some time ago one of our members nearly had his toes cut off by a bulldozer when he stood by trees he was trying to protect from having the roots sheared through. It is only too easy for Authorities to pay lip service to their concern for trees but if they fail to supervise progress on site they will have to accept the opprobrium they deserve.

Members of the Society are asked to be as vigilant as possible in reporting failure to protect trees on sites where building is taking place and assurances are known to have been given. The Trees Sub-Committee will do all it can as quickly as it can by taking up cases with the appropriate authorities. In this particular instance we are waiting to hear if anything can be done to retrieve the situation but fear that lack of supervision and disregard for the care and preservation of trees on site may have ruined much of what we tried to preserve.

The Village

Your sub-Committee has also been following work being done around the trees at the North end of the Church of England school in the Village close by St Barnabas' Hall. Those who pass it will see that this part of the site has now been tidied up while care has been taken to preserve such trees as are worth keeping. We have written to ask if the area between the trees is to be turfed as we believe this would be much the best way to make the area attractive and preserve the rooting area of the trees.

Dulwich Woods

We have often been asked what plans exist for the care and use of the Dulwich Wood. We can now report on matters in hand.

At the Estate Governors' request Prof Lindsay, a forestry expert, has completed a survey of the woods. This lists the existing trees and comments on their condition. It recommends the removal of dead and dying trees and their replacement with, in some cases, species new to the woods.

Prof Lindsay was also asked whether the Woods could be made to be revenue-producing but in his opinion a 12 acre woodland would have no commercial value. This is a pity because the Woods do run at a loss in the sense that maintenance costs are far in excess of the income derived from the annual rental of keys. Keys to the access gates of the Woods can be hired from the Estates Office at £3.00 per annum.

Unfortunately some keyholders do not behave responsibly. They neglect to report gates that cannot be closed and some make a practice of leaving gates unlocked and more often than not open so that their children and pets can have free unsupervised access to the Woods. The Society trusts that its members do not offend in this way and that they will do all in their power to discourage this and other abuses of the Dulwich Woods.

Arboricultural Meeting

Our joint meeting with the South East Branch of The Arboricultural Association will probably be a panel discussion between (1) A local planning officer, (2) A representative from a firm of developers, (3) An expert arboriculturalist and (4) A local amenity society representative.

Each member of the panel will make a brief statement of his viewpoint and then the meeting will be open to the floor for questions and discussion.

This interesting meeting will take place at St Barnabas Hall on Thursday November 4, 1976, at 8.00 pm. Light refreshments will be served.

Members' Meeting June 3

After agonising difficulties we managed to get a projector working so that we could hand over to Mr W. E. Storey, GLC Horticultural Adviser, whose talk was amply illustrated with excellent slides which fully revealed the 'beautiful creation that is Trees'.

WILD LIFE

'Thames Transformed'

An exceptionally interesting meeting on 6 May took place, by kind permission of the Master, in the Great Hall of Dulwich College. On the fine big screen Mrs Harrison showed, in little more than an hour, some four hundred of her beautiful and interesting slides taken on trips down the Thames, often in early morning or late evening light. She showed them, of course, to illustrate Dr Jeffery Harrison's talk 'Thames Transformed'. He showed us some of the ways in which the river had formerly been polluted, especially by sewage on which the algae thrive and deoxygenated the water so that it was uninhabitable by fish and other living creatures. He pointed out that the development and installation of modern sewage plants which returned to the river only water fit for human re-use was a great success which should be widely known and appreciated. More spectacular was the return of enormous numbers of wildfowl, including geese. It was these which provided the main material for the lecture

and much delight for the audience. The photographs were fascinating and much appreciated by a large audience.

The Lonely Swan

Members and others sometimes wonder why there is only one swan on the Millpond. We hear from Mr A.J. Scott, lately Bailiff to Estates Governors, that at seventeen she is too old to be given another mate. She has in the past produced four families of cygnets. Mr Scott assures us that she is quite happy but in the last few months has aged too much even to continue to come to the gate for her breakfast which he, personally, gives her. The average length of life of a swan is twenty one years.

It is notoriously difficult to choose a mate successfully for a particular swan. In the wild state they live in large flocks where there is plenty of choice for mating but the choice is normally for life.

Sightings

We have been grateful again for reports of sightings by members but this time rather for their interest than for the number of observers. One was of a field mouse which habitually came close to the observer to be fed and another, an impressively long list from a school-boy of birds seen and heard in Dulwich during the last few years: sixty-eight species in all, including wildfowl. A cuckoo was heard in the woods by several observers in early May. We have heard of a number of butterflies but only from one member. More please! To encourage members to discover the wide variety of wild life in this area we are pleased to include the following note contributed by Miss Rosa Davis of College Road.

A Spring Walk in Search of Birds

April 1 was dull and cool when I met my friend at West Dulwich Station in the morning, hoping to hear or see some of the migrants.

We first entered Belair grounds and walked along beside the railway bank, often a good spot for birds but only the usual ones were in evidence such as magpie, thrush and dunnoek. Alongside the river we saw three coots sitting on their nests and here we stopped to chat to an interested groundsman who pointed out an inconspicuous female Carolina duck that had been there for some weeks. Whilst we were talking to him we heard the call of a lesser spotted woodpecker and saw it on a nearby dead alder tree busy excavating a hole. At the same time a long tailed tit and a goldcrest came and inspected the bush beside us.

From Belair we made our way by Lovers Walk to the Picture Gallery garden where we saw the usual pied wagtail on the lawn. Then we entered the Park and amongst the resident assortment of ducks and geese on the lake we were delighted to see a pair of little grebes or dabchicks. These birds spend more time under the water than on top. We were sorry to learn that the male whooper swan had been killed by a young boy, especially after the pair had successfully reared young for the last two seasons. Whilst having our lunch a pair of herons alighted on the island. This caused great excitement among the Park staff who had for some time been seeing a solitary bird as a regular visitor. Here we met two young ornithologists who had heard that morning all three warblers - chiff chaff, willow warbler and blackcap.

On Wilsons playing field we had a good view of a green woodpecker feeding on the grass by the hedge and a wheatear flitting about; we then heard our first chiff chaff of the season.

Finally, we wandered up Grange Lane skirting the allotments. A charm of goldfinches flew up and a little further along linnets and greenfinches called from the hedges. On the edge of the woods several tree sparrows were flitting about.

Although I have not mentioned some of the more common birds we also saw that day, this walk seemed particularly interesting for a suburban area and often when I have been further out in the country I have seen and heard far less.