

# The fountain ~ focal Point in Dewey's Garden



## The Friends of South Hill Wood & Kingswood Glen

The Friends formed in 2009 to reclaim South Hill Wood from anti-social behaviour, following police advice at the Shortlands Safer Neighbourhood Panel. The Wood was neglected, unmanaged, overrun with invasive laurel overhanging paths, overgrown, gloomy & threatening; consequently, the Wood was little used. The Wood is now much used, due to improvements instigated by the Friends, in partnership with the London Borough of Bromley, and idverde on behalf of the Borough. Both South Hill Wood and Kingswood Glen are designated "Local Green Spaces", signifying the Borough's recognition of their "special qualities and particular local significance" - and the Wood is a listed Woodland Trust Bluebell Wood. The bowling & tennis clubs fully support the Friends.

The Friends seek to enhance the tranquil and relaxing natures of Wood and Glen, and have instigated many improvements, including, in the wood:

- Restoration of the herbaceous border by the Jubilee Gates;
- Clearance of invasive laurels, brambles, and snowberries;
- Tree thinning, coppicing & wood management [with the Borough of Bromley];
- Planting many daffodil bulbs, and whips of native species;
- Information panels, based on historical and flora and fauna studies;
- Opening up the north west quadrant with the new footpath;
- The two pedestrian gates commemorating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee;
- Stabilisation and planting of the fountain.

The Friends are grateful to the following for their support to the Fountain Project :

Tesco "Bags of Help" and Groundwork UK for funding the stonemasonry repairs;

idverde Bromley for filling the "moat" with drainage layer and soil;

Shortlands Residents' Association, Jason's Totally Tennis, and the Bowling Club for substantial contributions for the plants;

Diana King for supplying DVD and photographs;

Rotary Clubs of Beckenham and Langley Park;

Bromley Friends' Forum for substantial contribution to the information panel; and,

Helen Brown, CMLI retired, Musketbrown Design, for the report "South Hill Wood - a landscape history", for the Friends, from which most information here is obtained.



English Oak



The Garden was originally part of Toots Wood - ancient semi-natural woodland which covered a large portion of the surrounding area, long before any houses or gardens were developed. Oak dominated the woodland, and elm was commonplace. The western part of South Hill Wood [to the left] is Ancient Woodland, being substantially undisturbed for over 400 years - as determined by plant indicator species.

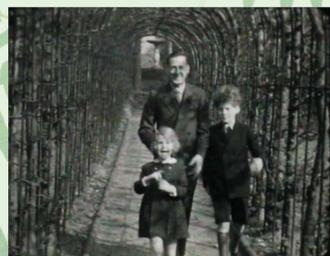
Thomas Charles Dewey developed the garden between 1887, when he acquired South Hill Wood Estate, and the early 1900's - and built South Hill House, in South Hill Road. Thomas Dewey was a remarkable man and personality, engaged in a wide range of local initiatives to improve the provision of education, health, and religion in Bromley. As well as chair of Prudential Assurance Company, he applied his professional skills and wisdom for the benefit of the nation, including secondment to the Cabinet Office during WW1, for which he was knighted in 1917 as "Baronet Dewey of South Hill Wood".

In 1903 he was Charter Mayor of Bromley. He assisted financially and gave his time to local churches, education establishments and community groups, including the Scouts and Guides.

The fountain was built around 1902. It was a focal point for views and orientation to the house [to the right], garden [to the right], garden shelter [to the left], music pavilion and terrace [almost straight ahead]. It was probably designed by locally-renowned architect, Evelyn Hellicar, who also designed the music pavilion, with a Dutch gabled roof, and additions to Dewey's home.



Speckled Wood Butterfly



Arthur Chilton King, of Chiltonian Biscuits, bought the property in 1926. He took photos and cine-film of his children, Ivan and Diana, and his wife playing and walking in the gardens and woods. All images of the fountain and garden are from those.



Emperor Dragonfly



Wood Anemone

### Plan of the Garden as it was in 1909



left: fountain in the snow in the early 1930's  
below: South Hill House



Peacock Butterfly



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Newly planted fountain

### Conservation of The fountain

The Friends of South Hill Wood and Kingswood Glen investigated full restoration of the fountain - but this was found to be impossible, as the damage to the workings and stonework over the years was too great. The original water supply is unknown but thought to have involved one or more of the four ponds in the garden.

The Friends therefore restored and conserved the fountain, by specialist work to the walls, and stabilisation of the circular walls - substantial parts of which were leaning or collapsed due to tree roots - by filling the "moat" with a drainage layer and topsoil, and planting with native plants which replicate the woodland flora of the Wood.

These plants provide food for invertebrates, especially insects which, in turn, are a food source for birds, bats and other animals. The oak trees by the Fountain are of a similar age, class and size. The two oaks growing in the immediate perimeter of the fountain are between 80-120 years old, and their canopies interlock with surrounding oaks. The trees in the area around the fountain are true to what would have been there in bygone times.