



The Dulwich Society

TO FOSTER AND SAFEGUARD THE AMENITIES OF DULWICH

Newsletter 45

July 1979

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OUR MEMBERSHIP

At the latest count on 18th May we made the membership total 1195 which compares with 1149 at the same time last year. This means that we shall be printing 1400 copies of this newsletter since we always have to allow a margin of error in the distribution system and we need spares for enquiries from outside and so on. Extra printing means extra cost, so the sting in the tail of this little announcement is that, on 18th May, only 816 members had paid their £1.00 subscription (due last January). No doubt some more will have paid up by the time you receive this in response to reminders sent out, but if you feel a pang of remorse on reading this please remember that our Treasurer lives at 88 Alleyn Road and would like to hear from you.

OUR NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is typed on an electric typewriter on A.4 paper and the pages are then reduced in size to A.5 to enable us to produce the finished article in a folded form, small enough to be easily handled and distributed through members' letter-boxes. Remember that this is all done by voluntary helpers who appreciate the easy format. However, reducing it in size naturally reduces the size of the print and we have heard the occasional complaint that it is not easy to read. We are very reluctant to change the present system, partly no doubt because we are lazy, but mainly because ease of handling is a great advantage to a voluntary Society like ours and because any change would cost money. The newsletter is already the major item in the Society's budget and costs are increasing quite fast enough without our giving them an extra push. It would therefore help us to know whether the small print really is a problem to our readers. If you feel strongly about this (and are prepared to accept the financial consequences if you want a change) please drop a line to the Secretary - typed large, so that he can read it.

THE VILLAGE ROUNDABOUT

The roundabout system at the south end of the Village has now been in operation for about six months and the following facts may be of interest inasmuch as the Society's Traffic and Transport Sub-Committee has been closely concerned with the project throughout.

As long ago as February 1972 we were advised by Southwark Borough Council that in view of the frequency of accidents at the junction they were considering the creation of a 'mini roundabout' there which would involve the removal of the 100 year old drinking fountain, together with the finger post and milestone, all of which were to be re-sited somewhere to the north east of the junction.

The Society protested strongly at this obvious threat to the amenity and more particularly to the removal of old existing landmarks and there then followed protracted correspondence lasting several years during which a whole range of alternative plans and ideas were submitted to the Borough, all of which included the fountain in its original position. Eventually, the Borough agreed to retain the fountain but drafted an amended plan to convert the junction into an ordinary roundabout with the fountain, finger post and milestone as a centre-piece.

Subsequent to this, further delay was caused owing to the questions of finance as between the G.L.C. and the Borough. However the project has now been virtually completed and the Borough must be congratulated on the high standard of the work carried out on the centre-piece of the roundabout. Whilst not everyone is pleased to see yet another concession to the demands of vehicular traffic the majority of opinions expressed have been decidedly favourable.

THE MILESTONE AND THE ROUNDABOUT

The V milestone has stood on the same site at the South end of the Village since 1772. Over the years there have been many changes in its immediate surroundings.

The open Village Green, where sheep once grazed freely, gradually became enclosed and incorporated in the grounds of the Old College. In 1842 the Grammar School annexe was built on the corner of Gallery Road and the farm track which eventually became Burbage Road.

In 1877 what was to become the Village's best known, though possibly not best loved, landmark, Dr. Webster's Memorial Fountain, joined the milestone, seat, tree and fingerpost on their island site. Then in the early part of this century perhaps the most far reaching changes were made to this end of the Village.

The row of ancient shops including the original 'French Horn' Inn at the beginning of College Road were demolished and replaced by the Bank, Estate Agent and 'Rokeby'. On the opposite side of the High Street changes no less dramatic had also taken place. The 'Greyhound' Inn had already been demolished in the '90s and its eleven acres of pleasure grounds fronting on to the High Street as far as Burbage Road built over. Burbage Road had been made up and finally the large and ancient 'butcher's' pond on the corner opposite the Old Grammar School was filled in and the site developed.

After this the island site changed very little over the years, only the seat and tree disappearing, until today the latest of the long line of changes has taken place with the coming of the mini-roundabout.

With the raising of the level of the central island the milestone would have been moved for the first time in its history even if only upwards. The past two centuries had left their mark on the old stone: a corner knocked off by some iron bound cart wheel in the past, the top seemingly filled in with some sort of crude concrete and the remaining lettering on the two sides becoming worn with age.

The idea of restoring the stone was prompted by the excellent job done on the Beckenham High Street milestone at the behest of the Beckenham Society for their Jubilee project. Our Jubilee project you may remember had been the restoration of the Memorial Fountain. If the Village stone was to be restored while the site was in a state

of upheaval there was no time to lose.

The Stonemason from West Norwood who had worked on the Beckenham stone was contacted, estimates received and approved and, with Council co-operation, the stone lifted and moved to the mason's yard. Research had revealed the Latin inscription initials and date on the back of the stone which had been completely obliterated for many years. However, in the mason's yard close inspection revealed traces of the original lettering.

Now that the stone has been replaced in its original position on the island, anxiety has been expressed by some residents who assume that as it looks so new it must be a replica. To these residents we can give our assurance that it is still the original 18th century block of Portland stone as all stages of restoration were witnessed by members of our history Committee.

The fingerpost, however, is a replica. When the previous post, itself a replica, was removed it was found to have rotted considerably below ground and two of the three arms had been stolen by vandals or souvenir hunters. Thanks must be given to Southwark Council for providing the new post.

Now it can only be left for time to take its toll again. One day, perhaps not in our lifetime, the V milestone will regain its old picturesque look but meanwhile future Dulwich residents will still be able to read the interesting legends on the three faces instead of being left with an even more worn and possibly blank stone.

For those of you who drive past the milestone and have not found it possible to examine it closely we should perhaps add that it is triangular in shape and the newly-cut lettering reads as follows:

On the back - SISTE VIATOR

TT

1772

On the left face - V MILES FROM THE STANDARD CORNHILL

On the right face - V MILES FROM THE TREASURY WHITEHALL

TREES

Memorial Tree Planting Ceremony in Belair Park

A tree was planted in Belair Park on Saturday 19th May 1979 in memory of the late John Rogers, who had been Secretary of the Planning Sub-Committee of the Society from 1971 until his death last year.

Ivor Lightman, Chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee, paid generous tribute to John Rogers. His wide knowledge of the area, together with his enthusiastic and active support had been invaluable to the Society.

The planting ceremony was performed by his widow, Mrs. Pauline Rogers, in the presence of many of John's friends. The species of tree planted was a Turkey Oak (*Quercus Cerris*), and we hope it will flourish. It is sited by the two benches in Belair previously donated by the Society. Although it was a sad event, this was a delightful ceremony blessed by a rare burst of fine weather and we are grateful to Southwark Parks Department for their co-operation.

Help Needed

The Trees Sub-Committee is short of technical expertise. If any member has specialised knowledge of the subject, or knows anyone else who has, Alan Barnard or any other member of the sub-committee would be very pleased to hear from them. Alan's number is 01-693 6487.

Gift of Trees to Local Schools

As we all know, through Dutch Elm Disease we have lost many beautiful trees in Dulwich. Two outstanding casualties were the magnificent Jersey (or Wheatley) Elms situated in the grounds of Dulwich Village (C of E) Infants' School and Dulwich Hamlet Junior School. The Dulwich Society offered to buy and arrange for the planting of two trees to replace these and, having provided a short list of suitable species, the final choice was left to the staffs of the two schools concerned.

The Hamlet school teachers chose a Holm Oak and those of the Infants' school a Mulberry tree. The reason for the latter choice was that in years gone by a fine old specimen Mulberry grew on the site of the new school buildings and it was intended that it was to form one of the main features in the plan of the new school built there. Unfortunately the original tree died.

By arrangement with the G.L.C. Parks department planting ceremonies took place on the morning of 28th March. At the Hamlet School, in a biting wind, the Headmaster, Governors, members of the Trees Sub-Committee, Mr. Cudd and staff of the G.L.C. Parks department watched as children from the school piled earth around the roots of the Holm Oak which was declared well and truly planted for posterity. Short speeches reminded the children of the need to plant and care for trees.

Then the gathering moved to the grounds of the Infants' school where the ceremony was repeated for the Mulberry tree, each small child present 'helping' to plant the tree with forks and trowels they had been asked to bring for the purpose. (One had actually brought a fork from the family cutlery!)

Let us hope that, if all goes well, future pupils will delight in picking ripe mulberries and that the taste of the fruit - not to mention the stains on the school carpets - will remind them of the Dulwich Society.

MEMBERS' MEETINGS

- 12 AUGUST : The Wild Life Sub-Committee is organising an evening visit to Beddington Sewage Farm (near Croydon) to see the interesting bird-life there. If you would like to go please ring Miss Rosa Davis on 670 3011.
- 4 OCTOBER : Wild Life evening at 8.0 p.m. in St. Barnabas Hall. We are not sure of the details yet, but come along anyway and we are sure you will have an interesting and pleasant evening.

MONDAY : A combined meeting with the Dulwich Forum at
5 NOVEMBER 8.0 p.m. in St. Barnabas Hall.
Please note the change of date to a Monday.
A talk by Mr. A. T. Milne, M.A., F.R.Hist.S., on 'Dulwich in the early nineteenth century: The diary of Joseph Romilly'.

Mr. Milne has discovered that the home of a well-known Cambridge character, the Rev. Joseph Romilly, was in Dulwich and that unpublished parts of his diary (1818-64) give very interesting information about local people and local life at the time.

- 6 DECEMBER : A Social evening to welcome new members to the Society. More detail in our next newsletter. 8.0 p.m. in St. Barnabas Hall.
- 7 FEBRUARY : Trees Sub-Committee: a talk on the work of a 1980 Park's Superintendent (to be confirmed).

OUR NEW HORTICULTURAL SUB-COMMITTEE

We mentioned in the April newsletter that a proposal to form a new Sub-Committee was going ahead and we are pleased to announce that it was finally approved at the Executive Committee Meeting on 11th June with the following membership:

Horticultural Sub-Committee

Chairman: Dr. T.H. Frankel, 108 College Road SE21	670 3079
Mrs. S. Daniel (Secretary) 163 Turney Road SE21	274 9907
Mrs. M. Barnard, 18 Dovercourt Road SE22	693 6487
Mrs. A. Calder, 17 Alleyn Road SE21	670 7058
Mr. G. Fairlie, The Grange, Grange Lane SE21	693 1187
Miss J. Galer, 16 Lovelace Road SE27	670 2659
Mr. Brian Jones, B.Sc., F.I.Biol. 16 Mount Adon Park SE22	693 3698
Miss M. Nurse, 60 Great Brownings, College Road SE21	670 7049
Dr. F. Rackow, M.D., F.R.C.P.(C), 19 Village Way SE21	693 2324
Mrs. P.D. Rich, 63 Court Lane SE21	693 5332
Mr. J.B. Robinson, 10 Court Lane SE21	693 7249
Mrs. B. White, Stoney Hill House, Rock Hill SE26	670 3402

This Sub-Committee is starting at once in a small way and has recorded the names and addresses of all the people who registered their interest at the inaugural meetings held in Mr. Fairlie's garden in May. There may well be other members who were not able to attend Mr. Fairlie's meetings but who would like to be kept informed of any visits and functions which will be arranged. If you are one of these please get in touch by telephone with one of the Sub-Committee members so that you can be included on the distribution list.

The Horticultural Committee is planning to carry out the seven suggested activities listed in the April newsletter (page 22). Briefly these are as follows:

1. Visits to members' gardens (with permission of the owners)
2. Visits to interesting gardens outside Dulwich
3. Lectures by experienced horticulturalists
4. Informal talks by members on gardening and horticultural matters

5. Exchange of plants, cuttings, etc.
6. Propagation and sale of plants in support of charities
7. General discussions and advice. It is proposed to form a small panel who will be available for consultation on garden matters.

Suggestions for other related activities are always welcome.

WILD LIFE

Butterflies

We are indebted to Mr. Gerald Fairlie for the following notes on his Butterfly Farm which he has instituted in his garden in Grange Lane. Mr. Fairlie has also written a full report on the breeding success (or otherwise) of 18 different species. This is too long, and perhaps too technical, for inclusion in this newsletter, but copies can be obtained on application to Mr. Fairlie at The Grange, Grange Lane, SE21.

Mr. Fairlie reports as follows:

"It is now about a year since the stocking of the butterfly farm began in 1978. It has proved an absorbing and rewarding hobby, but has not been an unqualified success. One pair of butterflies normally lays about 100 eggs and nature ensures that, in the open on average, 98 have to perish before breeding successors. This farm gives protection from birds and largely from wasps, so improving the chance to increase stocks, but it cannot eliminate risk from some small insect predators, or from virus and other diseases. The most spectacular success in breeding, that of the Commas, ended in failure as none survived hibernation. Other species have done so in small numbers, giving an encouraging start to this year.

"There is not room to print full details of the different species we have dealt with (this is in the full report), but as an example of what is involved this is what has happened in the case of the Brimstone:

"2.6.78 Two pairs caught in Surrey were put into the cage. 4 pupae from Sherborne were received 22.6.78 but only one perfect specimen emerged from these. Two more from the wild were added in July. On 14.4.79 one female emerged from hibernation and 5 more were collected from the wild to ensure possibility of breeding, which they did. On 7.6.79 about 3 dozen eggs and larvae were taken into the house, so that the remainder could be supported on the only established Buckthorn in the cage.

"In summary we can say that only five species survived to breed in 1979 and five others are still in hibernation.

"During the winter a large flower border has been introduced next to the cage and planted with flowers attractive to butterflies.

"The following sightings have been reported so far in 1979:

Large White	Orange Tip	Peacock
Small White	Red Admiral	Comma
Green-veined White	Small Tortoiseshell	Painted Lady,"

Other Sightings January to May 1979

Some unusual as well as the more usual birds have been seen and heard in Dulwich during the early part of 1979. The harsh winter led to many residents supplying food and our records report coal tits, blue tits, great tits, nuthatches and even the greater spotted woodpecker feeding together on nuts and fat, and of redwings and mistlethrushes feeding on apples. Some unusual sightings at the end of 1978 and early in 1979 were of a hawfinch (first report since 1976 although it is in the 1950's records of the Alleyn's School Natural History Society), of the Jack Snipe (two reports), a partridge, a brambling and tree creepers.

In the cold early spring there were reports of house martins as early as 4th April and then swifts and swallows later (early May). The cuckoo was heard calling early in May and a willow warbler was seen in Dulwich Woods. Bird watchers may have seen some exotic species too - we have had several scattered sightings of aviary birds at large.

Early summer records include redpolls, green finches, a saffron finch, bullfinches nest-building, chaffinch, black caps, flycatchers and pied wagtails. The kestrels in All Saints Church are reported gone, and replaced by small birds - they are still a common sight hovering over parks and other open spaces, so presumably have set up residence elsewhere.

The sound of robins or other birds singing in the dark at night appears to be on the increase in Dulwich. The habit is not a new one but is infrequently reported and the Wildlife Sub-Committee is appealing for records from those who hear night singing robins in our area. In due course, if an appropriate number of records is received, it is hoped that the result will be published in this Newsletter. Reports should be sent to Mr. Toler, at 127 Sydenham Hill.

Other Sightings

A few other records of interest are of an albino squirrel - one was reported several years ago - of 'wild' lilies of the valley and winter heliotrope, and of orange tip and green veined white butterflies.

Frogs and Toads

Many readers may have come across frogs, tadpoles in their garden ponds, or toads in their gardens. The Wildlife Sub-Committee would like to have records of frogs and toads, where they have been seen, and any other observations. Please send your records to Mrs. Howells, 7 College Road.

PLANNING NOTES

Committee Secretary

We were very happy to announce (in Newsletter 42) that Mr. Brian Sweeney had volunteered to serve as the Town Planning Sub-Committee's Secretary. To our horror, his company have now seen fit to post him to some far-flung corner of Empire; and he leaves with our good wishes and our grateful thanks for his short but extremely effective service.

Stuart Valentine has kindly stepped into the breach for the time being; but if there is a member of the Society who would be willing to take on this interesting but not excessively demanding job, Ivor Lightman (670 4743) would be thrilled to hear from him or her.

Lapse Wood

Members of the Planning and Development and Housing Committees of the London Borough of Southwark Council will be visiting Lapse Wood to see for themselves what all the fuss has been about over the years. The visit has been arranged for Tuesday 17th July at 6.0 p.m., and a number of representatives of the Dulwich Society will be there to show them around and to demonstrate the importance of Lapse Wood to Dulwich in particular and South London in general. A report will appear in our next issue.

Hambledon House

Some members will have noticed that part of the Hambledon House group of buildings known as the Villa (on the right of the main block as one faces it from Dulwich Common) was severely damaged by a recent fire; it is not known at the time of writing whether or not it will prove possible to save the structure.

A number of proposals have been put forward to the Estates Governors in recent times for the future use of this site, some of which include ingenious plans for retention of at least the best of the buildings on the site. Decisions have yet to be taken, but we very much hope that it will in the end prove possible to achieve a development which does not sweep away this striking relic of 19th century Dulwich.

Gypsies

We reported in Newsletter 42 on a proposal that a permanent site for gypsies might be provided alongside Dulwich Common (the South Circular Road) on a part of the Old Alleynian Sports Club.

After an indignant public meeting last September strong letters were sent to the Council both by all our local ward Councillors supported by the unanimous view of those who had attended the meeting; and by the Society itself. We hoped that this proposal had been 'seen off', but we have now heard that it has been resurrected, that the Department of the Environment are pressing Southwark to nominate at least one site in the Borough for gypsies, and that of the short list of 'possibles' Dulwich Common has to be regarded as the front runner. The reasons for this are complex, but our opposition remains as strong as it has ever been and will be made clear once again to the Council. Meanwhile, local Council members are calling a public meeting on 29th July and a further report will appear in our next issue. In the meantime, members can help to support the views of their local representatives by writing personally to the Borough Planner at the Southwark Town Hall (Peckham Road SE5 8UB).

Southwark Town Hall

It now seems that, partly in response to local representations and partly because of the severe impending cut-backs in public expenditure, a lavish new Town Hall is not likely to be built in Peckham. This is of course excellent news not only for Southwark ratepayers but for everyone who likes to think that local authorities do occasionally respond to the strongly expressed wishes of the Electors.