



L * E * T * T * S * O * M
G * A * R * D * E * N * S
A S S O C I A T I O N

Aims

1. To celebrate the life and works of Dr Lettsom by maintaining his garden and promoting the rich historical associations.
2. To encourage the use and enjoyment by local residents of a piece of land which is maintained so as to encourage the maximum variety of wildlife.
3. To encourage a community spirit in an inner city area by providing a safe play space, a location for local events and a resource for school and nursery group activities.

Lettsom Gardens Association has run this small, wildlife garden for nearly twelve years. It was established in 1980 by Southwark Council. Subsequently, however, we have been able to run it independently and the Borough now benefits from a free, natural park, run by a voluntary organisation which provides a considerable service to the local community.

The Gardens are used by both the young and old, winter and summer. Membership is open to all and in order to encourage as wide a membership as possible the subscriptions are minimal. Monies raised pay for insurance, maintenance and events. Southwark consequently has a virtually free park, run by an enthusiastic local community. The Committee has worked out a minimum-effort running policy and the grounds are maintained in a sensible, environmentally friendly way. Assistance in preserving the ecology is provided by the Southwark Wildlife Trust and the Council's Ecology Officer and we organise nature walks, etc. in addition to bonfire parties, barbecues and summer picnics. All these events are open to the public although we obviously try to get people to join the Association if they use the Gardens regularly.

We have a considerable membership, well over 350 members. The exact number is difficult to assess as people can join as a family regardless of the number of family members. During our first twelve years there have been plenty of new people both using the Gardens and on the Committee. This indicates that the Association is viable into the foreseeable future. The Gardens have an additional role in that they provide open space and access to a wild environment to a number of local schools and nurseries (e.g. Dog Kennel Hill Junior, Infants and Day Nursery). For the Copleston Road Day Nursery we provide their only outdoor space, and because there is a hard play area, it can be used throughout the year.

Lettsom Gardens is of considerable historical importance as it is on the site of the original formal, flower gardens of Dr Henry Coakley Lettsom's estate. He was an 18th century doctor who imported huge numbers of exotic species to his estate. His name appears in a number of local features e.g. the Lettsom Estate on Camberwell Grove and Lettsom Street. Now, the Council are about to erect a heritage plaque on nos. 9-12 Grove Park (which form the north border of the gardens) indicating that they were the site of his villa. The land comprising Lettsom Gardens and the Camberwell Gardens Guild Allotments, which is in the Camberwell Grove Conservation Area, has never been built on and contains some trees which may be descended from those in the original gardens; acacias, mulberries, figs, etc.

The land is leased by Southwark Council via three trustees to the Lettsom Gardens Association. We have a written Constitution, regular Committee meetings and an Annual General meeting every May. The Committee consists of Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Gardening Coordinator, and Street Representatives for the local areas (the latter collect subs...

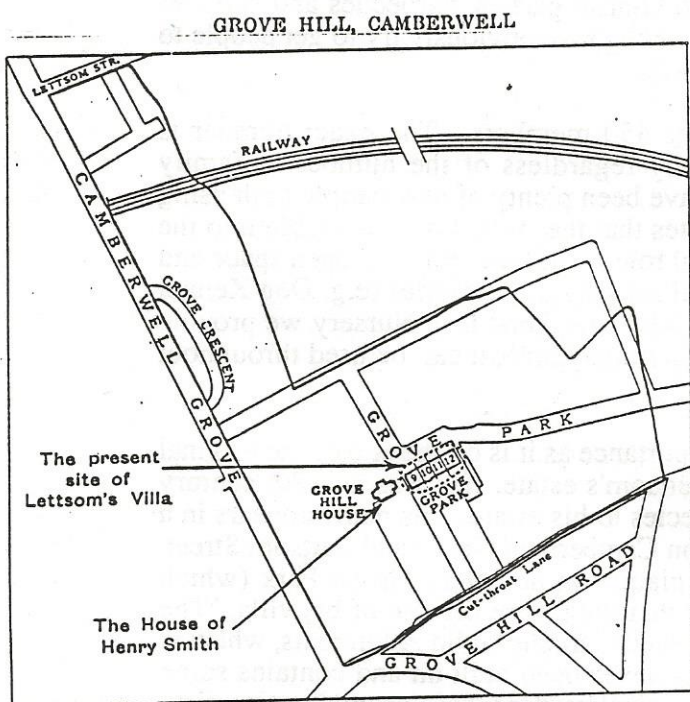
account and our accounts are audited each year. Copies of all minutes, activities, newsletters and gate notices are kept. We have produced a species list of the flora and fauna of the site and we have an eight panel poster showing the past history, how the Association was formed, the details of our activities and natural history of the site. This poster is shown at all public occasions and was put together by members with a small grant from Southwark Council during Environment year (1987) when we participated in the Borough's activities. We are listed in "Nature Conservation in Southwark, Ecology Handbook 12", printed by the London Ecology Unit and available from local bookshops.

For security reasons and because we need to raise money to run the Gardens we have to have a membership system with access by keys. However we keep as open door a policy as possible. The Gardens are open throughout the year on Sundays from 10.00-12.00 am via the Grove Park gate and events (bonfire; barbecues, wildlife walks etc.) are open to all. Notices indicating how to join are displayed on both gates, vandalism permitting! We do not advertise the area widely, because it is quite small. However local people get to know about the Gardens from the notices about events on the gates, in local schools and the Copleston centre, word of mouth and via the Camberwell Gardens Guild, Southwark Wildlife Trust and the Camberwell Society.

Membership Breakdown (approx.)

Camberwell Grove	38	Grove Lane	37
Chadwick Road	17	Grove Park	103
Crofton Road Area	38	Ivanhoe Road Area	36
Dog Kennel Hill Estate	14	Pelham Close	10
Grove Hill Road	44	Outlying Areas	12

Crofton Road Area includes: Shenley Road, Talfourd Road, Bellenden Road, etc
 Ivanhoe Road Area includes: Copleston Road, Choumert Road, Oglander Road, etc.
 Outlying Areas go as far as: Flodden Road, SE5; Henslowe Road, SE22; Wood Vale, SE25; and one member in SE1.



THE SITE OF LETTSON'S HOUSE is now occupied by Nos. 9-10-11-12 Grove Park, built forty years ago. No. 9 is in possession of William E. Ward, Esq., who was good enough to take us over the area when we visited it in 1931. He in-

Dear Mrs Jones,
 We are doing a topic on local history and we wondered if you could come and talk to us about the history of Lettson Gardens.

Christine and 4L

Dog Kennel Hill School
 Dog Kennel Hill
 E. Dulwich
 S.E22 8AB
 24.1.92



When any sick to me apply,
 I physics, bleeds and sweats 'em
 If after that they choose to die,