



The Dulwich Society

TO FOSTER AND SAFEGUARD THE AMENITIES OF DULWICH

Newsletter 78

October 1987

OCTOBER 1987

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All contributions for the January Newsletter, please, to the secretary, not later than November 13.

NEWS

ESTATES GOVERNORS ATTACKED: The Dulwich estates governors are coming under increasing criticism, notably from local historian and leading Dulwich society member Brian Green. Mr Green is proposing that the society should mount an inquiry into the scale of discontent amongst members and residents. His criticisms were reported in a recent issue of the glossy 'Southside' magazine, in which he made "a number of adverse comments on the estate governors' present management of the estate".

Mr Green adds: "The article originated when the magazine's reporter was present when I voiced my frustration, as a trustee of the old grammar school, over some four years of prevarication by the EGs over their responsibilities for the exterior of that historic building. In consequence of its publication, I have had numerous responses of support.

"So wide is the measure of disquiet with the apparent attitude of the governors that I feel the society, as the recognised and established amenity society, should assume a role in this matter. Indeed, it is why the society was founded in the first place! My proposal is that the society should arrange a meeting of representatives from each of the interested roads, blocks of flats etc. This representative would canvass his own area's measure of dissatisfaction, listing in detail the problem. A list of names and addresses of tenants who agree to these problems would add more weight. Such lists should be made in triplicate - one copy to be retained by the tenants' representative, one copy for the society, and a copy (if required) to be presented to the EGs. In this way the depth of the problem can be appreciated by all parties concerned.

"Whilst at the picture gallery fete, I had a long chat with Mr Marshall Feild who succeeds to the chairmanship of the EGs in January. He was disturbed with what I told him and I feel he will be responsive to evidence placed before him. If the society is favourably disposed towards my proposal, then I think it should act quickly, with a meeting of representatives in September and a collation of their results in October. As the one who put the match to the fuse, I shall be pleased to co-ordinate between the society and the representatives".

Other criticisms of the estates governors, reported recently in Southside, are reproduced later in this issue of the Newsletter.

FORUM TALKS: The Dulwich Forum for over 40 years has been arranging talks in the village on the first Monday of the winter months with a celebratory dinner in December. The range of subjects has been wide and varied with speakers from the eminent to the everyday (it must be said that some of the latter spoke far better than some of the former!) For the forthcoming season there is a new look to the forum. Meetings now, which will normally be on the second Monday of the month, will be in the upstairs function room of the Crown and Greyhound, continuing the tradition over centuries of speaking, poetry and lecture clubs in the centre of the village.

Commencing on Monday 12 October, our ever popular local historian Brian Green, straying far from his beloved Dulwich, gives a talk entitled "Have Camera - will Travel", a study of the American West illustrated with his own personal slides. This is followed by the talk on 9 November on the history of gardens by a founder member of the Gardens Society. Other talks in the programme include one on

the "Publishing Game" by Philip Clark, a local book publisher, Christie's, and an illustrated talk on the "Beauty of English Churches" by a lecturer from the Historic Churches Preservation Trust.

There are six talks in all and membership for the season is only £8, with the annual dinner being an additional event already provisionally booked for Friday 11 December at the Dulwich and Sydenham Golf Club. For further information contact the Secretary Philip Spooner, tel: 693 3697 or the chairman, David Wells, tel: 670 4960.

FOE FOR LONDON: The London Friends of the Earth unit was formally launched in April at the London Ecology Centre in Covent Garden. Speaking at the launch, Jonathon Porritt, director of FoE said: "The unit will at last give FoE a strong base to focus on London's environment". The unit has been set up to provide an information service to Londoners about environmental issues. It will not only deal with the capital's environment but with national and international matters with which Londoners are concerned. In addition, the unit will build stronger links with other environmental organisations in London and help to co-ordinate the 30 local FoE groups in and around London. It has grown out of FoE's previous work on road safety and recycling, which have been expanded, together with London Pollution, which has been added as a new area of work.

FoE has always been a public information service to some degree. People who have wanted to know or who have been concerned about some environmental issue have always turned to FoE as one of a few general environmental organisations providing information. The London Boroughs grant scheme has recognised this service and so has provided the funding for the necessary resources.

HAWTHORN HEDGE: The Dulwich Picture Gallery garden is being studied with a view to some remodelling. The horticulture sub-committee has been asked to look into the feasibility of planting a hawthorn-based country hedge with a mixture of native trees, shrubs and climbers such as would be found in our nearby countryside. This is planned to act ultimately as a screen on the inside of the length of oak paling, which runs for about 50 yards from the brick gatepost at the centre of the gallery's south elevation to near the north-west corner of the College Gardens site.

Many people have in their gardens small self-grown specimens of hedging material that they would sooner or later pull up and throw away. The list of possibilities is surprisingly long, with hawthorn, holly, yew, rose-briars, hazel, beech, oak, buckthorn, blackthorn, honeysuckle etc. Brambles and traveller's joy are anti-social and would not be planted. Any member of the horticultural sub-committee would be glad to receive a report of ordinary hedge material. Rooted cuttings or layerings would also be welcomed. Keble Martin's Concise British Flora would be used as a guide on which species can be considered as native.

NEWS

GALLERY FETE: A grand garden fete was held in the grounds of "London's most perfect art gallery" on Sunday 12 July featuring many attractions for the young and old. They included an escapologist, a clairvoyant, a palmist, giant chess and draught sets and a Punch and Judy show. There was also an art exhibition, an auction, many stalls and guided tours of the gallery and chapel.

CAMBERWELL RAIL-BUS LINK: The Camberwell Society is drawing the attention of interested societies and individuals to a public meeting it has organised which will be addressed by Mr N A Illsley, London projects officer for British Rail's Network SouthEast, and by the passenger planning officer (or representative) from London Regional Transport. The society has been active in pressing for a new station near Camberwell Green, with a bus interchange, which would enable many more people to benefit from the ThamesLink services coming next May. It is also actively interested in orbital services, the absence of which was noted in the recent consultants' report to the Department of Transport on the South Circular Road (see July Newsletter) and in the investigations of South London possibilities being carried out by LRT. The meeting will be an important opportunity to question planners and make views known. It will be held on Thursday 15 October at 8.15pm (coffee from 8pm) at the United Reform Church Hall at the corner of Grove Lane and Love Walk, a few minutes from Camberwell Green.

DYING TREES: The state of street trees in Dulwich is worrying - the trees sub-committee. So many that are planted die in a very short time. So at the risk of ridicule members of the committee have spent an hour or two on Friday evenings in July and August weeding around the young trees in several of the roads in Dulwich. We have put leaflets from Southwark council on the care of trees through letterboxes, asking people to water the trees near their houses in dry weather. Unfortunately we have chosen the wettest summer to embark on this project, but we hope by this token effort to persuade residents to look after the trees outside their own houses. It is so easy to do and would save a great many of them.

Stella Benwell

FOREST OF LONDON: This major environmental project for London, involving the planting of a million trees in London in five years, was due to start in September. It aims not just to plant trees but to raise Londoners' awareness, appreciation and sense of responsibility for the capital's trees. A concerted media, community and educational programme is planned as part of UK 2000, the environmental improvement project led by Richard Branson. With the help of MSC community programme workers, it is hoped to bring together individuals, community groups, councils, unions and environmental organisations to make the capital greener. The idea stems from the 'million trees campaign' - a community and media-based initiative which succeeded in motivating thousands of Los Angeles residents to work together and plant a million trees for the opening of the 1984 Olympic Games.

CEMETERY RAMBLE: An evening nature walk, arranged by the wildlife sub-committee was held on Thursday 23 July, when our guide was Jeff Hart, the co-ordinator of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery. The party from the Dulwich society was shown the conservation work which is being carried out in the cemetery, part of which is now a nature reserve. There is a wide assortment of trees and wild flowers. Foxes and rabbits frequent the wooded parts, and bat boxes are now being erected to encourage colonisation: pipistrelle and noctule bats have already been identified. Many birds visit the cemetery: at the last count, a few years ago, about 50 different species had been noted. The cuckoo is usually heard in Spring.

Although so near to a built-up area, one can feel the quiet of the countryside here, with the winding paths like country lanes. For anyone interested in visiting this Victorian cemetery, there are escorted tours for the public on the last Sunday of each month, beginning at 2.15pm, from Linden Grove Gate, Nunhead. The Friends of Nunhead seek "to promote the conservation and appreciation of the cemetery as a place of remembrance, of historic importance and of natural beauty".

Marjorie Campbell

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAM ROSS BENWELL

Readers of this quarter's Newsletter, and many others too, will be concerned and sad to hear of the death of Christopher Benwell on 24 June 1987. Christopher was born in India in 1918 and was educated at Caius College, Cambridge, where he read modern languages and economics. He married in 1942. After serving for six years in the Second World War in the Eighth Army under "Monty", chiefly in the Middle East, he came with his family in 1951 to live in Dulwich at 6 Court Lane. After the war, Christopher Benwell joined the Ministry of Defence, and later transferred to the Ministry of Health before retirement in 1975.

It was in retirement that Dulwich really came to know Christopher, who was a popular figure when shopping in the village, as he was kind and courteous, with a keen sense of humour. Many people have reason to be personally grateful to him as he spent much time helping and teaching illiterate adults. He loved music, both light and classical, but "it must have a tune"!

Christopher was also a perfectionist, and he used his love of photography to develop this side of his character. He took photographs of the Dulwich elm trees suffering from Dutch Elm disease and, persuaded by the late Gerald Fairlie, included many of the gardens of Dulwich in his collection of slides. He was especially interested in butterflies with their beauty and perfection of form and colour. These photographs will be a lasting record of his time with us in Dulwich. In a changing world, men of Christopher's calibre are hard to find.

Christopher leaves his wife, Stella, three daughters, and two grandchildren to whom we send our sincere sympathy in their bereavement.

John Robinson, horticulture sub-committee

GARDENS OF DULWICH: THE GRANGE, GRANGE LANE

Well-known to many Dulwich gardeners through the National Gardens scheme, the Grange's origins as a farm go back to the early nineteenth century. It has survived dilapidation, German bombs - including a parachute mine - and fire. GERALD FAIRLIE describes here how, as well as carefully restoring the house in the 1950s, he built around it woodland, valley and rock gardens which have made its grounds amongst the most beautiful in Dulwich.

When I first visited the property late in 1935, I found a house scheduled for demolition and a garden in two separate sections. The eastern half, next to the house, was an ordinary Victorian garden surrounded by magnificent trees. The lower, western half, was a derelict farm yard.

The farm cottage stood roughly in the centre of this half facing south. The stables backed directly onto a horse-chestnut tree, dividing the eastern (house) garden from the farmyard.

Buildings had embraced the whole area to the south of the Cottage, to the north of which were the remains of an old orchard. The extreme western strip had been partly used by recent Grange tenants as a kitchen garden and we continued that.

The north-eastern area had been the site of a number of greenhouses, the foundations of which, with their rain-water cistern, dictated the lay-out of the "well-garden", constructed by us before 1940, using some of the many bricks lying about from dismantled farm buildings. The old potting shed wall made the northern boundary of this.

The central horse chestnut was very ugly, being densely packed with branches mostly springing from a rather short trunk leaning to the north. To the north of this tree stood some wooden huts of no merit, and a broken pergola. These were all demolished. One of the huts bore a name-board "the chestnut burr", which I subsequently learned had been the headquarters of the local girl guides in the early 1930s.

Before the war we did what we could to try to link the two halves of the garden together. We laid out and sowed two lawns on either side of the alley which crossed the old farmyard, to act as extensions to the house lawn, and developed the opening to the north of the chestnut tree and stables. We started to plant more interesting shrubs in the woodland garden to replace many privets, euonymuses, aucubas and laurels.

On 19 September 1940 the house was made uninhabitable by bombs. It was not known until 1951 that the war damage insurance and fire insurance would nearly cover the cost of entire reconstruction. By that time all the house, cottage and farm buildings were entirely destroyed and the garden had become a wilderness with brambles and saplings grown head-high all over the site.

In March 1953 sufficient progress had been made on the rebuilding of the house to enable us to return to live here. We sold our Enfield house but in the meantime had been able to ferry here at weekends large supplies of layerings of shrubs, rhododendrons, and magnolias and seedling shrubs and trees including two walnuts, two crabs, two paulownias and so on to

enrich our plantings here.

We landscaped the woodland and loaded the soil with leaf-mould from the dump on what became the site of the first Grange Lane allotments - which made a good base, with some tons of peat for our collection of rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias. We found constant watering in the summer necessary, however, because the many fine trees dried out the ground. A few summers when hoses were banned killed many of our new shrubs, and also a bad attack of honey fungus in two areas cleared out some of our most interesting species. We now have two self-sown seedlings of *Hoheria glabrata*, and the first of these flowered in 1986 to replace its parents, destroyed by honey fungus.

I had to scythe all the lawns before they could be cut by lawn mower, and a very great amount of heavy work was spent in clearing much rough growth. In the alley beds we discovered a single stem of our special bay tree, lifted thirty years before from the garden of my first home. After two moves it had only a couple of leaves to identify it. In the next thirty years it grew luxuriantly and for a long time now has had to be clipped annually into a tall spire shape, to keep the adjacent paths clear, and needs a 20-foot ladder for that purpose.

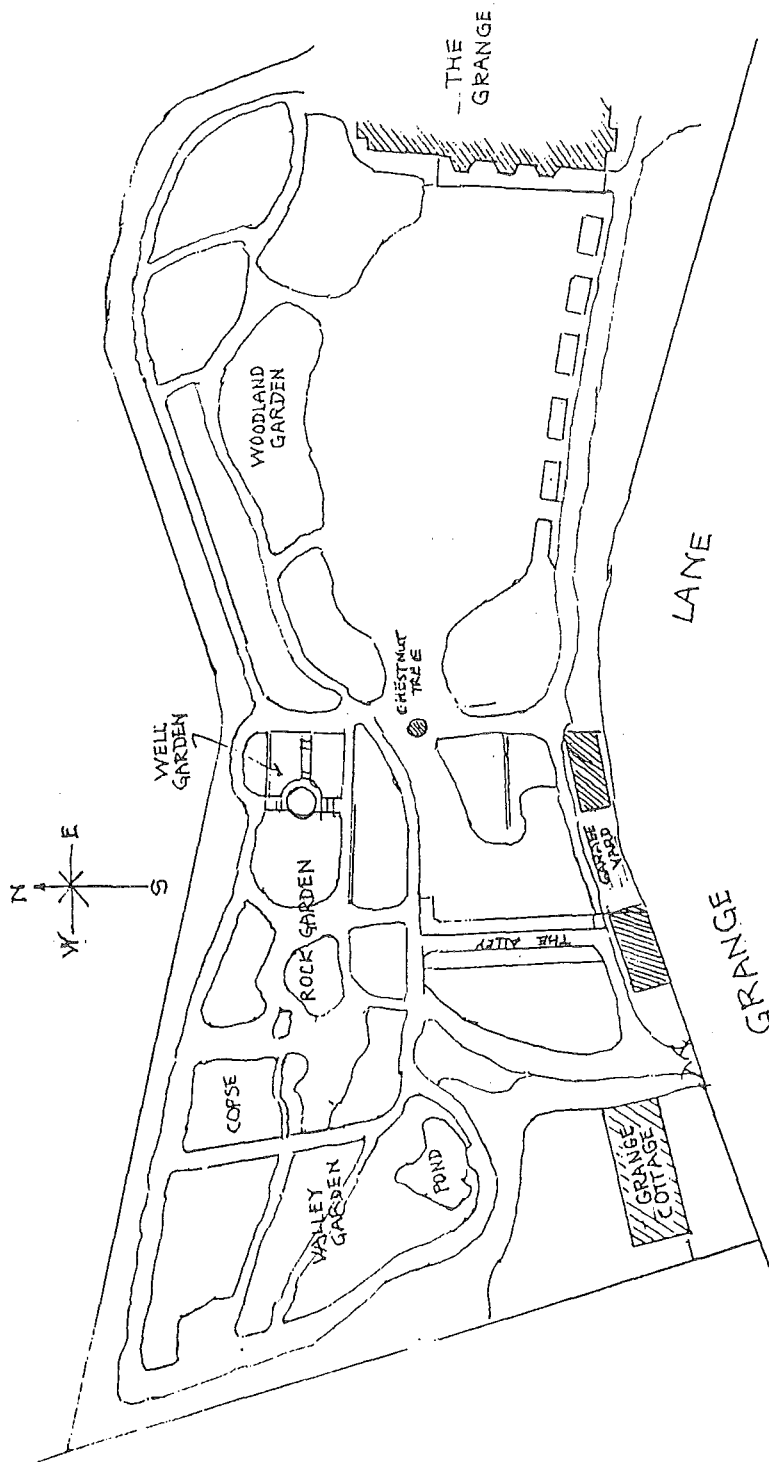
As soon as main tidying up was done, we tackled the big central chestnut tree and with extensive surgery removed nearly half of the crowded branches, leaving the more open shape it now has. Most auxiliary branches were removed and some main ones. It has now made a fine tree, nearly twice the size it was in 1935, and though the traces of the cut limbs can still be seen, they are healed and do not disfigure the tree.

The bombing had left the cottage an irregular mound covered with layered guelder rose plants and laburnum seedlings, apart from wild things. The Home Guard during our absence had dug out a great amount of the soil in the orchard for "sand bagging" leaving the trees on individual mounds on a sunken site. This called obviously for three-dimensional development as a large rock garden, for which we imported suitable rocks.

We had reconstructed the farm cottage as a staff cottage in the south-western corner of our site, giving them and us more privacy and a private front and back garden of their own. We planted a screen of trees and shrubs along their eastern boundary ending in a fine cotoneaster hybrid, given to us by great friends as a "garden warming" present in 1937.

At the bare picket fence, on our western boundary, we had started planting a hedge of lilac suckers, and nuts and laburnums, and any hawthorn seedlings we could find in the garden and an oak sapling. Now we have pollarded some of the hawthorns, which were cutting off too much afternoon sunshine from this part of the garden.

Since then many of our imported saplings have become fine trees, while our collection of shrubs has grown more or less tree high. The rock garden is less labour-intensive now and has developed its own wild-garden nature, and a wild life reserve. The walnuts and fig tree fruit generously but squirrels ensure that none is allowed to ripen. I could protect the figs, which were delicious, from blackbirds with dozens of plastic bags, but the squirrels tore them open and picked the fruit. There were two large Czar plum trees in



the old orchard, the suckers of which had made a copse in the north-western corner. This was a beautiful sight with blossom in the spring in the early 1950s. but a resident family of bull finches put paid to that, and the main trees were blown down some years later.

I set some new fruit trees in the two lawns on either side of the alley. My plums have been removed except for the large greengage which sometimes gives us a fruit or two. The Cox apple and Comice pear produce some fruit but the birds peck them and wasps finish them off before they are fit to gather. A Morello cherry near the east wall of the cottage gets beautiful with pale cherries, but is stripped in a day or two just before they are fit to eat. But wildlife is enjoyable and incredibly tame and I cannot fight it.

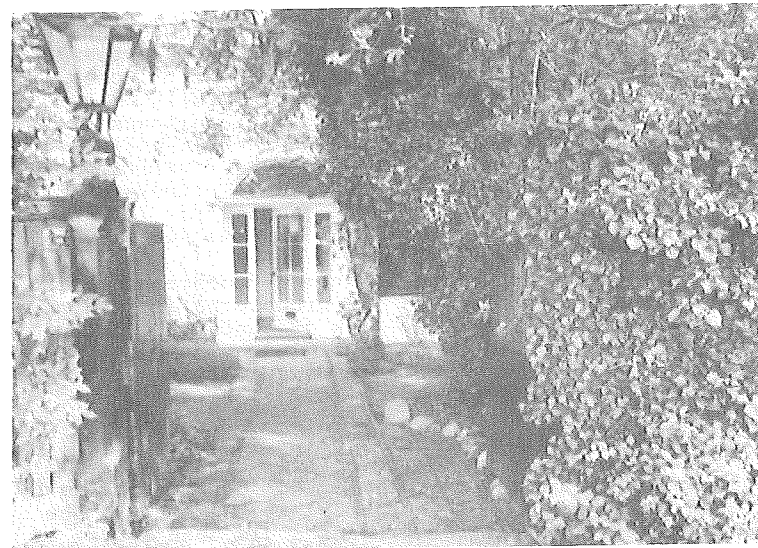
In 1982, encouraged by the wide interest of the horticultural sub-committee, I decided I must reset the section of the rock



garden to the west of the old cottage ruins, including the high mound now christened the "bomb hole". A large hawthorn had sown itself in the centre whilst we were in Enfield and was forcing all sapling laburnums and guelder roses outwards from it. When the hawthorn was cut down I was left with a reasonably open site with an interesting pattern of laburnum trunks. I trenched the site, resetting the rocks, and generously feeding the ground with leaf mould and compost. I planted it with ground cover, some alpines, and mostly low-growing herbaceous plants and small shrubs, setting some shrub roses and taller phloxes etc on the higher spots, aiming for an 'alpine meadow' effect, but with a full flowering range. This needs less attention than a proper alpine garden, and is reasonably self supporting and has a very informal look, which I like.

In 1983 my gardener decided he no longer wanted to try to raise vegetables in the 'allotment' I had given him from our old kitchen garden. The asparagus bed was worn out and my only interest was in runner beans. Large flocks of wood pigeons had made spinach and brassicas hopeless, so the flat area divided into formal rectangles was no longer needed.

It was an unpleasant contrast after passing through the three-dimensional garden adjacent, so I cut a path diagonally through it from the south-western corner of the bomb hole, running north-east and cut as low as the difference in levels between the upper path and the school



playing field would allow. Cutting out also for a layer of boiler ash and the thickness of the planned brick path gave a great deal of spoil to be thrown up on either side, making a definite valley garden with the eastern boundary rising well above the path level where it adjoins the grassed exit from the rock garden.

The steep slopes of the valley banks were planted as in the bomb hole with low-growing plants in the lower stretches and taller plants on the high spots, dramatically displaying their different architectures. Again I incorporated into the soil very extravagant quantities of leaf mould and compost of which we had accumulated large stocks, also adding generous supplies of grit to encourage drainage. The mixed planting and comparatively open site is now quite full of colour for most of the season.

In 1984 we planned a water garden to lie between the south bank of the valley garden and the cottage hedge. By digging an informal shape for a wild life pond as deep as 2' 6" in the centre, we had plenty of spoil to build up banks all round the basin giving a natural effect to the patch of open water, which I had always wanted but been unable to locate before because of our heavily treed garden. This proved a great success and all marginal planting flourished so much that we were encouraged to cut a ravine in the north bank of the valley garden in 1985, using some selected rocks, no longer necessary in the rock garden, to make a cliff, raising the eastern end higher than before, and constructing a chain of three pools, which could be easily flooded in

DIESEL FUMES EXHAUSTING OUR PATIENCE

Londoners suffer twice over from diesel exhausts - first by risking health problems through inhaling them, and second by paying for the clean-up of smoke-soiled buildings.

Diesel-powered vehicles have their advantages over petrol-driven ones. Greater fuel efficiency for town use has made them increasingly popular, especially on the continent. Some environmentally concerned people favour diesel fuels because they contain no lead additives and produce less carbon monoxide.

However, diesel engines are noisier than petrol engines and generate dirtier and smellier smoke. A diesel-fuelled vehicle emits 10 times more particles of carbon than a petrol vehicle. These particles are very small and when inhaled may lodge into the lungs for long periods, aggravating diseases such as bronchitis and asthma.

An additional risk is presented by the hydrocarbons carried on the surface of these particles. Hydrocarbons are organic substances thought to increase the risk of cancer amongst people inhaling diesel fumes. Higher rates of lung cancer are found in urban areas, though no-one has conclusively linked this with exhausts from either diesel or petrol fuels.

Meanwhile, the particles which escape human lungs reduce visibility. Due to their black oily nature, they soil buildings more than other sources. London Scientific Services estimate that diesel smoke may be responsible for 60% of the soiling by air pollution in the city. At a rate of £8.00 to clean one square metre of blackened building, this could mean a cost of £24 million a year if walls were cleaned once every 10 years. Finally, laboratory studies have shown diesel fumes to be 100 times more odorous than petrol fumes!

The next time a heavy goods vehicle sweeps past you in a cloud of black smoke which you find offensive, why not complain about it? The present standards for diesel exhausts are based on just such an assessment - that of a panel of observers who assembled in 1963 to decide how dirty was too dirty - and without being influenced by the smell!

Take the registration number of the vehicle and report it to your local police station. The police may then trace the vehicle owner and make a visit to check that the engine has had its annual Department of Transport check.

The police are unlikely to take legal action unless a lot of complaints are received about one particular vehicle. It is possible to bring a private summons, but you will need to prepare well for this, tracing the vehicle owner yourself through the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre, gathering witnesses and learning something about diesel engine mechanics.

There is a real need for tighter standards on diesel exhausts, just as in the United States. If these were backed up by an objective measurement of smoke and enforced by roadside fines, rather than lengthy court proceedings, we might be able to breathe more easily.

This article appeared in London Friends of the Earth's newsletter.

GRAPEVINE

WOMEN'S DEFENCE: Worries over women's safety has led Southwark council to make money available to train six women to become self defence teachers. Anyone interested should contact the policing and community safety unit, tel: 703 0911 extension 200.

INFANTS' HEAD: The new head of the village infants' school is Mrs Janice Bartley who comes to Dulwich from Norbury Manor Infants School where she was deputy head for six years. Mrs Bartley comes from a family of teachers. Her father was a headmaster in Stockwell for 24 years and her husband Keith is a deputy head. Her brother and sister-in-law are also teachers. Mrs Bartley has two children, Nichola, 16, and Jonathan, 15.

LIVE RINGERS?: Dulwich Handbell Ringers are looking for new recruits who do not need experience but should have lots of enthusiasm. The ringers are well known locally for their charity carol bell-ringing every Christmas and they can be reached on 693 4134.

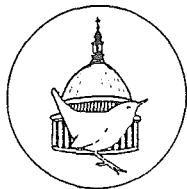
GREEN SOUTHWARK: Southwark Environment Trust (SET) is a charitable trust run by a voluntary management committee and employing one full-time project co-ordinator. It was set up in 1981 by local people working closely with Southwark council. The voluntary management committee consists of 12 Southwark residents nominated for their interest in the environment (elected annually) and three Southwark councillors nominated by the council. Any individual or group living or working in the borough can become a member of SET. SET aims to make improvements to the built and green environment of Southwark and to ensure that local people become involved in this activity. It wants to brighten up unattractive spaces with gardens, tree-planting and murals; improve and make use of old and unused buildings; and help others to undertake projects, by providing information, contacts and resources. The best known achievement of the trust is the restoration of Denmark Hill Station and its conversion into a thriving pub. Not only was a particularly fine building restored as a result of SET's joint campaign with the Camberwell Society, but 20 new jobs were created in an area of high unemployment. SET and British Rail are together the landlords of the Phoenix and Firkin. SET also joined forces with the council and the GLC in 1985 to renovate 48 Willowbrook Road and set it up as an urban studies centre. The trust would like to hear from anyone who has ideas for projects concerning old unused buildings. Its full-time worker is Ginnie Norman, at 48 Willowbrook Road, Peckham SE15 6BW, tel: 732 5123.

By Bob Young

Sydenham Hill Wood is, to locals and visitors from far and wide, a unique secluded haven for wildlife within the city of London. Maintaining this haven has meant fighting the plans of building developers and Southwark council to build on the woods and has involved dedicated support from local residents, London Wildlife Trust members and staff.

Despite these threats, much has been done to improve the woods for wildlife and public. There is now a regular warden, so that an eye can be kept out for the notorious motorbike scrambler or any would-be Sydenham Rambos on the rampage!

During the depths of winter we had a new arrival in the woods in the form of a steel container unit which now provides a base for a Manpower Services Commission team, tools and tea. The team



The London Wildlife Trust logo

has been tackling half a mile of mud along the nature trail and laying a drained gravel path.

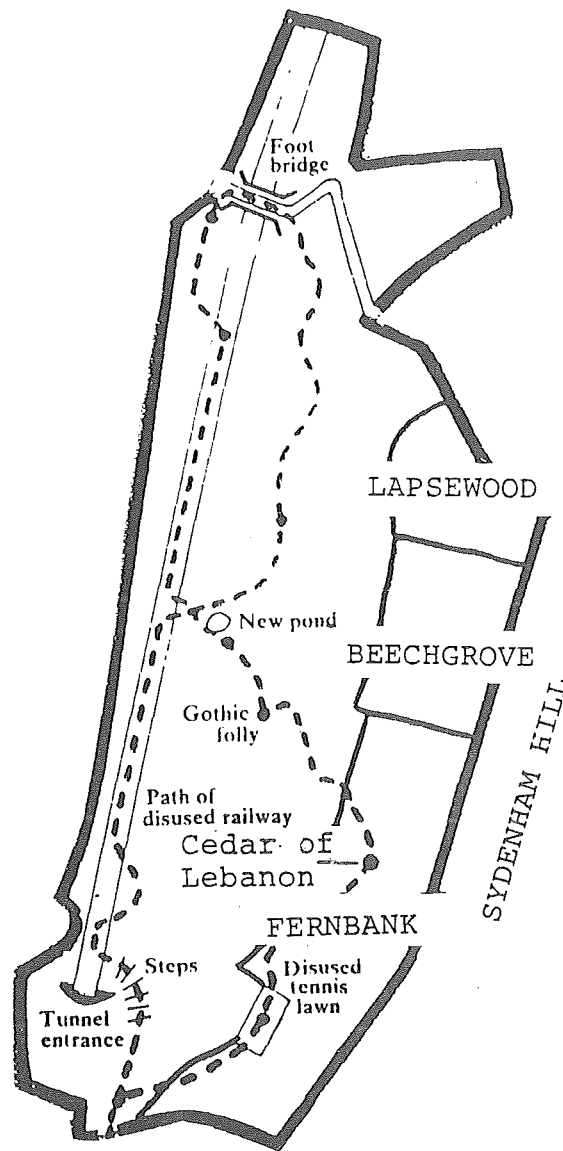
Barren lifeless slopes and patches caused by trampling have been discreetly fenced off and tree planting has been carried out, so that in a year or two these areas will once more be thriving with plant and animal life. Other work has been carried out by Community Service, schools and LWT members on Sunday workdays.

During my year as warden, I have been delighted by the growing number of visitors and their enjoyment of the nature trail. Recently, a pair of sparrowhawks - absent from the woods for 10 years - were spotted. Now, hopefully, they will breed. What could be a better endorsement of the Trust's work at Sydenham Hill Wood?

Bob Young is warden of Sydenham Hill Wood

SYDENHAM HILL WOOD

Nature trail and housing sites



CRESCENT WOOD ROAD

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Mr Michael Coleman

Dear Sir,

What a mess the public are making of Belair Park! Nothing more deflates that 'glad to be back feeling' after a journey abroad than a stroll through a local park. For me, that happens to be Belair, an oasis of quiet, peaceful beauty only yards from the South Circular.

Enter it via the West Dulwich station entrance and have that impression shattered! Dog heaps, metal cans and plastic drink bottles, shreds of newspapers, sweet and crisp bags, litter everywhere, much of it there a long time.

Do the park staff care, one wonders at first? But what if they did, what would be the result? More mess, more rubbish, it goes on and on. Even at the bottle banks one must tread warily, the aim has been so inaccurate. Where does all the litter come from? From the sweet shop, certainly - but food comes in packages and in tins abroad, too, so that's not the answer. Lack of training early on seems to be the reason.

Take our dog, for instance, and the ones before. He quickly learned never to leave his offerings in the open but at the sides, behind trees, even through the rail embankment fence. It can be done with a little effort.

One dog owner, after being admonished (politely, I thought) by me for allowing his overfed animal to relieve itself in full on a cricket pitch, responded by referring my attention (after first inquiring, less politely, whether I could read) to the sign saying "Dogs May Be Let Off In This Area".

It seems, then, that there is a lack of basic training for both dogs, their owners and for the public. Once you get into the anti-litter attitude it sticks. "This is your park: why mess it?" and "This park is not a dogs' WC: think of others" signs would have some effect, I'm sure.

The ultimate answer for dogs, of course, is for canine lavatories as installed in other countries. Once given the habit it's the first place a dog and its owner heads for. The same applies to litter.

Until an attempt is at least made to solve this depressing problem, Belair is running the risk of becoming Dulwich's number one black spot.

Yours sincerely

Michael Coleman
138 Thurlow Park Road
London SE21 8HN

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Mr H J Fyrth

Dear Sir,

My wife and I walk regularly in Dulwich Woods and we are distressed by the amount of rubbish which is encroaching on to the woods from the allotments which lie at the far end of Grange Lane, beyond the golf club.

The fence between the allotments and the woods is down and a mess of plastic sacks, tin cans, paper and other rubbish has made that part of the woods, where there is a path, very unpleasant. There is a rubbish dump by the road into the allotments, just by the corrugated iron compound where bonfires are lit. The dump spills into the woods, and some of the material on it has nothing to do with the allotments - for instance, there are old bedsteads and car seats. Surely all rubbish from the allotments should be deposited inside the compound where it can be burned. The many plastic sacks that blow into the woods should be burned or put into bins which can be removed. This is a nuisance which has grown worse since last year. I would also suggest that the fence should be mended.

Similarly Grange Lane itself is made very untidy and sordid by the rubbish from the allotments on the right side as one goes up the hill. Again there are plastic sacks and tin cans and bottles and plastic containers in the hedges and on the road.

Are the allotment holders not responsible for keeping their area tidy? Both Grange Lane and the woods are pleasant places which are being spoiled.

Yours sincerely

H J Fyrth
72 College Road
London SE21 7LY

From the Southwark local studies librarian

Dear Sir,

In the January 1987 issue of the Dulwich Society Newsletter, page 18, the "John Harvard local studies library" is mentioned. Our title is, in fact, Southwark local studies library.

Although we share the building with the John Harvard lending library, we are not open the same hours. It has happened in the past that people wishing to visit, and enquiring for the hours of, the John Harvard Library, have been given the lending library hours, and have found local studies closed when they arrived.

I hope that I do not sound too pedantic, but we are trying hard to establish our own identity within Southwark.

Yours faithfully

Nicola Smith
Southwark local studies library
211 Borough High Street
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ESTATES GOVERNORS UNDER FIRE

The Dulwich estates governors are coming in for increasing criticism from several different quarters for their handling of sensitive local issues. In view of the importance of the subject, the Newsletter below reproduces a summary of two recent articles which appear in Southside magazine.

Dulwich Village's sylvan tranquillity is being disturbed by ripples of discontent from residents over an apparent policy of neglect by the Dulwich estates governors.

While neighbouring Crystal Palace is decidedly coming up in the world these days, Dulwich is starting to look decidedly tacky - ironically at a time when local house prices are sky-rocketing and the village's profile is, thanks to Mrs Thatcher's taking up residence, higher than ever.

"It's either ignorance or neglect on the part of the governors", claims local historian Brian Green. "But whatever the reason, the governors are allowing the local fabric to crumble".

There is great disenchantment, particularly among residents at Stonehills Court, Gainsborough Court, Pond Mead and the prestigious Frank Dixon Way.

Mr Green said: "You only have to walk round the village to see how bad things have become. College Road, which is the responsibility of Dulwich estates governors, is dangerously pot-holed. A car hit the fountain some months ago and the damage there has never been repaired. The old grammar school - built by Charles Barry of Houses of Parliament fame - is in a shocking state. The tollgate cottage has been unoccupied for two years, and there are rumours that it is now going to be sold off. And the small garden surrounding the inscribed tablet marking the site of the old village stocks is overgrown".

Perhaps the greatest indictment of the powers-that-be, who control the leases on most of the property in the Dulwich village area, is that the gate posts of Dulwich College itself have been allowed to start falling apart.

"It's time the governors woke up to the facts of life", said Mr Green.

Dissatisfaction with the way in which the Dulwich estates governors conduct their affairs, with potentially disastrous effects on the local environment, has led to a hardening of attitudes among local people.

According to Mr Peter Whiteman, president of the Dulwich Village Preservation Society, the governors until recently "acted in a very responsible and reasonable way but now the situation is quite different. They have two roles: one as conservators of the area; the other as fund raisers for Dulwich College, a role which they now see as their prime function and which has led them to ride roughshod over the interests of the area in pursuit of financial gain".

Property developers see potential rich pickings in Dulwich and, according to the society, the estates governors are playing their game: "The governors are shadowy figures. We can't even find out exactly who they are - though, as far as we know, none of them actually lives in the village.

"What really galls is that the governors try to remain secretive about all property developments. We have had fantastic cooperation from the London Borough of Southwark, who keep us au fait with any applications for planning permission and who take our representations seriously, but the estates governors do not even reply to letters. There was even a recent 2,000-signature petition which has gone completely unacknowledged".

"Thousands of people come into Dulwich at weekends as somewhere to escape to. There are sensible proposals we would like to see carried through. Ironically, though, these are the things which the governors turn down - such as changing the usage of shops to fill local needs".

GARDENS OF DULWICH: THE GRANGE

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dry weather to irrigate a strip for more moisture-loving plants.

We had found that in times of heavy rain the water garden overflowed, so we cut a channel to convey this through to the valley path creating a boggy patch lined with butyl and perforated for restricted drainage near the path edge.

I have sought at all times to incorporate in the layout any remnants of possible historical interest, rather than obliterate them from this interesting old site. In 1985 and 1986 I opened the garden to the public under the National Gardens scheme and have been surprised and pleased by the success of this, which I feel must be continued in future years if at all possible.

Gerald Fairlie wrote this article earlier this year. Many members of the society will by now have heard the sad news that he died this summer. An appreciation of him, in particular his work for the society, for which he will be greatly missed, will appear in a forthcoming issue of the Newsletter.

STOP PRESS

3 Dec. Thurs. 8pm. St Barnabas Hall. "Planning in Dulwich" - Now and in the Future. An open meeting arranged by Transport & Planning sub-cttee. Representatives from Southwark Council will be speaking.