



The Dulwich Society

TO FOSTER AND SAFEGUARD THE AMENITIES OF DULWICH

Newsletter 65
JULY 1984

THE DULWICH SOCIETY:

NEWSLETTER 65:

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THE ANNUAL DINNER

This year the Society returned to the Dulwich and Sydenham Golf Club as the venue for the Annual Dinner. Arrangements went well and some 50 members enjoyed a pleasant meal, rounded-off by an amusing, informative and wide-ranging speech by Mr Fred Emery, a Society member and Presenter of the BBC's 'Panorama' programme. The weather provided the one 'spanner-in-the-works': mist swathed the magnificent panoramic view of London normally visible from the Club-rooms' stretch of picture windows.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

July 5th	Trees	Dulwich Trees Walk around the Farquhar Road Nature Reserve managed by the Ecological Parks Trust. We will meet at 7.30 for a 7.45 start at the Hut on the site which is at the Crystal Palace end of Farquhar Road. Please bring welling- tons!
	7.30 pm.	

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October 4th Horticulture
8.00 pm.
Barnabas Hall

Film about the contribution made by annuals to a colourful garden. Produced by Suttons and called 'The Seedsmen' it will be shown along with slides of gardens visited by the Horticultural Sub-Committee.

November 1st Local History
7.30 pm.
Barnabas Hall

Local History Quiz.

December

Meeting to be arranged.

LETTERS

As a result of the invitation to residents of Athol House to attend Society members' meetings free of charge, the following letter was received:-

"Would you please convey my thanks to the Executive Committee of the Dulwich Society, for their kindness to the Residents of Athol House. I will take the Dulwich Society booklet to the Home and explain the various activities available for the Residents to attend. I do hope that some of them will feel able to come to some of your meetings.

Thank you once again for your kindness and for your offer of help so that Residents can be met."

Ann Jones
Chairman of the Friends of Athol House
London Cheshire Home.

The following letter was also received:

""QUESTION TIME"

"Question Time" chaired by Sir Robin Day, is transmitted at 10.15 pm every Thursday evening on BBC 1. In it, as you may know, he chairs a panel of four guests before an invited audience of two hundred people. The audience submits the questions they want answered and also joins in the debate surrounding the subjects discussed. Although the programme has a strong political flavour, we do cover a wide range of general, social and moral issues too.

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The audience is made up each week from various local organisations, including social and amenity groups, men's and women's groups, special interests, churches, schools, tenants associations. I am writing now to discover if you would be interested in providing a group of six people to join one of our audiences. If you think your members would like to be invited I should be grateful if you would fill in and return the attached form, including your daytime telephone number. I shall then approach you at an appropriate time to offer tickets for a specific Thursday, giving you the names of the guests on the panel that week.

The programme is recorded on Thursday evenings at the Greenwood Theatre, 55 Weston Street, London SE1 in the Guy's Hospital complex close to London Bridge Station. Members of the audience are invited to arrive between 6.45 and 7.00 pm. Coffee and sandwiches are provided on arrival and the recording takes place between 7.45 and 9.15 pm after which you are free to leave. "Question Time" is transmitted later the same evening.

Thanks for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Maxwell
Editor

"Question Time"

Anyone interested in joining one of the audiences should contact Robin Taylor, secretary of the Dulwich Society who has the application form.

WILDLIFE SUB-COMMITTEE

Two interesting newspaper clippings came to our notice recently and are reproduced here:

Watch Out For These Moths

Southwark is likely to be plagued yet again by the Brown Tail moth this summer.

Despite tree and shrub spraying campaigns over the last few years the Moth is still with us.

Soon over the next few months the hairy caterpillar of the moth with its distinctive red spots will start appearing.

It causes a painful rash to those who touch it or come into contact with the hairs.

Pest Control officer Len Staines is asking everyone in the borough to keep an eye out for the cotton wool like breeding nest.

Any sightings should be reported to 231 7331 at once so that the nests can be destroyed.

Extract from 'Southwark Sparrow'

A Plug For Bird IQ

The scene is an aviary in which a professional zoologist kept four tame rooks. Adjacent was an aquarium which leaked water into the aviary. Six drainage holes were in the floor of the aviary, with a plug which controlled the amount of water.

Then the owner of the aviary noticed the plug was in one of the holes when it should not have been there. He removed it to let the water out. The plug was put back and he kept watch. One of the rooks was putting it in the hole. He put five more plugs in the aviary, suitably labelled, kept watch and recorded what happened.

It transpired that, especially on hot, dry days, one or other of the rooks would plug whichever hole gave the best pool of water, trickling in from the aquarium, to give the birds their daily bath.

It was the manner in which a rook would plug the hole that catches the attention. It would pick the plug up by the metal ring and drop it straight in the hole - then make it firm with four sharp taps with the beak!

How's that for an "appreciation of mechanical devices" and for putting two and two together!

Furthermore, I once had a rook that would unlatch the door of its aviary - and would also, at other times, latch it to keep me out!

Maurice Burton.

Daily Telegraph March 31st 1984.

DULWICH CROWS

In numbers, though not in variety, the crow family is well represented in our area. An abundance of food, animal and vegetable, and suitable nesting sites for Jays, Magpies and Carrion Crows, make Dulwich a most desirable residential district for these three members of the family. The occasional Jackdaw and migrant Rook do not warrant the prefix Dulwich, and the remaining species are unlikely to be seen.

JAY Seen overhead it is our only resident with a flight reminiscent of a large butterfly - a very large butterfly - and residents will be familiar with it due to its garden visits. Loud screeches usually herald its arrival, often in twos or threes as it alights on a tree before hopping about the ground where the brilliant blue of the wing coverts set against the grey-pink body colour relieved by black and white reveal its striking plumage. Invertebrates, eggs and nestlings play a part in the diet though the bulk of food consists of fruit and vegetables; the practice of burying and later unearthing acorns is common. There are records of Jays nesting in Dulwich, but the normal inconspicuous position in the area is probably against a bole of a large tree where a stout limb is growing. No records of movements into or out of our area are available though birds may well disperse if breeding territories are already fully occupied. It is not often seen to perch on rooftops.

MAGPIE Larger than a Mistle Thrush, this black and white bird with a long tail and chattering call cannot be mistaken. It conducts its business about our roofs and gardens and is generally less shy than Jay and Crow. Food is similar to that of the first species with less emphasis on fruit and vegetables. Hawthorns are recorded as popular situations for the bulky domed nest which is likely to be within a few feet of busy commuter traffic as in a more secluded spot. It is single brooded but the 5 or more eggs laid clearly ensure its survival with us despite predation by the Carrion Crow on eggs and nestlings. Autumnal gatherings of 20-60 have yet to be recorded in Dulwich. An unsuccessful attack by Sparrow Hawk has been reported.

CARRION CROW The only resident that is black all over and needs no further description here, save to add that partial albinism occurs not

infrequently, particularly on the wings. A regular feature of the sky as it flies or tumbles in the air it is more shy than the other two species and, on the ground, spends more time walking about playing fields than visiting gardens which merit its attention only when carrion or other suitable food is available. The diet is varied with a bias to animal matter, road casualties being a noted attraction. Winter reveals the bulky nest set high in the branches of tall trees. 4 or 5 eggs is the norm. Less solitary than is sometimes supposed it may be observed in the air "playing" with the more nimble Kestrel. There is a record of the latter at The Grange being driven down almost to the ground by a Crow, after which the resident hawk left the area.

The three species of Crow enhance the Dulwich scene. They help to clean up natural debris, to avoid the problems of over population in smaller birds, and, when there is time to spare, repay careful watching. Enjoy them.

Mr D Freshwater, a Wildlife Researcher, is always glad to receive reports of birds and other animals etc. in the Dulwich area. He can be contacted at: 24, Dulwich Village SE21. Telephone: 693-1666.

HORTICULTURAL SUB-COMMITTEE

Crane's and Heron's Bills

The three principal members of the family Geraniaceae are the florist's pelargonium, the Crane's Bill or true geranium and the Heron's Bill, genus erodium. These last two are mainly perennial, hardy plants, which can provide species or varieties to meet almost any gardening requirement - ground cover in sun or shade, plants for the herbaceous border or rock garden, for the sink or alpine house, even for the wild garden. The geraniums generally leaf early and thereafter provide an impenetrable canopy keeping weeds at bay. Once established, although preferring a sandier, freer draining soil than is naturally available in Dulwich, the tougher sorts accept our claggy conditions and thrive on benign neglect.

For ground cover among shrubs *G. endressii*, *G. grandiflorum* and *G. macrorrhizum* may be considered. All grow to 12" or 18" high. *G. endressii* and particularly its variety A.T. Johnson has clear pink flowers over a long period from June and thrives in partial shade. *G. gradiflorum* has blue flowers with a lighter centre in June and July, it has good green foliage developing from attractive young growths in spring, while *G. macrorrhizum* has pale pink flowers in May, the foliage turning an attractive burgundy colour in autumn and hanging on well into winter. This one can be seen very extensively used at Great Comp in Kent, where Mr and Mrs Cameron, who made this magnificent garden with virtually no help, have found it to be the best of the ground cover plants they have tried.

For the herbaceous border two geraniums of great merit are Buxton's Blue and Russell Pritchard. Buxton's Blue, a variety of *G. wallichianum* discovered by E.C. Buxton in his garden in Bettws-y-Coed has clear blue blooms with a central white disc and it flowers over several months from June happily accepting light shade. The hybrid, Russell Pritchard, which has a particularly long flowering period, throws out wide ranging trailing stems of magenta flowers from mounds of grey green foliage.

Of the many more compact varieties available there are four that particularly merit consideration. *G. sanguineum lancastrense*, from June to September, makes prostrate mats of deep green leaves with short stemmed beautiful salmon pink veined flowers. *G. subcaulescens* has neat mounds of deeply cut leaves and rich crimson flowers with a darker eye. *G. renardii* (height 9" spread 12") with scalloped felted sage green leaves (evergreen in mild seasons) is essentially a worthy foliage plant with a modest bonus of violet-pencilled lavender flowers in late spring.

Will Ingwersen, whose father introduced this species from the Caucasus, says that it is seen at its best in conditions of some austerity. Closely related to our native herb robert is *G. celticum*. Originating in Ireland, it has been described as the "the sweetest tiny weed that could be admitted to the rock garden." This one, Mr. Ingwersen says, has "Tiny tufts of light green leaves, as deeply cut as parsley, forming backing for constellations of pure white starry flowers throughout the summer. It is short lived but seeds modestly and will

happily colonise any cool lightly shaded position. It loves to grow in rock crevices."

For the sink or alpine house turn to the genus *Erodium*. *E. chamaedrioides*, from Majorca but fully hardy, forms mats of small dark green toothed leaves with short-stemmed white, or pink, veined flowers all summer; it is usually available in the form roseum. *E. chrysanthum* is a beautiful species with yellow flowers on 12" branching stems over small filigree grey foliage. Insist on female plants of this one, the males are poor things by comparison.

Finally, for the wild meadows now being established in some gardens in Dulwich, there is the meadow crane's bill, *G. pratense*, blue with a white eye, flowering from July.

There is also an unusual species, *G. tuberosum*, with tuberous roots from which arise lobed leaves and violet flowers on 9" stems in May which quickly die down to rest again until its brief show next year.

Many readers will find a favourite plant ignored in this article, for these are but a taste of the 500 or so species within these two genera. It is surely a pity that the name 'geranium' has been so comprehensively pre-empted by the florist's pelargonium and there by distracted attention from other members of this useful and accommodating family of plants.

Topical Tips

Have you sprayed your rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias with foliar feed to encourage generous flowering next season? A spray of two now will be amply rewarded. For plants with leaves of this type a spreader added to the mix is particularly important, a generous squeeze of washing up liquid in a gallon of spray will help the fine mist to adhere to the leaves and thus be absorbed by the plant. There has been a widespread attack of bud blast on rhododendrons in the area this season, buds form but do not open. Examination reveals that they have been colonised by an insect, this is the female leaf hopper who lays her eggs within the bud. They are not easy pests to eradicate but two or three sprays with malathion between July and September will at least reduce the infestation.

GOOD NEWS FOR GARDENERS. BAD NEWS FOR GROUND ELDER!

Glyphosate

This is an absolutely miraculous weed eradicator and one which deserves the attention of all gardeners, especially those troubled by persistent and ever encroaching nuisances - such as Ground Elder, Mares Tails and Convulvulus. Hitherto a continuous war has had to be waged against them but now the war is over.

Glyphosate is a 'translocated' type of weedkiller, which means that when it is applied to the new green growth it penetrates and 'translocates' throughout the whole plant and demolishes it entirely.

Now is a very good time to treat these weeds. Ask at the 'Hut' for Murphys Tumbleweed which is the commercial name under which Glyphosate is marketed. At prices which range from 90 pence for 50 ml. to £6.90 for 1 litre, with the choice of a brush-on Gel costing £1.60, one may be pleased to note that they are lower than anywhere else at all.

One word of warning. This is a very effective treatment, so make sure that it is confined to the weeds and follow the instructions implicitly.

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT SUB-COMMITTEE

Society Meeting, 3rd May 1984

"Horsepower to kilowatts", the title of the talk on 3rd May, suggested at first a lecture on the virtues of metric measurement. The sub-title, though, "The story of local public transport", revealed that what was in store was a colourful story of progress from horse-trams and buses to modern electric trains.

Although the speaker, Geoffrey Morant, has never lived in Dulwich, he has always lived nearby and in Beckenham he is not too far from being considered an honorary member of the Society. He gave us a comprehensive and entertaining overview of the development of public transport, from its beginnings in the 19th century through to the travails of British Rail and London Transport today. He enlivened his talk with stories of day-to-day incidents, humorous and tragic, and showed us a great many interesting slides. For both slides and stories from an earlier generation, Mr Morant acknowledged his debt to his father, who had left

him the accumulated product of a lifetime's interest in the field of London's transport.

Altogether a fascinating evening, of which we hope there may be more to come.

BUS SERVICE TO STREATHAM

Suggestions for a bus service along the South Circular Road have been made on several occasions in the past, but London Transport had always responded that demand was insufficient and the Society had been unable to demonstrate that it might be worth a try. Now, out of the blue, London Transport has introduced a single-decker bus running once an hour from Tulse Hill station to Streatham Hill, Streatham High Road and then via Bedford Hill to Balham. The bus leaves Tulse Hill a few minutes after the half-hour; returning it leaves Balham station on the hour and St. Leonard's Church at about ten past each hour. The first bus leaves Balham at 7.00 am, the last leaves Tulse Hill at 6.30 pm. The bus runs on Mondays to Saturdays, but not on Sundays or holidays.

It is a pity, from our point of view, that the new service serves only the fringe of our area, but nevertheless it may be of value to members living in West Dulwich. The service was introduced on 30th April 1984 and its continuation beyond the initial experimental period of six months will depend on how well it is used.

HERNE HILL STATION; THE END OF AN ERA

A link with the past faded quietly away last May when British Railways introduced its new timetable for 1984. For until then there still remained one train (the 4.00 am from Orpington) which carried on the tradition of dividing at Herne Hill into separate portions for Victoria and Holborn Viaduct. Now passengers have to change trains at Herne Hill, as of course they have for many years had to do at all other times of day.

The practice of dividing trains into "West End" and "City" portions goes back to the earliest days of the London Chatham and Dover Railway, and gave Herne Hill in Victorian times a train service which was lavish by any standards.

The "Dover Continental Boat Express" called at Herne Hill three times a day to join up the portions from Victoria and Holborn Viaduct before setting off non-stop for Canterbury and Dover Harbour. So did the "Queenborough (for Flushing) Boat Express" at 8.35 pm, to connect with the overnight boat to Holland. All those exotic destinations engraved in the stone of Blackfriars station - Baden Baden, Nice, Constantinople, St. Petersburg and a score of others - they could all be reached direct from Herne Hill.

After the merger of the South Eastern and Chatham companies in 1899, the continental traffic was concentrated on Charing Cross, although in 1910 the 11.00 am Victoria/Holborn Viaduct "Paris Express" still called at Herne Hill, as did the twice-daily Flushing boat train to Queenborough, Isle of Sheppey. Most other main line trains to and from Kent also called to attach/detach portions for the two London termini.

Gradually, during the 1920s and 1930s, more trains ran direct and omitted the stop at Herne Hill; as consolation, perhaps, the luxury of a Pullman car became available on many main line trains. Finally, with electrification of the Kent services after the second World War, the tradition of dividing trains at Herne Hill almost came to an end and for many years now, only that one train, in the silence of the early morning, has remained to remind postmen and other early risers of more than 100 years of railway history.

LOCAL HISTORY SUB-COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Sub-Committee invites members interested in local history to take an active part in doing research for the sub-committee without actually becoming committee members.
