

The Dulwich Society Silver Jubilee Trees Walk updated

Article by David Beamish published in *Dulwich Society Journal* 205 (Summer 2020)

In 1977, as part of the Dulwich Society's celebration of the Queen's Silver Jubilee, the Tree Committee produced a Jubilee Trees Walk, beginning near the Old Grammar School, going south on Gallery Road, along Lovers Walk, south to the junction of College Road and Dulwich Common, and back again to the Park gates and the Picture Gallery garden. Twenty-six tree species were included. The Walk was featured in the Society's Newsletter No. 39 (January 1978, downloadable from the Society website), and again as an insert in the Society's Newsletter No. 61 (July 1983) at the time of a guided walk along the route. The Walk consisted of a map, originally hand-drawn but later replaced by the computer-produced version reproduced here, with each tree marked by a letter of the alphabet (some letters appearing more than once), accompanied by notes dated May 1977 crediting "R.D. and E.J.B."

"R.D." was Rosa Warburton Davis (4 June 1911–23 November 2009). For many years Rosa lived at 118 College Road and was active in the Dulwich Society Tree Committee until she moved to Beckenham in 1998. She also served on the Wildlife and Gardens Committees. In July 1987 she was co-author (this time with Stella Benwell) of a second College Road tree walk, this one going south from the Millpond to the woods. An oak tree planted in her memory near the Old Grammar School now has a commemorative plaque, added when the new Village Orchard opened in 2019.

"E.J.B." was another Tree Committee member, Esther Joy Blackburn (24 May 1926–30 September 1977). Sadly Esther died soon after the production of the Trees Walk, aged only 51. Two Norway maples were planted in her memory by the Society and her family in Grove Meadow (south of Lovers Walk) in March 1978.

Unsurprisingly, several of the trees featured in the Walk are no longer there. Dutch elm disease was presumably responsible for the loss of the English Elm tree originally featured. I have not been able to establish whether the October 1987 storm brought down any of the others. In updating the Walk I have retained the original letters but substituted different trees in some cases (marked with an asterisk). I have also expanded some of the notes.

*A: Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). This tree, quite similar in appearance to the swamp cypress (Y), was discovered in China as recently as 1941. Another specimen is in Dulwich Park, near the Old College Gate.

*B. Sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). Now common on Dulwich streets. There is a line of them in the Picture Gallery garden. The leaves are strikingly coloured in autumn, ranging from yellow to deep crimson.

C. Dawyck Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Dawyck'). Two of the four beeches in the Picture Gallery garden alongside Gallery Road are the Dawyck variety, a formal tree with upright branches named after Dawyck, near Peebles, Scotland.

D. Common Oak (*Quercus robur*). A large, long-lived tree. Note the long stalks of the acorns, in contrast with the Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) which has no stalks to its acorns (none on this walk).

*E. Common Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Recognisable by, among other things, the relatively smooth grey trunk, reminiscent of an elephant's leg.

F. Lucombe Oak (*Quercus* × *hispanica* 'Lucombeana'). A hybrid Oak raised in an Exeter nursery in 1762 by William Lucombe. It is a cross between the Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) and Cork Oak (*Quercus suber*), both of which may be seen in Dulwich Park.

G. Copper Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'purpurea').

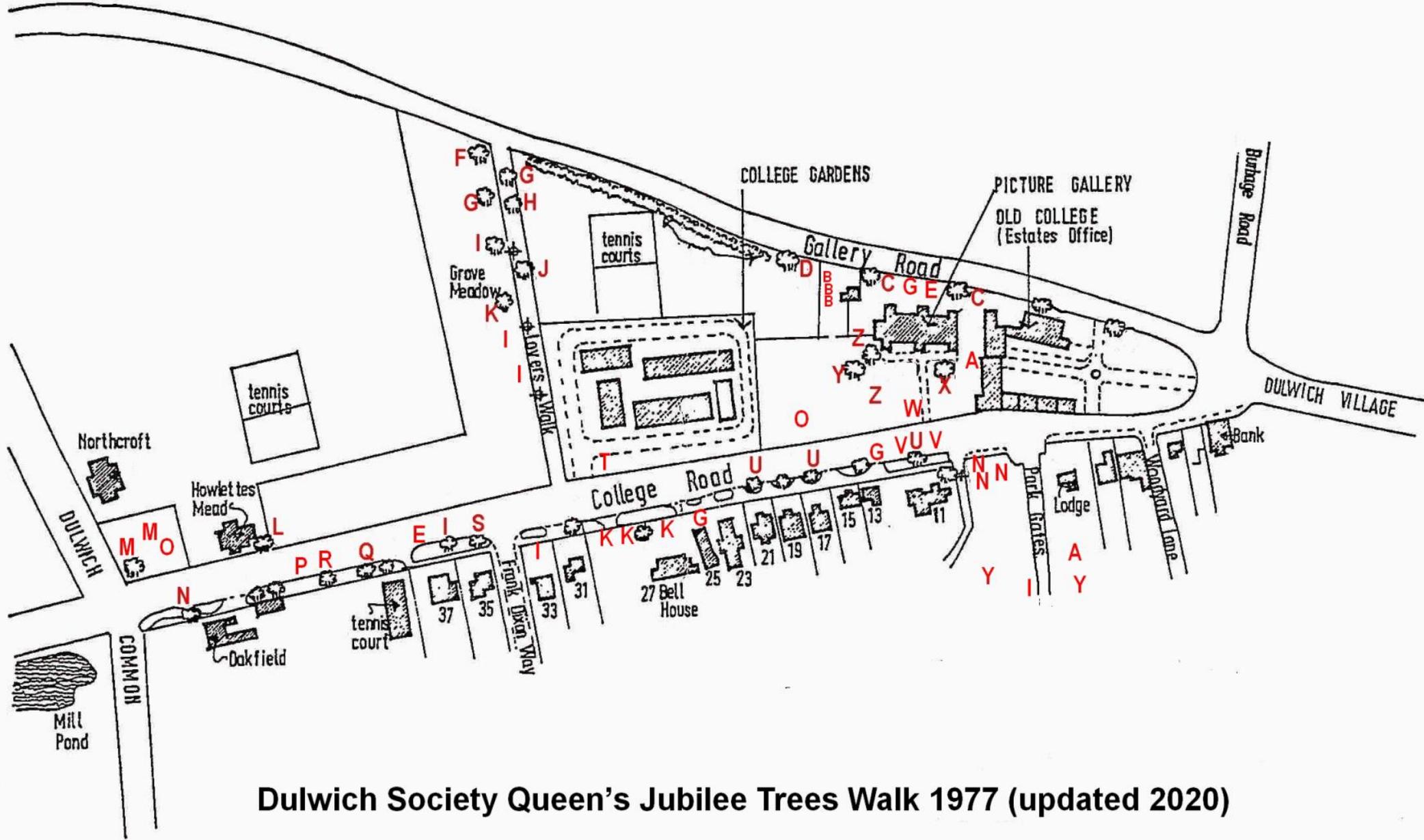
H. Common Lime (*Tilia* × *europaea*). A hybrid of the Broad-leaved Lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*) and Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*), now much more commonly planted than either. It has sweet-scented flowers and is often recognised by its suckering habit.

- I. Pyramid Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata'). Quite narrow as a young tree but broadening as it matures. Grove Meadow and Dulwich Park both have several examples of this elegant tree.
- J. Purple Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus* f. *purpureum*).
- K. Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus Hippocastanum*). It is said that many were planted in Dulwich because it was Edward Alleyn's favourite tree. As well as those on this walk there are several on the east side of Dulwich Village between Christ's Chapel and Gail's bakery.
- L. Cappadocian Maple (*Acer cappadocicum*). Attractive trunk and beautifully coloured leaves in autumn.
- M. Caucasian Elm (*Zelkova carpinifolia*). A rare tree characterised by scores of stems. This striking example, thought to date from around 1780, has done well to survive – it leans towards the main road and needed "drastic pruning" in November 1977 and again in August 2010, when it narrowly escaped being felled on safety grounds. Another example has been planted, on the initiative of Society members, just across the pedestrian path.
- N. London Plane (*Platanus × hispanica*). A fine specimen of a tree much grown in towns because the bark flakes off, helping it to tolerate pollution.
- *O. Indian bean tree (*Catalpa bignonioides*). A tree with a broad profile, notable for its dangling bean pods in the autumn. The tree near the A205 was planted in memory of George Clout (died 1962), Dulwich Estates Bailiff from 1914 to 1957. The tree in the Picture Gallery garden is the golden variety (*Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea').
- P. Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*). Leaves deeply divided and sharply lobed with pin-pointed ends.
- Q. Cut-leaved Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* 'Incisa'). Some of the leaves are like the Oak and others like the Hornbeam. Often thought of as an Oak growing on a Beech.
- *R. European hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia*). So-called because its fruits are in hop-like clusters. There is a large one in the Old Burial Ground in the Village.
- S. Chestnut-leaved Oak (*Quercus castaneifolia*). A rare tree with leaves like the Sweet Chestnut.
- *T. Manna Ash (*Fraxinus ornus*). Produces striking plumes of creamy petals in late spring.
- U. Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). Distinct-shaped leaves and attractive tulip-like flowers in late spring. There is another in Dulwich Park near the Old College Gate, and several in Woodwarde Road.
- V. Cypress Oak (*Quercus robur* f. *fastigiata*). Two young examples of an elegant oak variant with the "fastigate" growth pattern and thus some resemblance to a cypress.
- W. Smooth Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*). An elegant plant with smooth grey bark. The pale green leaves turn red in autumn.
- X. Judas Tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*). A member of the pea family, the rosy-pink flowers often develop before the leaves.
- Y. Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). A tall, narrow tree with leaves appearing late, good autumn tints. The tree which was standing in 1977 was 25m tall and once described as a "magnificent tree". It was felled in October 2008 when, according to the then chairman of the Tree Committee, Stella Benwell, it was "old and dying". Happily another swamp cypress has been planted close by. There are two more in Dulwich Park, near the Old College Gate, and another in Calton Avenue outside St Barnabas Church.
- Z. Black Mulberry (*Morus nigra*). A long-lived tree with blackish red fruit. There are two in the Picture Gallery garden.
- Several of these trees are featured on the "Map of remarkable trees in Dulwich", illustrated by Rosemary Lindsay, originally compiled by the Society's Tree Committee in 2005 and revised in 2013.

April 2020

Scale
1:2500

Key
☺ trees marked A-Z
⊕ lamp post



Dulwich Society Queen's Jubilee Trees Walk 1977 (updated 2020)