

The Dulwich Society

TO FOSTER AND SAFEGUARD THE AMENITIES OF DULWICH

Newsletter 38

October 1977

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SOCIETY NEWS

The Social Sub-Committee : We are very sorry to have to report that Mrs Evans, who has been the most able leader and organiser of the social sub-committee for the past few years, is having to give up her active work for the Society for reasons of health. Although we all hope that she will soon be restored to her normal good health, she feels that she must resign her position as Chairman of the sub-committee at once. We are very sorry indeed to lose her services and we are sure that all our members would wish to join us in thanking her most sincerely for all her good work in the past and in wishing her a rapid return to health.

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 may 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 present 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.

We are always glad of offers to help distribute literature, or to assist with typing and so on, and we now badly need new volunteers to join the Social sub-committee, and in particular a willing person (or persons, since it might well suit a husband-and-wife team) to take over the job of Chairman and organiser. Anyone who would like to help is asked to get in touch with the Secretary or any other member of the Executive Committee.

This year we are inviting non-members who would like to join the Society and take an active part in some capacity, to come to our evening meeting in St Barnabas Hall on Thursday 3 November (at 8 pm). They will then have the opportunity to meet members, learn something about the Society and its aims and activities, and will be able to discuss what help they could best give to the Society (for details, see below under Members' Meetings).

Members' Meetings : We have had to make some changes in the programme of meetings planned for the autumn so please take careful note of the following arrangements:

6 October : the Dulwich Society meeting for this night had to be cancelled as it clashed with an important Planning meeting arranged by the Director of Development, the London Borough of Southwark. This is the last of a series of public meetings called by the Borough to discuss the preparation of a District Plan for Mid/South Southwark, in this case with particular reference to Ruskin and College Wards. We felt that this meeting was of such importance for the future of our local environment that it was essential to cancel our own meeting. We very much hope that this change did not cause any serious inconvenience to our members.

3 November 8 pm, St Barnabas Hall, Dulwich Village :

The Executive Committee are inviting prospective members who are interested in joining the Society and in playing an active part in its affairs to come to an informal meeting to meet members of the Society and to hear something about its aims and activities. Wine and biscuits will be served during the evening. Present members of the Society who wish to volunteer their services or personally introduce a new member are also welcome. All the Executive Committee will be there, ready to talk about the activities of their own Sub-Committees.

8 December 8 pm, in the Old Library, Dulwich College :

This is the annual meeting held in combination with the Dulwich Choral Society. Refreshments will be available to ticket holders at a cost of 50p per adult and 25p for children of 14 or under. These may be purchased in advance from the Secretary or at the door on the night. This evening is always a jolly one with plenty of carols and light-hearted singing, so do come along, but please note the revised date (8 December) and venue - in Dulwich College and NOT St Barnabas Hall.

1978

There will be no meeting in January and the first meeting for the year 1978 will be at 8 pm in St Barnabas Hall on Thursday 2 February. This is when Bill de Baerdemaecker will give his popular talk on local history, illustrated as always by a number of interesting new slides.

The AGM will be on Thursday 2 March and we expect to have news of an April meeting by the time our next newsletter is distributed.

The Society Dinner will be held, as it was last year, in Dulwich College by kind permission of the Master. The revised date for this is 21 April 1978 and details will be included in the next newsletter.

SECRETARY'S NOTES

1. We have received a letter from a member who lives near Sydenham Hill Station in College Road disagreeing with our remark in the last newsletter to the effect that "generally speaking Sydenham Hill Station is used by people who know where it is". She says "when gardening in the front of my house it has happened more than once that desperate people have asked us how to find the station", so there are obviously people who do need the sign. It certainly does not seem likely that British Rail will now remove it.

2. Members who remember the most enjoyable and interesting talk given by Mr and Mrs Jeffrey Harrison on 'The Thames Transformed' in the Great Hall of the College in May of last year, illustrated by approximately 400 of Mrs Harrison's own colour slides, might like to know that the Harrisons have produced a book of the same title including many of Mrs Harrison's photographs. Published by Andre Deutsch it is now on sale at £5.95 and well worth it!

3. I quote from a letter received from Mrs Betty Topley, Hon Secretary of the St James's Swimming Club:

'Your Society may wish to know that St James's Swimming Club celebrates its centenary in 1978. St James's was founded by three young men living in St James's Grove, Camberwell, in 1878 and Dulwich Baths has been the Club's headquarters for the major part of its existence. The Club has a number of events planned for next year including matches with Southport SC and Burton-on-Trent SC who also celebrate their centenaries in 1978. I enclose details of our commemorative gala we intend holding on 27 May.'

The details of the gala on 27 May are too long to reproduce here but details may be obtained from Mrs Topley at 5 Ryedale, SE22 (693 6724). The closing date for entries is 30 April 1978.

4. Dulwich Park Our Trees Sub-committee offered to provide the GLC Parks Department with a report on members' reactions to the 12-month experimental restrictions on dog movements in Dulwich Park. We received comments from some twenty members and those were incorporated in a report sent to the GLC recently. They replied as follows: 'Your observations on the dog experiment were included as part of our recent report to the Open Spaces and Recreation Committee. The Committee agreed that the experiment should continue for a further year, as far as Dulwich Park is concerned, unchanged.'

We have agreed to send another report to the GLC in November and the Trees Sub-committee would welcome any further comments on the subject.

5. The next performance by the Dulwich Choral Society will be on Saturday 26 November 1977 at 7.30 pm at St Johns, Smith Square, SW1. It will include works by Lalande, Lully, Charpentier and Le Clair. Tickets from any choir member or Mrs E. Boyle, 8 Hengrave Road, Forest Hill, SE23.
6. Trainwalk 77 If you feel like walking round London in one day try the Trainwalk on 23 October. This is a sponsored walk of about twelve miles round a circuit of fourteen main line termini, also open to non-sponsored walkers at 50p a head. It starts at the Bishopsgate Institute, opposite the northern end of Liverpool Street station between 10 and 11 am on Sunday. Details from Trainwalk 77, 13 Newell Street, Limehouse, E14.

TREES AND WILD-LIFE

Belair Trees Walk Some 70-80 members and friends attended a "Trees Walk" in Belair in Gallery Road on the evening of 7 July last. This walk was kindly organised by Mr J.D. Bradbury, Superintendent of Parks for the London Borough

of Southwark and his assistant Mr. J.B. Brooks. Thanks to their encyclopaedic knowledge of trees they were able to provide a walk of fascinating interest and we are most grateful to them for their trouble. At the end of the walk Mr Brooks arranged a special display of insects and diseases connected with our local trees - all too evident at the present time unfortunately in our parks and gardens.

Jubilee Trees Walk

Miss Rosa Davis and Mrs Esther Blackburn have produced an excellent Jubilee Trees Walk covering most of the triangle enclosed by College Road, Love Walk and Gallery Road and detailing twenty-six separate species. We hope to include this in a future newsletter but, meanwhile, copies are still available from Alan Barnard, Chairman of the Trees Sub-Committee.

Tree Diseases

In our last newsletter we included an article by Mr W.E. Storey, Chief Horticultural Adviser to the GLC Parks Department, on diseases in Sycamore trees. We now include one by the same authority on diseases in Willow Trees.

Willows and Disease

There are so many Willows that it is a virtually impossible task to write about them in any but the broadest terms. Altogether about 300 distinct species are hardy in this country and perhaps twenty of these are considered to be truly native. They range in size from stately timber trees reaching almost 100 ft in height down to the tiniest shrubs measuring no more than 2 or 3 inches. Confusion is perhaps understandable with such variety to choose from, but this is worse confounded by numerous hybrids which stand somewhere intermediate between the species.

In common with other truly native trees, Willows support a very large and varied insect population as well as an impressive list of diseases, many of which, although distinct organisms, produce very similar symptoms. Possibly, because of an association of thousands of years standing, some sort of equilibrium has been reached between tree and disease and it is rare indeed for a Willow to be killed outright, though it is possible in the case of a tree already weakened by damage or drought for disease to finish it off.

Apart from its ornamental attributes, Willow has been put to many uses during the ages and even in these days of synthetics some Willow products are still in demand; cricket bats and wicker baskets are prime examples. *Salix coerulea* is known as the Cricket Bat Willow and, along with several others which produce suitable timber is grown specially to meet the needs of cricket bat production. Several other Willows which produce shoots of extreme toughness and flexibility are grown in "Osier" beds for the basket making trade.

In these spheres, an outbreak of disease can be potentially very damaging indeed even though the trees are not killed. Possibly the most serious is a bacterial disease known as Watermark disease, which in addition to causing shoot die-back and so depressing growth, produces a diffuse brown stain which

may extend throughout the wood, hence the name "Watermark", and render it unacceptable for bat making.

A very large number of fungi affect twigs, shoots and leaves of Willow and are often described as "canker" or "blight" and several which cause damaging lesions on young shoots are given the general name of aethracnose. These diseases can seriously affect basket willow beds by reducing the length of the rod, and stimulating the development of unwanted side shoots. Rust fungi also occur on the leaves and shoots and cause scars on the rods which are weakened and spoiled for basket making.

All of these diseases can and do occur on ornamental Willows and occasionally may be quite disfiguring, though it is fortunately not often than an attack is sufficiently severe to cause serious die-back.

Control Measures

In the Osier beds, practical measures combining good culture, good hygiene and fungicidal sprays are used successfully to ensure reasonably healthy crops. A somewhat different approach is demanded by the sheer size of the trees grown for bat making and the south-eastern counties principally involved have for over forty years enjoyed the protection of Watermark Disease Orders which add legal weight to normal hygiene precautions by requiring an owner to fell and destroy infected trees.

As there is no significant threat to the ornamental Willow, control measures would simply not justify the expense involved and, in view of the vast array of organisms and possibly associated vectors, would be unlikely to be particularly effective. Fortunately, Willow is one of our fastest growing trees and a favourite specimen disfigured by disease can be replaced rapidly by a healthy youngster.

W.E. STOREY

References:- Peace - Pathology of Trees and Shrubs
Bean - Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles

Sighting Records of Wildlife

The Wildlife Sub-Committee has recently been receiving reports of butterflies and would welcome more. Species recorded during this summer included the Red Admiral, Peacock, Meadow Brown, Comma, Cabbage White and Tortoiseshell.

Some reports this summer suggest that we have a local increase in woodmice and voles. If anyone has any sightings of this kind please send them either to Mrs Howells at 7 College Road, SE21 or Mr J.W. Toler at 127 Sydenham Hill, SE26.

Mr Toler's Bird Report

The following birds which have never been reported previously in Dulwich, have been seen: the Sedgewardler in Alleyn Park and Belair in April, a Teal and Turtledove flying over Alleyn Road and a Greenshank on the Park lake in May. Housemartins successfully nested in Burbage Road in June.

The Tawny Owl continues to be seen and heard, and at least three pairs of Kestrels have been roosting (or nesting) on Dulwich buildings. The Green, the Lesser Spotted and the Greater Spotted Woodpeckers are all present in the wood and the Greater Spotted has nested successfully. At least four pairs of Tree Creepers have bred in the woods.

In April a Yellow Wagtail and a Black Redstart were seen on the Golf course, a Firecrest in Lapsewood and a Pied Flycatcher in the Park.

In May Lesser Whitethroats were seen and heard in the Park and the Woods and a Common Whitethroat and a Wheatear on the Golf Course. A Garden Warbler was seen and heard by the Park Lake, a Wood Warbler on fields on the common and a Sedge Warbler in Belair.

In July a Blackcap was singing in Lapsewood also numbers of Chiffchaff. A flock of thirteen Long Tailed Tits seen in Alleyn Road and a further flock of seven at the College. Number of Redpolls, several pairs of Linnets and a Redstart seen on the Golf Course.

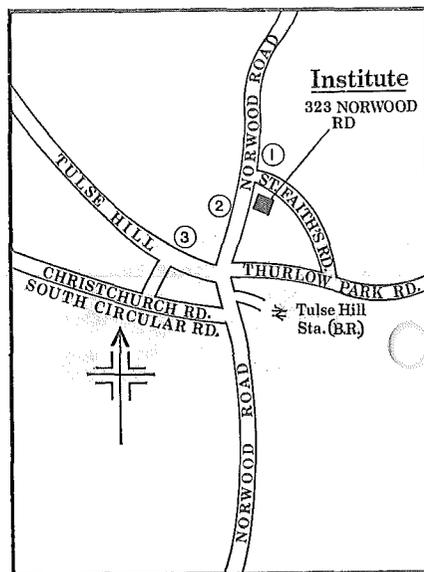
In August Willow Tits seen on Sydenham Hill, a Whinchat near the Golf course and a Whimbrel flying over Alleyn Park. Many pairs of Bullfinches and Chaffinches are seen.

On September 2 a Cuckoo was seen flying from the College to Huntslip Road.

THE SOUTH LONDON BOTANICAL INSTITUTE

This is an association of people, mainly centred in South London, whose common interest lies in the study of plants of all kinds. It is located at 323 Norwood Road, London SE24 9AQ; tel 674 5787 and the Hon. Secretary is Mr C.E. Wicking ACIS.

We are indebted to Miss Rosa Davis for the following note on the Institute.



The South London Botanical Institute was founded by Allan Octavian Hume in 1910 when he purchased the freehold of 323 Norwood Road and provided a capital endowment. His object was to encourage the study of botany and make readily available a library and collection for those living in South London.

A.O. Hume was a remarkable man; born at Bryanston Square in 1829, he served in the Indian Civil Service all his life. His enlightened policy improved the lot of the native population by education, social and agricultural reforms. He founded the Indian National Congress and in his spare time amassed ornithological records and specimens, donating 82,000 of these to the British Museum (Natural History).

In 1890 when he retired he came to live at The Chalet, Kingswood Road (now Drive) where the junction of Giles Coppice now is. Here he devoted his time to an intensive study of the British flora, travelling extensively and assisting with the county floras and building up a large library and herbarium. Eventually, this necessitated engaging two assistants and transferring everything botanical to the Norwood Road premises.

The Institute is interesting to people who enjoy wild flowers in Britain and Europe, gardeners and horticulturists, as well as those with specialist interests such as mosses and fungi etc.

The library is one of the finest botanical libraries in the country containing about 3,000 volumes besides many current periodicals including the Royal Horticultural Society Journal. There is a herbarium with over 100,000 specimens which is arranged to facilitate the identification of plants. Lectures and rambles are arranged for members and beginners and visitors are welcome to the Institute which is open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 3 pm to 10 pm except during August. The resident Secretary is Mr Wicking who will be pleased to answer any queries.

LOCAL HISTORY - The Old Croydon Canal

Canals have never figured in the long and varied history of Dulwich yet 150 years ago the Croydon Canal ran within a mile or so of the Estate passing through Penge, Sydenham and Norwood. It could be said that it has a connection with Dulwich inasmuch as The Croydon Canal Company hoped to swell its profits by supplying water to Dulwich and other places en route, but this plan had to be abandoned as most of the available money went on the building of the canal.

Conceived in 1799 as the first stage of an inland waterway link between London and Portsmouth during the Napoleonic wars, the canal was beset by troubles from start to finish. The Engineer was John Rennie who chose the most direct route over Forest Hill necessitating 28 locks to reach its summit level between Penge and Croydon. It formed an arm of the Grand Surrey Canal at Deptford and terminated at Croydon.

It was finally opened in 1809 at a total cost of £170,000, and the company never showed any substantial profits as the trade it was expecting to create never materialized the district being still too rural, unlike the newly industrialized Midlands and North where the canals grew and prospered. Croydon had not enough merchandise to act as a canal terminus being still an agricultural market town. Therefore the Company decided to hire out boats for punting and rowing and to collect rents from other users of the land such as the Landlords of 'The Jolly Sailor' and 'Dartmouth Arms' public houses at Norwood and Forest Hill who laid out their gardens down to the canal banks as picnic areas. Another source of income was the granting of angling licences and these activities meant that this was the first canal in England to be officially used for recreational purposes.

There is no doubt that the rural delights to be found between Anerley and Norwood attracted many Londoners and to quote a contemporary account 'Boaters found themselves gliding through the deepest recesses of the Forest where nothing met the eye but the elegant windings of the clear and still canal, its borders adorned by a profusion of trees the beauty of which was heightened by tints of Autumn.'

But despite these sources of income the Company was finally forced to sell out to the new-fangled iron railway and in 1836 the London and Brighton Railway Co. took over at a cost of £40,259. Much of the canal bed was used to lay the rails upon and stations were erected at former quays such as 'The Dartmouth Arms' and 'The Jolly Sailor', the stations retaining these names until changed to Forest Hill and Norwood Junction respectively. The line terminated at West Croydon station on the site of the original canal basin.

Boating and fishing still took place on the remaining stretches of the canal which survived into the latter half of Queen Victoria's reign, but as London expanded further, thanks to the railways, and more land was built upon the disconnected stretches of canal gradually disappeared.

Today the canal is no longer even a memory and yet traces can still be found by those interested enough to seek them. Copies of old prints of the canal are obtainable from the Lewisham Borough Library Service. Part of Spurgeon's bridge which carries St James's Road over the railway at West Croydon is the original canal bridge and the public footpath alongside the railway, which was built on the canal bed, from the bridge to Sydenham Road is the original towing path. South Norwood Lake, still popular for boating and fishing, was the principal reservoir for the canal but it used to be much larger than it is today.

But perhaps the most vivid reminder of this pleasant and most rural waterway is to be found in Bett's Park, with entrances in Anerley Road and Croydon Road, SE20, where an actual stretch of the original canal is still to be found 'in water'. Although preserved for ornamental purposes only, this small length of canal can still enable the more imaginative among us to hark back to one of the more leisurely and rural delights of the past.