



# *The Dulwich Society*

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TO FOSTER AND SAFEGUARD THE AMENITIES OF DULWICH

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## *Newsletter 37*

July 1977

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#### THE JUBILEE

Although the Dulwich Society has not been involved very directly in the Jubilee activities we are sure that all our members must have been moved by the marvellous events of the recent past and we hope you all enjoyed any events, whether street parties, processions, or merely television watching, in which you took a part. The Society manned a stand in Belair on Saturday 18 June at which the various activities of the Society were displayed and this attracted a good deal of favourable interest. We also hope that a number of new members will join the Society as a result of this interest.

#### SOCIETY EVENTS

##### Trees Walk

As far as the Society is concerned the next event is the Trees walk on Thursday 7 July at 7.30p.m. The rendezvous is in Belair car park (on the corner of Thurlow Park Road and Gallery Road) and Mr. J.B. Brooks, Assistant Parks Superintendent of the London Borough of Southwark will guide visitors around the Park which is full of interesting old trees.

##### Visit to Merrist Wood Agricultural College

After the meeting last November when Mr. Peter Bridgeman, Head of Arboricultural Studies at Merrist Wood Agricultural College, joined our trees panel he suggested that the Dulwich Society might like to make up a party to visit the College to see the work of the arboricultural and horticultural departments. Arrangements for such a visit have now been made and details are as follows:

1. Time and date: 10 a.m., Saturday 10 September 1977.
2. Members make their own way to Merrist Wood which is at Worplesdon, near Guildford. All applications will be acknowledged and full details, including a route map, will be sent to those going.
3. Programme:  
Arrive, approx. 10 a.m.  
Coffee on arrival (cost 12p)  
Tour of arboricultural and horticultural departments (mainly outdoors) on foot  
Return to College about 12.30 p.m. (bar available at cost)  
Lunch 1 p.m. (cost £1.50 per head)  
Visit ends about 2 p.m.

4. The maximum number which can be accommodated is 40 so applications will be dealt with on a first come, first served basis. Closing date for application is Wednesday 31 August.
5. The cost per head of the visit will be £1.50 to cover lunch.
6. If you would like to join this party please complete the application form on p. 16 and return it to Alan Barnard who is responsible for the arrangements.

#### Dates For Future Society Meetings

(normally at 8 p.m. in St. Barnabas Hall, Dulwich Village)

#### 1977

- |             |   |   |
|-------------|---|---|
| 6 October   | : | Traffic   |
| 3 November  | : | Planning  |
| 15 December | : | Meeting with Dulwich Choral Society<br>(note revised date for this meeting) |

#### 1978

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|-------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 2 February  | : | Local History                       |
| 2 March     | : | A.G.M.                              |
| 7 April     | : | Society Dinner                      |
| 4 May       | : | Wild Life                           |
| 1 June      | : | Trees                               |
| 6 July      | : | Trees Walk                          |
| 5 October   | : | Social meeting and membership drive |
| 2 November  | : | Planning                            |
| 14 December | : | Meeting with Dulwich Choral Society |

#### VISIT TO HONOR OAK NURSERIES

Little is known about the things that go on behind the scenes in a major London Borough like Southwark as can be appreciated from the following account, written by Mrs Esther Blackburn, a member of the Trees Sub-Committee which describes the nursery activities of the Borough.

On Thursday evening 12 May the Trees Committee organised a visit for a small group of members of the Dulwich Society to Honor Oak nursery which produces plants for the 350 acres of the 80 parks under the control of the Borough of Southwark as well as the gardens of 130 new housing estates.

We were lucky to be shown round by Mr. J.D. Bradbury, Superintendent of the Parks Department of Southwark. He is very enthusiastic about all aspects of his job which, apart from all the plants, includes being in charge of over 400 staff and such things as 250 large motor mowing machines necessary not only for the parks and housing estates but also for all the football pitches and playgrounds in the Borough.

The Nursery consists of about eight acres on which there are greenhouses and cold frames

as well as a small outside nursery for shrubs and trees. There are also offices and a joint off-the-job training centre for gardeners for the Boroughs of Southwark, Greenwich and Lambeth.

Although the greenhouses are not of the very latest type, having been built in 1958 and extended in 1967, they have many clever modern automatic devices which intrigued members of the group. One of these sprays moisture into the air whenever a part of it exposed in the greenhouse becomes dry, and a steady low concentration of fungicides and insecticides to fill the whole greenhouse is given off by another. One of the houses also has automatic venting varying according to the temperature and capillary irrigation which comes from a constant supply of water below the benches up into the gravel on which the flower pots stand.

Although most of the ½ million plants produced annually are for bedding in the parks, up to 1/5 are produced for civic decoration. Members of the party were however not only impressed by the numbers, particularly of about 20,000 geraniums raised from cuttings and seed (90% germination) but also by the attractiveness of so many of the plants. Among many others there were fuchsias, cyclamen, foxgloves, hydrangeas, dahlias, mesembryanthemum and begonias of all kinds including the very striking 'iron cross' variety. The fantastic variation in colour of the leaves of the many coleus plants was also very impressive. Among more unusual plants that we saw were a magnificent red and yellow abutilon in a hanging basket, cigar plants, so named because of the touch of black at the tips of the red tubular flowers, and datura knightii known as the wedding bell plant because of its large white bell shaped flowers.

As well as general flower decoration for all civic occasions a few carnations are especially grown for red buttonholes for members of the Southwark Council to be worn at the annual Civic Service; this year there is also a special Jubilee carpet bed in one of the Southwark Parks, and the Mayor's barge on the Thames was especially decorated for the Royal party's visit to Southwark and the River Procession on Thursday 9 June.

#### BENCHES IN THE PARKS

Many people have commented favourably on the garden seats presented by the Dulwich Society two of which are now in the grounds of Belair. As funds permit we shall repeat this sort of gift which is both durable and useful. Meanwhile we would mention that the GLC welcomes presentation of seats to

its parks at any time and individuals may like to consider personal presentation. The cost at the present time is about £70 for a good hardwood seat. Information on how to do it may be obtained from the Secretary.

#### NEWS FROM THE BOROUGHS

##### How Lambeth Works

Details of Lambeth Council's policies and its plans are set out in the Lambeth Community Plan published each September. The plan is divided into seven volumes covering different areas of activity and is available at all public libraries in the borough for anyone to consult.

The Community Plan is formulated each year in an extensive planning process involving all Members of the Council, leading up to the making of the rate in the spring.

However, throughout the year there remain many other decisions to be made in order to implement the Community Plan policies. Most of this work is carried out by nine major committees responsible for a group of services. Some of these committees appoint sub-committees to deal with particular aspects of their work.

During a six-week period each committee usually meets once, and at the end of the six-week "cycle" a full Council meeting is held at which each committee reports its decisions or makes recommendations to the Council. However, most of the discussion takes place at committee meetings so why not come along? You will not be able to take part in the discussions, but you will hear your elected representatives dealing with the many and varied aspects of life in Lambeth.

##### Lambeth's Mayor

The Council held its Annual Meeting on 18 May, and at that meeting Councillor Wilfred Juniper was formally elected as Mayor of Lambeth. The retiring Mayor Councillor William Hall had a busy year and has expressed his thanks and appreciation to all those people who have helped him carry out his duties.

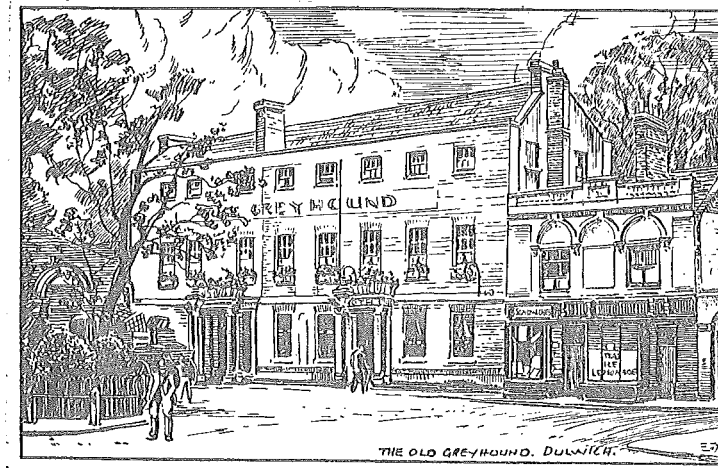
##### The Results of the GLC Election

The following were elected on 5 May to represent Lambeth on the Greater London Council:

VAUXHALL	Ewan Geddes Carr (Labour)
STREATHAM	Frederick Walter Weyer (Conservative)
LAMBETH CENTRAL	Anna Lloyd Grieves (Labour)
NORWOOD	Normal John Smith (Conservative)

##### More Help From the Government

Lambeth is one of the few areas in the country to be offered a special partnership with the Government as a part of the strategy to halt inner city decline. This is a welcome and very important development for the future of Lambeth which will bring more resources to the Borough. As a start the Government have allocated £5 million to Lambeth to boost construction over the next two years. Lambeth is also to be given priority in a much expanded urban programme.



### Southwark

The Borough has just published a major document entitled "Towards a Community Plan" which is obviously the result of many months of work in the Town Hall. To quote from the letter signed by Mr. S.T.Evans, the Chief Executive and Town Clerk which introduces the document;

"Towards a Community Plan" sets out for the first time in a comprehensive way all the policies and programmes of Southwark Council. It is thus essential reading for those who seek to understand what the local authority is about, and more importantly gives a firm basis to those who would wish to influence the future direction of the Council's policies."

"Because of its sheer size we have decided that it would be more helpful to most recipients of the plan if they were sent only the Corporate Section and other Programme Area Sections that seem appropriate to their interest."

We, the Dulwich Society, have received the Corporate Section, which incorporates a profile of the Borough and a summary of the Corporate resources of the Council (manpower, finance, land), and the separate Sections on Southwark's Housing Strategy, Planning and Transportation and Social Services.

All this contains a great deal of detailed information which would not be easy to get hold of elsewhere and provides a valuable source of reference to members of the Society. Copies of both the Lambeth and Southwark documents are held by the Chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee.

### PLANNING NOTES

#### British Rail

##### Sydenham Hill Station

We reported in our last newsletter that we had written to British Rail to object to the illuminated red and white sign recently erected at Sydenham Hill Station. A slightly tart reply from British Rail included the following:

"Our view, as a commercial undertaking, is that Sydenham Hill Station, being unobtrusive, is just the type of station which needs a sign to denote its presence for those who are not familiar with the locality. The sign is simple and well proportioned and I see no cause to alter or remove it".

It being the view of the Society that, generally speaking, Sydenham Hill Station is used by people who know where it is, we are pursuing our objections. Representations have been made to the Estates Governors and to higher echelons in British Rail, and we will report developments next time.

### West Dulwich Station Bridge

Members will be glad to know that planning permission has now been obtained by British Rail to renew the damaged eastern side of the bridge across Thurlow Park Road, the Victorian decorations of which collapsed a few months ago, in a similar manner to the repairs carried out on the western side in 1969. We understand that the steel work is now being fabricated and that repairs are expected to be completed by the later summer.

### SYCAMORE SOOTY BARK DISEASE

Some concern has been caused by our mention in the last newsletter (page 17) of a disease attacking sycamore trees which has been named 'Wanstead' disease. We are now pleased to be able to publish a report on this disease written by Mr. W.E. Storey, Chief Horticultural Advisor to the GLC Parks Department. We are much indebted to him for providing this detailed information.

A severe outbreak of this disease in 1976 in the London area with reports of instances as far afield as the Midlands attracted a lot of attention and raised fears that the sycamore might be about to share the fate of the elm. Similar fears were, in fact, voiced in 1948 when the first major outbreak in this country caused severe mortality of sycamores in Wanstead Park, London and gave rise to the title 'Wanstead Disease'. Some three years previously the first identification of the disease in this country had been made on a dead sycamore in the same park, so it is reasonable to assume that it was present but unnoticed for several years before the big flare up.

How it got there in the first place cannot be said with certainty but the disease has been known in Canada since the last century as a harmless saprophyte on dead maples, so imported timber is a distinct possibility. Here, it favours sycamore though it has been noted occasionally on other maples.

### Symptoms

These may be difficult to detect in minor cases when no more than a twig or small branch may be killed but when really rampant, a large part, or even the whole crown of a tree may wilt in the summer. It is perhaps prudent not to confuse these symptoms with those caused by some other agency, such as drought or squirrel damage which may be superficially similar.

### The Disease

The cause is a fungus which delights in the name *Cryptosporium corticale*, the spores of which are windborne and can gain entry to the tree through quite small wounds such as broken branches, though it is not known if this is the only method of infection. Once inside, the fungus spreads through the wood at a speed which seems to be governed closely by summer temperature. It may take several years to become thoroughly established, by which time sap channels are blocked, wilting appears and the tree, or the affected part, dies from lack of water.

The fruiting bodies or spores are formed just below the bark, killing the bark in strips or patches in the process. Spore production is enormous, calculated to be about one hundred million per square centimetres, and as the dead bark falls away these are revealed as a distinctive sooty layer - hence the name 'sooty bark' - which is dispersed by the wind.

### Climate and Spread

Since the initial virulent outbreaks of nearly thirty years ago there have been several upsurges of the disease, long periods of almost complete quiescence, and finally the quite dramatic outbreak last year. The Pathology Branch of the Forestry Commission has compared incidence with temperature down the years and has demonstrated a definite link between high summer temperatures and increased activity of the disease the following year. The 1948 outbreak followed the blazing summer of 1947 with temperatures which were probably not exceeded until 1975 when the month of August was probably the hottest in S.E. England for 300 years. The severe and widespread outbreak of sooty bark disease of 1976 followed. What of 1977? Last summer was even hotter so it seems likely that this year will see even greater and more widespread damage - time will tell if this is correct.

### What of the Future?

The record of the last thirty years shows that when we have had typically British summers the disease is more or less dormant with only minor instances being recorded.

Only when July and August temperatures consistently average around the mid 70s or more do conditions seem favourable for active development, with results which are seen the following year. These conditions are usually confined to the South East and even here they occur but seldom becoming progressively rarer as one moves north.

It seems likely, therefore, that a return to normal English summers will bring a recession of the disease in the South East and that it is never likely to make more than a transitory appearance in the cooler north - where Sycamore is more at home and of greater importance.

### Control

Is there any form of control? The answer must regretfully be 'No'. Cutting off and burning dead branches or trees will certainly remove the distressing evidence but this operation must inevitably release billions of spores into the air. Treatment with any form of fungicide would be a waste of time because the disease would most likely have been established for several years before there were any visible signs. The available evidence seems to indicate that nature will in her own good time push the disease into the background once more and the best assistance man can give is to refrain from cutting or damaging sycamores, and so providing entry points, while the disease is active.

### WILD LIFE

#### Recording of Local Incidents

The Wild Life Sub-Committee is anxious to hear from any Dulwich residents about sightings of birds or other wild animals, as well as lists of wildflowers, fungi, or other items of interest. These recordings can not only provide evidence of the rural nature of Dulwich, but the continuing record can be used to warn us of unwelcome changes. We have records of birds, butterflies and wild flowers, some going back more than twenty years.

In order to help us to maintain these records into the future we would like to hear from anyone willing to help. This would entail regular visits and might be ideal for someone who has to pass through the Park or

woodland daily. Volunteers who would be interested in maintaining a regular watch in any particular area (and who preferably know something about birds, animals or wild plants) are cordially invited to communicate with one of the following: Mrs Howells, 7 College Road, 693 7226; Miss R.Davis, 118 College Road, 670 3011; Miss M. Pye-Smith, 9 Breakspeare, College Road, 693 8341.

#### Local Sightings

Mr. Toler who lives on Sydenham Hill, has provided us with the following notes on local sightings (which astonish your editor who has never seen any of these things):

The kingfisher is still visiting the Mill pond and was last seen there on 7 March. The cuckoo was first heard on the golf course on 26 April, the swallow on 5 May, and the swift on 10 May. The green, the greater spotted, and lesser spotted woodpeckers have all been seen regularly, also the tawny owl. Kestrels are often seen and are now nesting on a local building. Over 300 redwings were seen on 16 January. The grey and the pied wagtail, the meadow pipit and marsh tit were seen in Belair. Seven lapwings flew over the College in January. The stock and collared dove have both been sighted. A blackcap was seen in the village, while on the golf course and woods a stonechat, a long tailed tit, many goldfinches, greenfinches and coal tits have been seen and a willow tit heard.

In Dulwich Park the goldcrest and heron were seen in March, while on the lake, wildfowl included a little grebe, a shoveller, a family of eight canada geese, sixty five tufted duck, seven pochards, several coots and over 125 mallard.

Foxes continue to be active in the district. Several inhabited earths are known, and several new holes discovered in the woods which may be the beginning of new earths.

and another member adds the following:

Willow warbler	16 April
Chiff chaff	17 April
Redpolls (two)	17 April
Blackcap singing	21 April
Seventy to eighty common gulls	30 March passing through
Sedge warbler (one)	29 April railway embankment Alleyn Park
Swallows (two)	3 May Dulwich Park
Swifts (four)	15 May
Goldfinches (twenty)	a charm during May

#### Notes from Dulwich Park

Although we have experienced a most disappointing spring this year because of the lack of warm cheering sunshine, a stroll through Dulwich Park on any day, regardless of weather, can be well rewarding and refreshing if one notices the beautiful trees and shrubs, the wide expanse of green lawns, and the fine variety of wild life.

In our last newsletter we mentioned that the free flying canada geese had returned to the lake with their last year's young and now we are happy to relate that after sending the young goslings off to find new abodes, they settled down again to rearing six more youngsters and all of these with the parents can be seen enjoying the water.

The shelduck are thriving well but Mr. Woods, the Park Superintendent, mentioned that at night their peculiar calls sound quite eerie.

In the aviary the diamond doves of Australia, those with small white spots on the wings, also the love birds and cockatoos are all breeding and the nicobar pigeons from New Guinea and Solomon Islands are breeding for the second time this year; unfortunately the first brood did not live long. These pigeons have remarkable features, the plumage, black with green, blue and copper sheen, peculiar shaped feathers around the neck and a small knob at the base of the bill.

The special arrangements made for dog owners to exercise their dogs on certain sections of the Park are proving to be successful as far as can be seen.

#### DR. WEBSTER'S MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN

It will have come to the notice of some Dulwich residents that the fountain on the "island" at the south end of the Village has had a facelift.

The Dulwich Society History Committee had put forward the idea of having the gas lantern restored and the disused troughs converted to flowerbeds to commemorate the centenary of the fountain's erection and had approached Southwark Council as its custodians. The Council suggested a full restoration job as a Silver Jubilee commemoration project and this was finally brought about by the joint efforts of the Dulwich Society, the Civic Trust Jubilee Fund and the Borough Council.

But, for those who ask "Who was George Webster?" I hope the following will shed some light on the qualities and public record of this once revered and distinguished resident of the Village.

Born in Forfarshire, Scotland in 1797, George Webster became a Doctor of Medicine at the age of eighteen and was on the army medical staff in Belgium at the time of Waterloo. In 1815 he became assistant, and later partner, of a Dulwich GP taking up residence in a former alehouse "The Bell" on the site of the present lodge within the old college gates of Dulwich Park. During his sixty-one years of practice in and around Dulwich he became so well regarded for his good works in the causes of the poor and the Board schools that he became known as "The Patriarch of Dulwich" partly, no doubt, because of his tall figure and bushy white beard.

As well as being a prolific contributor to medical and literary journals he was the instigator of the first British Medical Association of which he was President for fourteen years, a Guardian of the Poor, and a JP.

So much was he thought of throughout the Hamlet that a Committee of residents was set up to consider a memorial in his honour. On being asked what form he would like the memorial to take he requested that it should be of benefit to his fellow-men. Thus the idea of a public fountain was born and Charles Barry, then architect and surveyor to the College estate, designed the imposing column we know today, built of red "Balmoral" granite from Italy and topped by a magnificent gas lantern.

Unfortunately, by the time all public subscriptions had been gathered in and the final plans drawn up the good doctor had died, at the age of

seventy-nine, and it was not until one year later that the fountain was finally erected on land granted by the estate at the apex of the old Village green where after 100 years, although perhaps not admired by everyone, it has become not only part of the Village scene but part of Dulwich history.

A NOTE FROM THE ESTATES GOVERNORS

The Estates Governors have become increasingly concerned in recent months with the number of instances where lessees and freeholders have carried out extensions or works of improvement and alteration without first seeking the approval of the Estates Governors either as lessors, or the Managers under the Scheme of Management.

Existing leases clearly set out procedures requiring the approval of the Estates Governors as does the Scheme of Management. A copy of the Scheme is given to the solicitor acting on behalf of a lessee when enfranchisement takes place. It is appreciated that in some cases lease details are not immediately available to the lessee concerned and the Scheme of Management may well have been mislaid, but in those cases or where a lessee or freeholder is not sure of the position then a telephone call or an enquiry to the Estate Office would be promptly dealt with, saving a great deal of time, inconvenience, and unnecessary expense to all concerned. It is not the Estates Governors who lose where breaches of covenant occur but those who live on the Estate. It is only by cooperation that the amenities can be preserved and the character of Dulwich maintained. The Estate Office is always ready to help or advise on matters arising under a lease or the Scheme of Management and the Estates Governors hope that by explaining the situation many of the difficulties now being experienced would be avoided.



APPLICATION FORM

I wish to apply for ..... places in the party to visit MERRIST WOOD on 10 September 1977. I enclose a cheque (payable to The Dulwich Society) for £..... at £1.50 a head.

\* I shall be travelling by car and can offer ..... spare seats for anyone wanting a lift.

\* I do not have transport and would like a lift in someone's car please.

NAME (block capitals) .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

TELEPHONE NO .....DATE.....

Return the form to Alan Barnard Esq., 18, Dovercourt Road, SE22.

\* delete as appropriate

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