



# *The Dulwich Society*

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TO FOSTER AND SAFEGUARD THE AMENITIES OF DULWICH

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*Newsletter 70*

*October 1985*

THE DULWICH SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 70:

OCTOBER 1985

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#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

In place of the usual History Supplement with this Newsletter, the Society is producing the first of a series of Booklets on Dulwich Houses. The Houses have been the subjects of Local History meetings in recent years. The Booklets are issued free to members, but will also be on sale locally at 60p per copy.

November 7th 8 pm St. Barnabas Hall	Local History Sub-Committee	Illustrated lecture - "The Latter Days of Court Farm, and the Early Days of Dulwich Park". This lecture celebrates the Park's 100th Anniversary.
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December 5th St. Barnabas Hall		A Christmas event may be arranged
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#### OTHER EVENTS

Weekly on Tuesdays from September 24th 7.30 - 9.30 pm Norwood Upper School, Crown Dale, SE19 3PD	ILEA	Course - "Local History of Southern Lambeth", Topics for consideration include: Local Place Names; By-gone Brixton; Dulwich - Past and Present; The Story of John Ruskin; Maps of Lambeth and South London; Why Buildings Should be Preserved; Local History Resources in Libraries; History of London Government. Tutor Brian K Vale, DGA, MBCS and Guest Speakers.
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Many subjects will be illustrated. Attention will be paid to local history research carried out by amenity Societies in the area, and walks will be arranged during the Course.

Weekly on Thursdays from September 26th 7.30 - 9.30 pm Kingsdale School, Alleyn Park, SE21 8SQ	ILEA	Course - "Ecology of an Urban Woodland".
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October 17th           Lambethan           Illustrated Talk  
7.30 pm               Society             "What is Britain's  
Effra School,         Heritage Worth".  
Effra Parade,         Alan D Piper,  
SW2 1PL               Dip Arch:, RIBA.

As announced in Newsletter No. 69, the Dulwich Group of Friends of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund is holding its 4th Annual Exhibition of Art in the Great Hall, Dulwich College.

The Exhibition will be open as follows:-

Friday, October 18th	8 pm - 10 pm	Admission - 50p
Saturday, October 19th	10.30 am - 6 pm	Wine and coffee
Sunday, October 20th	10.30 am - 4 pm	will be on sale

More than 65 South London artists have been invited to exhibit work including paintings and drawings - many of local scenes - sculpture, ceramics, pottery, embroidered paintings, collage and batik. Some exhibitors are members of Greenwich Printmakers. More than 2000 people visited last year's Exhibition, and nearly £3500 was raised for Cancer Research.

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On members' behalf, the Treasurer and the Secretary would like to welcome David Lord, a new member, who has nobly undertaken to become the Newsletter's new Editor. We hope he will be able to take up the reins for the January issue.

We would like to thank Mrs Carolyn Dufton who, though not a member, has very kindly typed the bulk of the copy for the last two issues, and all contributors who have helped to make production of these Newsletters quite a lot of fun.

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#### TRANSPORT and PLANNING Sub-Committee

##### Sydenham Hill Wood

January Newsletter No. 67, referred to the Society's interest in and concern for Sydenham Hill Wood spanning a period of at least 15 years.

The findings of the Inspector have now been published following the Public Enquiry this Spring on the Mid-South Southwark Local Plan (MSSLP) which, as many members know, included the Borough Council's proposals for development in the Wood.

We quote here, extracts from his report provided by the London Wildlife Trust. Members of the Trust co-ordinated the appeal against development: among many others, the Vice-Chairman, Peter Lawson, supported them with a very able presentation of the Society's objections, and the Society made a very substantial contribution towards Enquiry costs.

Recommending that the largest site on the upper slopes of the Wood should not be zoned for housing, the Inspector states:

'All parties accept that notwithstanding the one-time presence of the railway in the valley and the houses fronting Sydenham Hill Wood, the Wood is now a valuable ecological, educational and local amenity'.

While he is of the opinion that the 1.4acre Lapewood site is not of sufficiently high wildlife value to be retained as part of the woodland, the Inspector concludes that:

'The development of the 2 Fernbank sites (6.7acres) however would be very different. To-day, they form a prime part of the remaining woodland. The Council's comment that "there will be some temporary disturbance during construction of housing and some changes in the ecological balance thereafter, although these woodlands appear very robust", and the implication that the present values could still be maintained in the remaining linear area which includes the former railway cutting, seems to be unduly optimistic even though it adjoins a strip of Dulwich Wood. Having carefully studied the detailed evidence presented by the London Wildlife Trust, I am inclined to accept its assessment of the impact of new housing,

in so far as Fernbank is concerned, as presenting a more realistic picture.'

'In conclusion therefore, whilst I am not convinced by the objectors' arguments relating to Lapsewood, I am in no doubt any development of the 2 Fernbank sites must seriously damage the existing quality of Sydenham Hill Wood'.

He recommends that, while no housing should be built during the 10-year life of the MSSLP,

'the ecological and educational and amenity value of this site to the Borough and the local residents will be reassessed together with the then housing needs at the end of the Plan period when fresh proposals are formulated for the next decade'.

The LWT is naturally delighted the Inspector has recognised the importance of the Fernbank site, though disappointed the Lapsewood site has not been similarly assessed and still zoned for housing. We hope members are also delighted with the news of Fernbank's reprieve.

Both the LWT and the Society are disappointed the Inspector makes no reference to the 'Beechgrove' site, where a large house of that name was demolished in 1982, which has been threatened by an application from the Estates Governors to the Council's Planning Applications Sub-Committee for the development of 36 flats on the site. We know now, however, that the Sub-Committee has refused the Estates Governors planning permission for this development.

The 'Beechgrove' site was not included in the MSSLP, and, ironically, the objections put forward by the Sub-Committee to the Estates Governors' plans echo to a great degree objections put to the Public Enquiry against the Council's own plans for development in the Wood. The Sub-Committee refers to the limited space of the open area of the site: the steep downward slope behind the Wood: wooded areas on three sides: the existence of a blanket Tree Preservation Order on the site: the inappropriate overdevelopment indicated by the outline plan which appears to be out-of-character with the site: the loss of important trees: the adverse effect on trees and the character of the site by necessary excavation and alteration of levels, and the visual intrusion of major access and parking areas needed to service the number of units covered by the plan.

The Sub-Committee has concluded that "some form of restricted residential development could be acceptable which would retain the character of the site and meet

Council policies and standards. It is considered that development only on the site of the former building itself would be an acceptable compromise". The Estates Governors are now at liberty to present less ambitious plans to conform with these criteria. If, for any reason, they do not wish to limit their plans in this way, they must face a Public Enquiry by appealing against the Council's decision on the original plans.

The LWT hopes that, in the future, the site can be incorporated as a further area of value to wildlife within the Wood - already the rubble at 'Beechgrove' shelters a fox earth - and that a recommendation by the Inspector that future development plans should include a statement on nature conservation will be accepted. Many interested Groups would welcome the development of a nature conservation strategy for Southwark.

The immediate reprieve for at least a major portion of the Wood does seem to indicate a victory for common-sense.

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# SYDENHAM HILL WOOD

## TREES Sub-Committee

### Walk through Sydenham Hill Wood

The Trees Walk round Sydenham Hill Wood took place on 4th July led by two members of the London Wildlife Trust. Although only about twenty-five people were present, it was very interesting and a worthwhile occasion.

We started by going to the top of Countisbury Court - a 6-storey block of flats in Crescent Wood Drive - from where we had a marvellous view of the extent of the Wood and of the dense canopy it provides. Then we toured the Wood which consists mainly of oak and hornbeam, but there are interesting relics from the Victorian gardens such as a magnificent Cedar of Lebanon and a Gothic folly. A pond has been dug and efforts made to increase the growth of wild flowers. With the kind permission of the Trust, we are printing the Nature Trail, which they already have established through the Wood, together with essential stop-by-stop information. The Wood is open to the public.

Everyone's feelings after the Walk seemed to be of delight and astonishment at the intense greenness and seclusion there. It would be tragic if this was destroyed, and we must continue to hope that no development will take place in any part of the Wood.

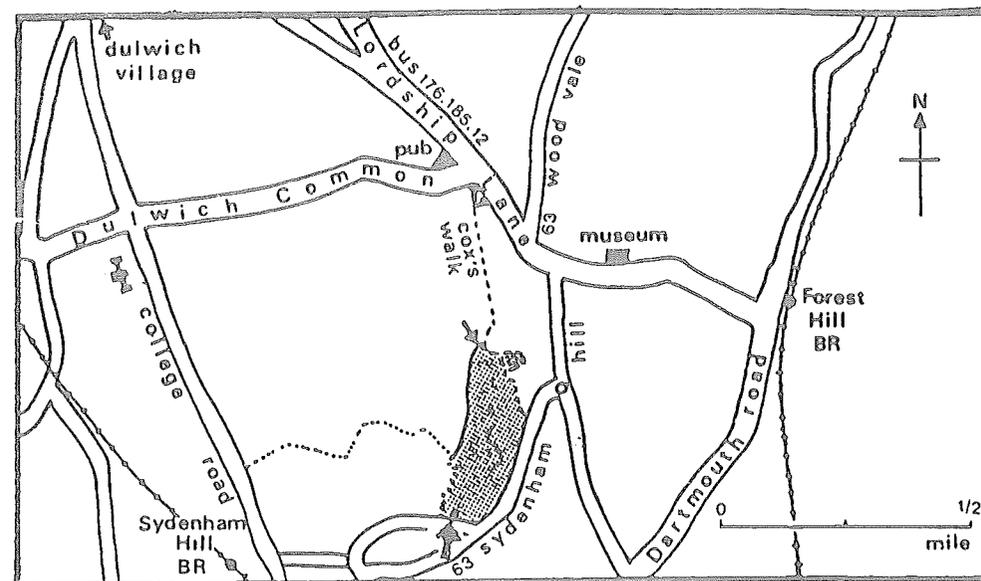
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### Trees in Dulwich Streets

The Sub-Committee has been increasingly concerned about the state of the street trees in Dulwich, which have suffered so much from drought, vandalism and general lack of care!

We are in touch with Southwark Borough Council about the possibility of producing a leaflet encouraging residents to look after trees in their street, particularly newly-planted ones. Several members have already been taking care of and watering young trees in their neighbourhood, and we hope others will do the same.

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### LOCATION

Reproduced by courtesy of  
The London Wildlife Trust

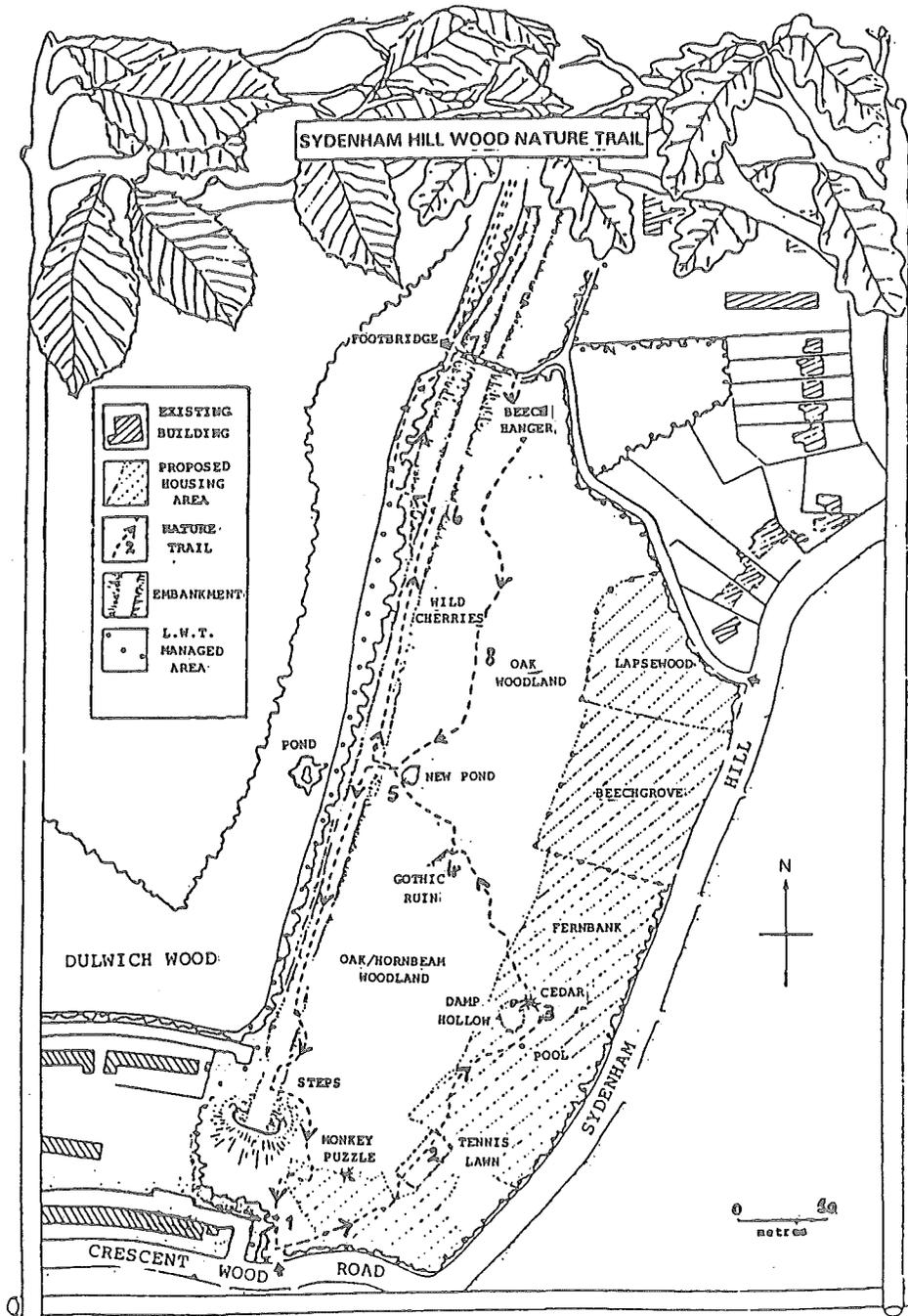
### HOW TO GET TO THE WOOD:

Take either a No.12 or No.185 bus to the stop nearest to Dulwich Common. Walk up Cox's Walk at the corner of Lordship Lane to the wood. Or catch a No.63 bus to the top of Sydenham Hill and enter the wood at Crescent Wood Road.

Visitors to the nature reserve are asked to use the routes described in this leaflet. Owners of dogs are asked to keep them under the strictest control whilst in the reserve.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WOOD

Sydenham Hill Wood is a remnant of the Great North Wood which once covered the hills and valleys from Brockley to Selhurst. For much of its past it was owned by the Church for recreation and for wood products. After the Reformation ownership began to pass to local estates and the wood managed for commercial gain. At the beginning of the Nineteenth century it was still possible to get lost in the wood. The coming of the railway and the growth of housing estates mid-century destroyed much of the wood. Southwark Council acquired the wood in the 1970's but, sadly, although its historical and wildlife value cannot be disputed, the wood has been threatened with development.



DEvised BY GARY GRANT AND ILLUSTRATED BY ANRIT ROW.

## SYDENHAM HILL WOOD

### NATURE TRAIL

Entry to the wood is via Cox's Walk or through the gate by the letter box in Crescent Wood Road, where the trail begins (see map). Each stop and the trail route is marked by white posts.

Inside the gate you will find stop ONE. The southern and eastern edges of the wood (of which this is a part) were occupied by Victorian houses. They were finally demolished in the 1960's. Several non-native plants including Rhododendrons, Cherry-laurels and a Monkey Puzzle tree were introduced into the woods when the houses were occupied. Amongst the ruins male Fern and hard Fern (both native plants) can be seen.

Stop TWO, the disused tennis lawn marks the boundary between the ancient Oak/Hornbeam woodland (to the left) and the immature Birch/Sycamore woodland which has colonised the areas that were formally gardens (to the right).

Continue to stop THREE, where you will find a huge Cedar of Lebanon. This species was first introduced to Britain in the Eighteenth century. Looking down across the damp hollow you can see Wild Clematis scrambling over an Oak and a neighbouring Hornbeam. This plant is sometimes called Old Man's Beard because of the white, feathery fruits it bears.

At stop FOUR is the 'gothic ruin', a Victorian folly. About 15 metres to its left is a dead tree riddled with holes made by Woodpeckers. Fifty three species of bird have been recorded in the wood, including the Lesser-spotted and Greater-spotted, and Green Woodpeckers. The London Wildlife Trust will be removing some of the Rhododendrons in wood to enable some of the wild flowers to spread.

Stop FIVE is the new pond, excavated in 1984. We expect it to be colonised by a wide variety of pond plants and animals in the coming years. Several black Poplars are nearby, some of which have been pollarded. In the glade to the north of the pond are many plants that are important to butterflies, including grasses and nettles, which are food for some butterfly caterpillars. Twelve different species of butterfly breed in the wood.

Continue north along the railway line passing wild Cherry trees on the right and an open area of embankment on the left where slow-worms are found.

At stop SIX several large Beech trees can be seen on the slope. Note the soil erosion that has taken place. Some parts of the wood need protection urgently to prevent this kind of damage from over-use.

At stop SEVEN you can see the foot-bridge from which the artist PISSARO painted a view of Lordship Lane Station (which no longer stands). The railway formed part of the high-level line which served The Crystal Palace. The cutting was excavated in about 1865 and the last train ran in 1954.

Proceed to stop EIGHT where some of the nearby Oaks have Ivy growing on them. The stems of Ivy have adhesive roots which enable the plant to climb trees and walls. Ivy flowers late in the year (September to November) and provides the last source of food before hibernation for many nectar feeding insects. Such insects in turn are important food for some birds.

Head towards the tunnel entrance via the pond and ascend the steps to complete the trail.

The trail will take you around the wood in an hour. You will see, in that time a complex woodland community which has taken thousands of years to evolve. In 1982 The London Wildlife Trust began to manage the wood as a nature reserve; helping to formalise paths, combatting soil erosion and the invasion of non-native plants. The London Wildlife Trust has prepared surveys of plant, bird and insect life, available to the public on request and is in the process of preparing a detailed historical account of the wood.

#### TREES AND SOME TRADITIONAL USES

OAK: A strong hardwood used for housing and ship building. Bark was used in the tanning of leather.

HAZEL: Often coppiced for poles. Used in fencing.

HORNBEAM: A strong hardwood used for tool handles and heavy wooden implements.

YEW: Of great symbolic significance, said to ward off demons. Used for bows in the Middle Ages.

ASH: Wood used for tool handles. A main source of fire wood as it burns well, producing little smoke.

#### WILDLIFE Sub-Committee

##### Sightings Report

The departure of 70 redwings in Dulwich Park and a solitary fieldfare in the Griffen field which left in March, heralded a cool damp Summer that has so far had little adverse effect on our fauna. Among the birds, the green woodpecker may have been absent and the house martins fewer, but for the first time in some years there were sightings of collared doves. Summer residents included spotted flycatcher, blackcap, lesser whitethroat, chiffchaff, willow warbler, swift and cuckoo, though only the first was seen to nest. Woodland birds seemed up to strength and the remaining two species of woodpecker (great and lesser spotted), tree creeper, nut-hatch (3 juveniles at one Park site) and tawny owl were regularly reported.

Outside the woodland area, coal and longtailed tits, redpoll, bullfinches and chaffinch (one pair only) were noted, as was a kingfisher in College Road: gulls, after a three week near-absence in June, began returning in July. In the seventies, herons were fairly frequent, but this year only one has been recorded.

There would appear to be little change in the status of our more common birds.

The member in Village Way who was watching a young jay on the ground close by, received a warning buffet on his head from a parent bird!

Foxes, of which both albino and melanistic forms were seen, are becoming even tamer, one accepting an invitation to enter a kitchen for food! Records were well-distributed around Dulwich. Hedgehogs, both live and road casualties, now seem to be scarcer. Bats on the wing have claimed some attention but species cannot be identified. Spiders (Linypha Sp.) in some numbers were spotted in May, mating and feeding (!). Bees (identified as Bombus Lapidarius) were seen to emerge from a group of about one hundred three-quarter-inch diameter 'molehills'; they were distinctive in colour, black body with red abdomen. Stag Beetles, on the wing in June and July, were in several areas, confirming that Dulwich is one of their strongholds. Frog reports are increasing, due in part no doubt to the widespread publicity this declining species has had.

Of the hordes of the Painted Lady butterflies invading this country in April, only one was reported in Dulwich. At the same time several Red Admirals appeared, but other species were limited to Whites, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock. There were no moth records.

Many members of the Society have been kind enough to submit the records from which these notes have been compiled. They are duly thanked.

Please continue to send Sightings to 24 Dulwich Village, or 'phone 693-1666.

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#### Blanket Weed in Garden Ponds

I have been asked to contribute some thoughts on this subject as I am the proud, and fortunate, keeper of two blanket weed free ponds.

There is no easy answer to the problem. If we start with the proposition that blanket weed is a filamentous form of algae and therefore a plant, it follows that in conditions which are favourable for other plants to flourish, the blanket weed will do likewise. It also follows that I do not recommend the use of chemical treatments to destroy blanket weed as these are forms of herbicide and may have adverse effects on other plant life in the pond, particularly water lilies, which can be very sensitive.

The position of the pond is a major factor, although this will not be of much help to those with well-established ponds which cannot be relocated. A certain amount of sunlight is necessary for the growth of water plants, but a pond positioned so that it receives no more than 2 or 3 hours sun per day is not being starved. The problem of providing shade is that unless evergreen shrubs or conifers are used, leaf-fall in the autumn may be a nuisance, although a net placed over a pond should solve this problem, and also deter cats, squirrels, owls, herons, ducks and Canada geese that wish to practise their fishing skills!

For those who do not keep fish in their ponds, daphnia (water-fleas) and frog or toad tadpoles are very efficient consumers of algae in its early stages of development. Fishkeepers, of course, will be well aware that their charges are equally efficient consumers of daphnia and tadpoles!

The much-maligned pond snail can also assist in keeping the sides of fibreglass and smooth liner ponds clear of algae growth.

Strong-growing plants are one of the pondkeeper's best allies. Water lilies not only produce beautiful flowers, but also plenty of large green leaves which will restrict the amount of sun which can enter the pond, provide shelter for the fish, and rafts for tiny toads and frogs, and landing-places for mosquitoes and other insects to deposit their eggs and thus supply more life food to the fish in due course.

The oxygenating plant *tillaea recurva* is very efficient and seems to block blanket weed, as it grows partly below and partly above the surface of the water. It is also attractive to look at, with pale green leaves and small white flowers. It can be grown in partnership with rooted willow moss and elodea and free-floating hornwort. Duckweed is a useful floating plant which also restricts sunlight and is easily controlled by lifting out clumps when necessary.

In spite of all this, should your pond be afflicted by blanket weed, the best method of removal is by twining it around a stick or rose-twig and pulling it out, daily if necessary, so that it does not grow so thickly as to trap and choke your fish.

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## LOCAL HISTORY and WILDLIFE Sub-Committees

### Dulwich Field Walk

On Saturday, July 20th, twenty-two Society members enjoyed a rural field walk in East Dulwich. Meeting at 2.30 pm at the gate across Green Dale, the ancient 'dirt' road once part of the route from the Village to the Parish Church of St Giles in Camberwell, we wandered along the rural, traffic-free lane until we were met by Mr Ponder, the Groundsman for Dulwich Hamlet Football Club. He had opened the gate to a greensward lane which ran between hedgerows, across the playing fields of the ILEA and St Olave's until it reached the ancient boundary wall of St Francis Hospital, erected in 1892, where it emerged into the Club's car park. Here, by the gate, we discovered a long-forgotten Manor Boundary Stone which Mr Ponder had cleared of undergrowth to reveal the inscription "Dulwich College 1877". He informed us that this lane was once the back entrance to the Club's grounds, but it had been unused for so long that he had had to cut a pathway through the undergrowth for us. Certainly, this lane has to be one of the least-known, fume-free, rural walks to be found anywhere on the Estate today.

Mr Ponder told us about the varied wildlife in the area, and how he had seen twelve foxes at one time on the main football pitch. To confirm this, he showed us a number of foxes' earths which had been burrowed-out beneath the stands.

Leaving the Club grounds, we walked through a field with a spinney of young silver birches at one end but we did not see any of the different species of birds usually to be found there. Following a footpath up the side of the hill just short of Dog Kennel Hill, we emerged onto the ridge of Champion Hill and followed the ancient, tree-lined road, passing an old iron Parish Boundary Post and another Manor Boundary Stone on the way, until we came to the top end of Green Dale, now no more than a rough footpath running between tall old hawthorns and elders.

Except for two short, sharp showers, the weather was ideal, and this made for a particularly clear view of the distant slopes of Sydenham Hill and Honor Oak. Those of us who had brought binoculars may have been disappointed not to see many birds but made up for this by using them to identify the various landmarks across the valley, while the more knowledgeable among us were pleased to identify many wild flowers such as black horehound, mugwort, common mallow and convulvulus.

Ten more minutes of wandering down the lane, passing the sites once occupied by Bessemer's Observatory which housed the world's second largest telescope and where his man-made lake with grottos and a cascade used to be, brought us back to the gate from whence we started, thus ending a very pleasant hour-and-a-quarter's rural diversion across the Dulwich fields on the Estate's eastern extremity.

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### THE NATIONAL GARDENS SCHEME

Mr Fairlie would like again to express his sincere gratitude to his many friends in the Dulwich Society who gave him his second opening of The Grange garden, under the above scheme, which took place on June 23rd. On this occasion also we were blessed with a bright sunny day, pleasantly warm by this year's standard.

It was very gratifying that over 300 visitors came and seemed to have had so much pleasure from that afternoon's event, bringing the number who visited on the two openings to over 700 and raising the total, received from them in 1985, to over £1,000.00

After this encouragement, it is felt that The Grange must open its garden again in 1986 and two dates, still to be decided upon, will be advised later.

Most of the second-hand flower pots so generously given for 1985 have been filled and sold, so that if anyone has some that are surplus to their requirements they will be most gladly received at The Grange - (phone 693-1187).

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## GALLERY NEWS

### "Introducing SAM RABIN"

21 November 1985 - 2 February 1986

Following the success of the showing of "Late de Chirico" at Dulwich, the Gallery is to continue its experimental series of temporary exhibitions with its first ever show of work by a living British artist - Sam Rabin. Such exhibitions juxtapose the old with the new, shed fresh light on both, and attract a new type of visitor.

This Exhibition covers the extraordinary life and work of one of Britain's greatest draughtsmen and teachers. Rabin has found fame in many fields - as sculptor, actor, opera singer, professional wrestler, teacher and painter. At the age of 82, he continues to teach and produce work.

Described as the 'English Degas', Rabin has been very largely neglected by writers and critics. The theme of boxing has dominated his work for the last 35 years, though, surprisingly, the artist has little interest in the sport. In such works as Toledo Massacre and The Prelude, he uses the motif of the ring in the same way as Degas used the ballet dancer, or Cézanne Le Mont Saint Victoire. Each of his paintings is an essay in pictorial arrangement in which he experiments with the relationships between colours, lines and shapes. Rabin is intrigued by the abstract possibilities of the ring, and combines this with a profound interest in drawing the human figure. The boxing pictures establish a powerful interaction between the abstract and the figurative.

Many of the 70 works on display come from the artist's own collection. As well as the boxing pictures, a selection of figure studies, such as Nude Negress 1949 and The Mulatto Model, are included. Such delicate works reflect the astonishing versatility of this master draughtsman.

The Exhibition is designed to establish Rabin as an important British artist who has, for too long, been overlooked: it will tour Southampton and Salford Galleries in 1986.

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## ENDPIECE

### The Day 'The Grange' Squirrel Took the Plunge

Did he jump, or did he fall in? That is the question. Or was he taking his daily bath?

I decided to walk down to the Grange pond before the mass of visitors arrived for the garden opening.

A faint sun shone, and all was peaceful and quiet as I gazed along the "Pond Walk". There was a glorious display of colour, overflowing with the beauties of nature in this "natural garden" where the flowers of the wild and the flowers of man's hand mingled in glorious profusion, to the Glory of God and the pleasure of one who had, through ingenuity and labour, used the bounty of nature to build a garden for others to enjoy.

As I moved over towards the pond there was a loud splash, and lo and behold did my eyes deceive me? No! It really was a squirrel, with eyes firmly fixed on me, crossing the centre of the pond like an Olympic swimmer, firmly set on its goal.

He reached the far side and climbed out, so I hastily moved around the undergrowth to see what became of him. The little fellow, for he appeared to be very young in his bedraggled state, stood on the path and shook himself well and truly, sat down and wagged his tail, reared up on his hind legs, waved his front paws in the air as though to say "Well, that's that", and hopped slowly away.

The squirrel well and truly made my day memorable.

Late in the afternoon, when most of the crowd had gone, I returned to the pool. All was peace and quiet, except for one tiny, fair-haired, five-year-old girl, alone and oblivious to the outside world. She was crouched down, peering into the depths of the pond, absolutely intent on studying the nature of things and the secrets of pond life, and lost to the world of twentieth century hurry and bustle.

Where were the frogs? Where were the tadpoles? Where were the fish? Where were the water spiders? Where were the snails? What flowers were there? How did they get there? Would there be any dragon flies? What lay beneath the leaves?

There were flashes of movement in the pond as the slanting rays of the sun penetrated the water. The child of nature found a world of wonder and enchantment in that pond, a myriad questions, and some answers. Reluctantly, she was led away to the world of the twentieth century where there is no time to ponder the nature of the "imponderables", the wonders and complexities of nature.

At last the garden emptied and folk went on their way, made richer by their experience of a lovely garden, where nature discloses her secrets and her bounty.

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