



The Dulwich Society

TO FOSTER AND SAFEGUARD THE AMENITIES OF DULWICH

Newsletter 30

October 1975

THE DULWICH SOCIETY: NEWSLETTER 30: OCTOBER 1975

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SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

Recruitment Campaign: at the same time as we deliver this newsletter to members we are asking our ever willing street representatives to deliver a leaflet to all houses in the area to encourage new members to join. You will probably get one too. This leaflet, which is similar to one used last year, outlines the benefits of membership and asks for help in running the Society. This latter appeal of course applies equally to members of the Society. You can help the Society in two ways; either by joining one of the Sub-Committees to add your expert knowledge of trees, wild life, the law or whatever to the work already being done, or by helping in some administrative way. In this connection Mrs Evans of the Social Sub-Committee needs more help; we are always glad of offers to help distribute literature; and we would love to hear from someone with an accessible electric typewriter to help production of the newsletter and other documents. If you would like to be involved in any way please let the Secretary or any member of the Executive Committee know, or alternatively come along to the meeting at Belair on 22 November 1975 at 11.00 a.m. to volunteer your services. We would be very pleased to see you there.

MEMBERS MEETINGS

8.0 p.m. 6 November 1975, St. Barnabas Hall

The Planning Sub-Committee has asked Mr Ronald Brown, JP, MP, Deputy Chairman of the Estates Governors (and brother of Lord George Brown) to talk to members about planning in the area. Mr Brown will be accompanied by Mr Russell Vernon, Architect to the Governors and by Mr White, the Secretary and General Manager. This will be a wonderful opportunity for members to air their views and to seek answers to their questions about the Estates Governors activities as custodians of Dulwich.

11.0 a.m. 22 November 1975, Belair

The Executive Committee are inviting prospective members who can help the Society to an 'at home' to meet active members and to discuss ways in which they can help. Wine and 'small eats' will be available. Existing members who wish to volunteer their services are also welcome.

8.0 p.m. 4 December 1975, St. Barnabas Hall

A carol concert will be held in the big hall in conjunction with the Dulwich Choral Society. Refreshments will be available to ticket holders in the rear hall at a cost of 50p per adult and

25p for children of 14 or under. Tickets must be purchased in advance from Mrs K.M.Evans of 22 Dulwich Village, SE21 (693 3522) or from any Executive member.

Next Year

There will be no meeting in January and the first in 1976 will be at 8.0 p.m. on Thursday 5 February in St. Barnabas Hall. Details have not yet been fixed and will be announced in the December newsletter.

The meeting on 4 March (it's Leap Year next year) will be the Annual General Meeting which will be as usual at 8.0 p.m. in St. Barnabas Hall.

The Annual Dinner will be held at the Golf Club on 2 April. The speaker will be Lord Wolfenden. Details later.

WILD LIFE

The offer of prizes in the photographic competition brought no response at all. Can anyone suggest a competition connected with wild life which might be more popular?

The Forestry Commission tells us in answer to a question we put to them that ivy is not harmful to healthy woodland trees since it takes no water or nourishment from them; and, except in the case of the ash, the dense mass of flowering shoots we sometimes see high up in the crowns of trees cannot develop in the shade of a vigorous tree's own foliage. On the other hand ivy is of enormous benefit to a wide range of wild life, both by helping to protect the soil from snow and frost thereby enabling birds to forage in hard weather and by providing shelter and nesting places for many small mammals, birds and insects. The flowers provide a late source of nectar and the fruits a late source of food. So we must regard ivy as an essential component of the best woodland habitats in Britain.

The Nature Conservancy tell us in answer to another question that probably hedgehogs may be poisoned by feeding on slugs which have eaten anti-slug pellets. So if you want hedgehogs in the garden why not let them deal with the slugs?

Of birds which feed on the wing, high in the air, swifts, swallows, and house martins have been seen again in Dulwich during the summer. We know of one place where swallows nest. We should be interested to hear from any member who knows where the swifts and martins do.

AN UNUSUAL PILLAR BOX

Some of our members may have noticed that a pillar box of unusual shape, hexagonal, stands on Sydenham Hill at the corner of Wells Park Road.

Pillar boxes were used in France from the middle of the 17th century but the first in the United Kingdom was set up at St. Helier in Jersey in 1852. Anthony Trollope is believed to have been

responsible; he was for many years a surveyor in the Post Office. Before that letters had to be handed in at offices. The first box in England was set up at Carlisle in 1853 and the first in London was at the corner of Fleet Street and Farringdon Road, in March, 1855.

A standard pattern of fluted, cylindrical, box was used from 1856. There were also some square boxes. A standard pattern of wall box was used from 1857. Posting boxes were painted green; the familiar red colour was adopted in 1874.

The hexagonal box was suggested by a secretary of the Post Office, designed by J.W.Penfold and made by Cochrane, Grove and Co. at Dudley. The words 'Cochrane Dudley' are embossed on the part of the box that goes into the ground. These boxes were made from 1866-1879. Does anyone know when the one at Sydenham Hill was installed?

Most of this information comes from the small but very interesting postal museum at Bruce Castle, Tottenham, where examples of pillar boxes are on display.

TREES

Commemoration Tree

Members will recall that at the Annual General Meeting last March Sir Frederick Everson announced his retirement from the chairmanship of the society.

During his five years in office Sir Frederick played a very considerable part in the affairs of the Society and it is largely thanks to his efforts that the growth and influence of the Society has increased to its present state.

The Executive Committee was unanimous in the desire to express the thanks and esteem of the Society to Sir Frederick and it can now be reported that he has agreed to the suggestion to plant a commemorative tree in Dulwich Village.

The planting will be during the winter months at a time and date to be arranged and these details will be made known in due course so that members may have the opportunity of attending this happy occasion.

Dutch Elm Disease

It has been suggested that a photographic record be made of many of the trees affected by Dutch Elm Disease in the Dulwich area, and the society is fortunate in having 'discovered' a member, Mr Christopher Denwell, who is a keen amateur photographer and has kindly agreed to carry out this survey.

It is hoped to show the resulting slides at a later 'Members Evening'.

PLANNING

Buildings of Local Interest

We reported in the last newsletter that the London Borough of Southwark had accepted the Society's recommendation to add a number of buildings in the area to their list of 'Buildings of Local Interest' but had been unable to accept our recommendation to include 'Beech Grove', Sydenham Hill. Members will be glad to know that on questioning this decision we were told that it was due to a clerical error, and that the Council have now included this building on the list. This is very gratifying, and although inclusion in the list conveys no kind of guarantee for the future it does ensure that any proposals to redevelop the sites on any included buildings will receive close and critical attention.

Crystal Palace Park

Since our last report there has been a further meeting of the Crystal Palace Forum to consider the future of the park; and while there are differences of emphasis between one local amenity organisation and another it is quite clear that there will be strong and unanimous opposition to developments in the park that are not directly associated with the park itself or with the Sports Centre. Fortunately, the economic climate will in any case defer any substantial development of any kind for a number of years to come, and it is therefore perhaps all the more likely that cosmetic treatment, the reinstatement of statues, the restoration of terraces and their opening to the public as an integral part of the park, will take place before too long.

Gypsies

We reported in Newsletter No. 28 that Southwark Borough Council had recommended strongly to the Secretary of State for the Environment that a site at the top of Grange Lane beyond the Fort, which had been put forward as a suitable site for 15 gypsy caravans, was not in fact suitable and should not be so used. We have now heard that the Secretary of State has not entirely accepted the Council's recommendation (which concerned a number of other sites in the Borough too) and has invited the Borough to consider again this site and one or two others.

We have no reason to believe that the Council will withdraw its well-founded objections to the use of this remote and inaccessible site for this purpose. However, we are keeping closely in touch with them and will report developments in future newsletters.

Planning Applications

There have been few applications of any significance in recent months. One application, for permission to erect three 3-storey buildings on the site of No. 4 Kingswood Drive, aroused some objections from local residents. The Society itself did not wish

to raise any objection to the proposal but are giving close attention to the impact of the development on trees on the site.

A planning application has now been submitted for the erection of a single storey schoolkeeper's house in the grounds of the Dulwich Village Church of England School. This forms part of Stage 2 of the school development itself and seems unlikely to give rise to any objections.

Members may have noticed advertisements in some newspapers for the sale by the Estates Governors of four (unidentified) sites in the area. The sites are in fact:

- a. 65-67 Alleyn Park;
- b. 57-59 Dulwich Wood Avenue/140-148 Gypsy Hill;
- c. A site on the corner of Calton Avenue and Gilkes Crescent;
- d. 15-16 Acacia Grove.

All of these sites carry outline planning applications which were granted a few years ago and which are due to expire in the near future.

REMINDER: Thursday 6 November, 8 p.m. Members' Meeting to be addressed by Mr R.J. Brown JP MP, Deputy Chairman of the Estates Governors. Please come!

VIEWS OF THE PAST

Curiosities of Victorian and Edwardian London are to be found in a new issue of postcards by the borough of Southwark. From 15,000 photographs of the past, they have picked just 16, which are going on sale as two sets of eight at a modest 5p a card.

Donkeys on Peckham Rye, the handsome early 19th-century Crown Inn at Dulwich and the dining-room of Bessemer House, home of the steelman Sir Henry Bessemer, are some of the subjects.

A personal tragedy lies behind a scene of a ragged crowd round a hot-potato seller, taken from a glass positive found at Pembroke College Mission. He was 'Mr Betts', still remembered, who caught his hand in a power-saw, could not do ordinary work, and so sold potatoes and chopped wood for a living.

The cards made their debut in an exhibition on Victorian and Edwardian Southwark at the local Livesey Museum this month, and are now on sale at the borough's libraries.

LOCAL HISTORY

Bill de Baerdemaeker reports that seven of the Dulwich finger posts are now missing; they seem to be popular targets for souvenir hunters or vandals. They will be replaced as soon as possible, but production of new ones is held up by the current spending restrictions.

He also says that Southwark Borough Council have placed one of their well-designed historic plaques on the Lodge House at the entrance to Belair in Gallery Road. This is similar to the one recently put on the old college buildings.

We are sorry to report that Dulwich's oldest inhabitant has died in her Pond Cottages home at the age of 103. She could remember Dulwich when it was a country village surrounded by woods and farmland.

RAILWAYS OF DULWICH

A large gathering of members heard a fascinating talk on 2 October by Mr R.L.E. Lawrence, Vice-Chairman of the College Governors, on the development of the complex network of railways in and around Dulwich. This was well illustrated by slides and maps, many of considerable historic interest, and an added attraction was a display of model railways in the room below. We were honoured by the presence of the Mayor of the London Borough of Southwark, Councillor Charles Halford and the new Master of Dulwich College, Mr David Ems, MA, who had kindly given us permission to meet in the Great Hall of the College, a venue which greatly added to the attraction of the evening.