



The Dulwich Society

TO FOSTER AND SAFEGUARD THE AMENITIES OF DULWICH

Newsletter 54

October 1981

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS November 1981 to April 1982

November 5th: Dulwich, Past and Present. Slide-show by Bill De Baerdemaecker. St Barnabas Hall, 8.00 p.m.

December 3rd: A Carol Concert by the Choir of the Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich. Dulwich Picture Gallery, 8.00 p.m. Wine will be served during the interval. Admission by ticket, £1.50, available from Mrs Rich, 63 Court Lane. 693 5332. Places are limited to 230. You are asked to enclose a stamped & addressed envelope with your application, and to make cheques payable to 'Dulwich Society'.

January 7th: No meeting.

February 4th: Joint meeting with Ecological Parks Trust. St Barnabas Hall, 8.00 p.m.

March 5th: Society's Annual General Meeting. St Barnabas Hall, 8.00 p.m.

April 1st: Wildlife Sub-Committee meeting. Subject to be announced. St Barnabas Hall, 8.00 p.m.

Meetings of the Dulwich Society aim to be interesting and enjoyable, but rely on your support to ensure their success. Please therefore make a point of noting the above dates in your diary.

The former Secretary and General Manager to the Estates Governors, Mr Gerald V. White, retired earlier this year. His reply to a letter from the Society included the following paragraph:

"This is the last time I shall be in communication with you, as I retire on 3rd July. I would like to convey to you and your colleagues my appreciation for all your courtesy and help over the past years. While it has not always been possible for the Estates Governors and the Dulwich Society to be in agreement, these occasions have been, I am glad to say, rare and our relationship has been on a friendly and pleasant basis. I therefore send to you and everyone my warmest regards and best wishes for the future."

Our good wishes go to Mr White on his retirement, with the hope that our relationship with his successor, Mr A. Boyd Phillips, may be similarly pleasant and fruitful.

OFFERS OF HELP NEEDED

The Executive Committee is most anxious to hear from members who would be willing to help the Society actively, and in particular in the following positions:

Secretary. Sheila Low very kindly agreed to be Acting Secretary, following Rodney Maude's retirement to Wiltshire after many years of involvement with the Society.

Treasurer. Dick Low has been Treasurer since 1971, and wishes to hand over from the Annual General Meeting in March 1982. He has active support from Arnold Dawson and others, which considerably eases the burden.

Editor. John Westwood is leaving the Dulwich area, which leaves this Newsletter without a permanent Editor and producer. Patrick Darby has filled the gap, but cannot do so for very long. The position does not require specialised knowledge, but an ability to organise contents and get them typed in the right form for the printer is necessary.

For all three positions may we please have applications, or be pointed in the direction of members who can be persuaded to help. Contact the Secretary/Treasurer at 88 Alleyn Road, S.E.21. 670 1609.

THE SOCIETY AND ECOLOGY

As members will recall, the Chairman stated at the Annual General Meeting that the main thrust of the Society's endeavours this year should be on the ecological scene.

Current interest has centred on several acres of woodlands, lying on the slope of Sydenham Hill and protected by the Dulwich Estates Governors. The Society would like to see the adjoining woodlands also preserved as a local amenity, and as a relic of the great North Wood which once stretched from Honor Oak to Selhurst. Even today, looking south from central London, this wooded ridge is a notable and welcome feature. Members of the Society have already been active in surveying and listing many components of the woods, from trees and birds to wild flowers and small mammals.

The Society welcomes the development of a City Nature Park at the Farquhar Road woodland site, and wishes to support the arrangements made between Southwark Council and the Ecological Parks Trust. We have had the benefit of full consultation with the Trust, and have already been able to provide assistance: in supplying records of birds seen in the area over the past four years; with a detailed survey of the Farquhar Road site; with help in clearing the accumulated rubbish; with historical information and a series of plans relating to particular periods; with practical help and advice on display boards; and with preparing a photographic record of the site and its present flora.

To aid collaboration with the Ecological Parks Trust we have set up a Nature Parks Working Group. Alan Barnard, 18 Dovercourt Road, S.E.22 (693 6487) can supply further information.

A 'Thank You' to the Westwoods. In this context it must be mentioned that, sadly for the Society, John and Margaret Westwood are now moving from Dulwich. We wish them health, happiness, God-speed and a very big 'thank you' for all that they have done - for the Society and for Dulwich. They have been involved in the work of the Society since its formation in the '60s, Margaret as an active and conscientious member of the Trees Sub-Committee. John's range of activities has been so wide that it is difficult to do them justice.

One of his major contributions has been preparing this quarterly Newsletter, a 'labour of love' of enormous value to the Society over the years.

Perhaps his greatest achievements have been the surveys mentioned above - of Lapse Wood (as it was then known) and the Farquhar Road site (now called Upper Wood). Every single tree was identified and plotted on superbly prepared coloured maps, with species and relative sizes accurately recorded. Few members will be aware that his Lapse Wood work won John a special award from the Civil Service Council for Further Education in 1972, presented to him by Lord Wolfenden. In the last twelve months, John has re-surveyed the whole woodland area, giving an up-to-date record for use by the Society, the Southwark Environment Trust, the London Wildlife Group and others.

Ten days before a meeting with the authorities which led to the Ecological Parks Trust being given responsibility for the Farquhar Road site, the Trust asked John to produce a detailed tree survey to assist its case. He met their deadline with hours to spare, and the welcome result is in no small measure thanks to him.

Since the formation of the Nature Parks Working Group eighteen months ago John has been its Secretary, responsible for a vast correspondence with interested local and national bodies. As a man with such skill and dedication he will indeed be difficult to replace.

LOCAL HISTORY

Dulwich's wealth of written historical records is matched unfortunately by a dearth of archaeological evidence. Although a poor substitute for systematic excavation (not that there can be many promising sites which aren't already built over), reports of isolated finds would be welcome. If, while digging in your garden perhaps, you have come across anything of historical interest (e.g. old artefacts, coins, clay pipes, foundations of demolished buildings), the Chairman of the History Sub-Committee would like to hear from you. Please contact Patrick Darby, 54 Wolfington Road, West Norwood, S.E.27, giving details of what you found and when and where you found it. Only items of genuine interest, please - no broken crockery or suchlike, unless of proven antiquity! He doesn't want any items sent to him - just a description, preferably with a drawing or diagram.

TREE SURVEYS ON THE DULWICH ESTATES

Many members of the Society will be aware that the Trees Sub-Committee has participated in the survey - plotting and identification - of trees within the area controlled by the Estates Governors. However, there are other aspects of survey work which may not be so widely known, and in particular those relating to the direct responsibility of the Estates Governors are of very considerable importance.

For some years the Governors have invited members of our Trees Sub-Committee to visit various tree 'situations' with them. These much-appreciated joint meetings occur some four or five times each year, and provide an opportunity for us to see some of the problems involved in estate management - and also some of the many successes which are achieved.

Perhaps one of the more famous trees in Dulwich is the Zelcova, or Caucasian Elm, dominating the junction of the South Circular and College Road. Three years ago it was noticed that this magnificent specimen leant so far out over the road that it was in danger of being impaled on the adjoining railings - and becoming a potential hazard to traffic and pedestrians. The Estates Governors called in a firm of tree surgeons who were able to solve the problem by skilful trimming and lopping. Without this action there could have been a serious accident, and we would have lost a magnificent landmark.

The rapid growth of some species, such as willow and poplar, can cause blocked land-drains. Indeed, some years ago we visited a site where a willow had been planted 54 feet from a newly-built house; nevertheless within eighteen years its roots had penetrated the foundations, and caused damage costing thousands of pounds. Needless to say, it was felled.

From time to time obstruction of light becomes a problem. Such cases are treated realistically and sympathetically. Often they result in trimming, lopping, or the felling of the tree if this is unavoidable.

Dutch Elm disease, although the most infamous, is by no means the only natural enemy of trees. (Incidentally, it is believed that more than 2,000 elms died on the Estates as a result of this epidemic, despite valiant efforts to protect the better specimens by injections and treatment.) 'Sooty-bark' disease has been found in sycamores in the

area, and various diseases affecting Beech, Ash, Horse Chestnut and other species have been observed. In May 1980 we visited Hogarth Court to see two ancient beech trees - probably at least two hundred years old. The branches and roots of both were badly diseased, and a metal probe revealed damage extending several feet into each trunk. One tree had to be felled immediately, for safety. The other was given a thorough inspection by expert tree surgeons, but sadly that too had to be taken down.

Dulwich, being so blessed with trees, calls for a very considerable planting and maintenance programme. This in turn demands expertise and experience, which fortunately for us is not in short supply.

HORTICULTURE NOTES

We have had another successful season, and would like to thank all those members who have opened their gardens to us, to our great enjoyment, and for the benefit of the various charities nominated by them. If there are any members who would be prepared to allow us to visit their gardens, or who could persuade their friends to do so, please let any member of the Sub-Committee know and we would be delighted to make arrangements for next year.

Special mention must be made of the 'bring and buy' plant sale held in May in the garden of The Grange, by kind invitation of Mr Gerald Fairlie. This was in aid of the Hospital and Home for Incurables at Crown Point and, with an attendance of about 140, proved to be a great success.

We would like to record our gratitude for the warm reception given to our party by Dr and Mrs John Beattie at Reigate Heath when we were invited to visit them in June. Their garden is of some five acres, with a wide selection of unusual shrubs and trees.

We were also very glad to be able to entertain twenty members of the Lambeth Horticultural Society in visits to three gardens in Dulwich, after which supper was kindly provided by Mr and Mrs Harry Calder. Our Lambeth colleagues reciprocated with an invitation to twenty of our members to visit the most interesting garden of Mr and Mrs Cooper of Central Hill, when we were lavishly entertained.



WOODHALL. (FRONT VIEW.)

BYGONE DULWICH: 'WOODHALL'

The illustrations above and on the next page, taken from W.H.Blanch's 'Parish of Camberwell', published in 1875, show two views of one of the many fine mansions which in the 19th century were such a feature of the Dulwich estate. This was 'Woodhall', otherwise 101 College Road, the residence in 1875 of George Campbell. The mansion, "standing in but twenty four acres of land"(!) so Blanch informs us, was built by R.P.Harding on the site of "a house of less pretensions" known as 'Wood-house', which had been built by Thomas Lett in 1810, and whose most distinguished occupant, from 1832 to 1836, had been George Grote, the historian. In keeping with the ecological theme of the Dulwich Society's work this year, reflected in this Newsletter, the story of Grote's brush with his landlords, the College, is worth re-telling, since it is no less relevant today than a century and a half ago.

Grote had broken the covenant in his lease not to fell, cut or injure trees on his property, by cutting off the

heads of a number of them. Imposing a fine of £20 for this unauthorised pollarding, the Master of the College reminded Grote of this covenant (common to every lease of College property), and continued:

"In order to secure the College Estate from being deteriorated and disfigured at the caprice of every tenant, it is necessary to enforce these regulations; and were a gentleman of your rank and fortune permitted to disregard with impunity the covenants in his lease, with what grace could we proceed with greater severity against the poorer and more helpless of our tenants?"

A later tenant was James Eno, of Fruit Salts fame, whose products were advertised with a picture of a luscious bunch of grapes grown and photographed at 'Woodhall'. The site of the old mansion and its grounds were developed in 1961 and now comprise Woodhall Drive and Woodhall Avenue.



WOODHALL. (BACK VIEW.)

MOTHS IN DULWICH

There is no clear distinction between moths and butterflies - some moths even fly during daylight, and they repose in a variety of positions. Like butterflies, they have long probosces for searching out nectar, and sensory antennae in various forms. The moths of Britain number no less than 2,000 species, which vary in size from the large and spectacular Hawk Moths (strong fliers with a wing-span of several inches) to tiny but beautiful creatures. Some are an enigmatic grey and difficult to distinguish; others are instantly recognisable - like the red and yellow underwings, the white ermine, the light emerald and the brimstone.

Moths can be found by careful observation of tree trunks, wooden fences or stone walls, where their camouflage teases the observer into believing that they are feathers, or fragments of dead leaves, or roughnesses in the bark of the wood. A common procedure in the past was to coat trees and fences with a syrup made of brown sugar, beer and treacle (some even added rum!) which attracted the insects. Nowadays electricity makes the task easier - a moth trap with an ultra-violet lamp was used to obtain the record below, of sightings in Dulwich Village during June 1981:

Setaceous Hebrew character (common, early in the month)
Dark-barred brown spot carpet (occasional, early)
Cream-bordered green pea moth (abundant, late)
Heart and dart (abundant, late)
White Ermine (common, throughout)
Red-line Quaker (early) Clouded Drab (early)
Limespeck pug (early) Engrailed Clay (early)
Smoky Wainscot (late) Angle Shades (infrequent)
The Dot (several, late) Garden Carpet
Buff Arches Vapourer (only one, late)
Leopard (only one, late) Birds Wing (only one, middle)
Cabbage Moth (infrequent, throughout)
Peach Blossom (infrequent, early)
Light Brocade (infrequent, middle)
Light Emerald (infrequent, throughout)
Dark Dagger (fairly common, middle)
Scalloped Oak (only one, middle)
Broad-bordered yellow underwing (middle)
Large yellow underwing (common, throughout)
Brimstone (common, throughout first half)
Lime Hawk (only one, early)

NEWS FROM THE WILDLIFE SUB-COMMITTEE

Bird sightings report for the second quarter of 1981, recorded by John W. Toler:

May: Blackcap, Lesser Whitethroat and Greater Spotted Woodpecker in Burbage Road, and the Wheatear and Whinchat on the edge of Herne Hill Track; a Kestrel hovering and Housemartins swooping over Woodward Road. A Chaffinch, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff were heard calling on Grange Lane allotments.

June: Kestrels again, one hovering over moth traps in College Road, another taking a fledgling crow from its nest in a tall tree in Thurlow Park Road (causing noisy excitement amongst the other birds in the garden).

July: Housemartins nesting and breeding under gables in Woodward Road. Numbers of other nests have been seen, including Blackbird, Thrush, Crow, Wren, Bluetit and Spotted Flycatcher.

Pond Survey:

The Wildlife Sub-Committee has been conducting a survey of available water for aquatic life in and around Dulwich. So far only thirty ponds have been identified, so more information would be appreciated. Ponds of all ages, sizes and conditions (even dry ones) are of interest, as are damp areas where amphibia are living outside ponds.

All the ponds so far included in the survey, however small, have been found to contain some form of aquatic life. Most commonly occurring include water lice, pond-skaters and water boatmen of various types, but other species include water-beetles, water-spiders and the aquatic larvae of drone-flies and mayflies.

About one-third of the ponds contain amphibia, the most common being newts (in eight ponds), and the least common being toads (in two ponds). The common frog is no longer common, and is known to occur in only five of the ponds surveyed, although we have introduced them into a few garden ponds where we hope they will establish a breeding colony.

Please send details, i.e. the location, size and depth of your pond and the length of time it has been in existence, to Mrs Howells, 7 College Road, S.E.21 (693 7226), John Gaughan, 325A Upland Road, S.E.22 (693 8195), or Glynis Williams, 90 Upland Road, S.E.22.

THE DULWICH SOCIETY: NEWSLETTER 54: OCTOBER 1981

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