



streathamcommon.org

Common Knowledge

April 2016, Issue 57

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Common Knowledge, the newsletter of the Friends of Streatham Common, is edited by Peter Newmark: tel. 020 8679 2908; email: peternewmark@gmail.com

From The Chair

As we approach the start of Lambeth Council's new financial year, the outlook for the Common/Rookery is less than rosy. Across Lambeth, the budget for green spaces is being cut by around 60%. The consequences for the Common are that Lambeth will close down the paddling pool, although the Friends and the Streatham Common Cooperative are hoping to find a way to keep it running, and will be transferring responsibility for the toilets to the café's new leaseholder once they are in working order. We can also expect to see less litter picking and lower standards of maintenance of the Common's infrastructure.

To try and offset the loss of budget, Lambeth is trying to encourage large money-making events on the Common. Because of the income they bring in, we have not opposed such events. In return, Lambeth promised that funds would be made available to stop the flooding of footpaths at the bottom of the Common. However the work has still not been carried out. Now Lambeth is proposing to increase substantially the noise limits for large events to compete with other venues. We have expressed strong opposition to this. We will be reviewing our position on large events in future.

On the brighter side, the new owners of the café are now in place though they are still waiting for their lease from the council. They are paying a more realistic rent for the café and prices have raised a little to reflect this. It's a difficult transition for the café but I believe the lease holders are doing a marvellous job and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome them to the Common. Inkspot now has permission to renovate the barn and set up their microbrewery. They are very sympathetic to the needs of the Common and have already supported a number of four events. SCCoop continues to do a great job in the Rookery and I hope there is a successful outcome to its negotiations to take over the rest of the Common in September.

FRIENDS OF STREATHAM COMMON

BARN DANCE

At the Streatham Common Barn, behind the
Streatham Community Gardens, SW16 3BZ

Saturday 30th April 2016
7pm-11pm

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Includes Live Band, Entertainment and BBQ
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Book tickets at: [http://buytickets.at/
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Any enquiries contact:
rookery100events@hotmail.co.uk






Where Our Money Comes From And How We Spend It

Every year, thanks to members like you, the Friends of Streatham Common receives around £2000 in subscription fees and donations. We also raise funds through the Quiz and Comedy nights that we started for the Rookery Centenary Project and have carried on since, thanks to our tireless fund raiser. This April we're even having a fund-raising Barn Dance. These, raffles and other events raise around another £2000 per year. Additionally, if the weather is good, we can make up to £1000 from our large events like Kite Day and Shakespeare in the Rookery, but then we can also make nothing at all!

So in case you don't pour over the annual accounts at our AGM we thought we'd give you a flavour of what the money gets spent on.

First, there are the bigger projects. As many of you will know, nearly £10,000 was



raised for the Rookery Centenary Project by the amazing Rookery fund-raising group. This topped up the Heritage Lottery Fund grant and helped pay for items like the White Garden restoration, the centenary events and many other improvements. We also spent around £5000 to draw up the plans for completely rebuilding the playground, and £6000 for setting up the Streatham Common Cooperative, which is now completely independent from the Friends.

Then, annually, about a £1000 a year goes on running the Friends – hiring meeting halls, printing and mailing this newsletter, replacing the odd gazebo, etc.

The rest of our income, we tend to split between events, projects and donations. We spend around £1000 a year supporting events. In part, this is for the insurance that is essential to enable us to put on any events at all, from the annual Easter Egg Hunt and Dog Show to this year's planned new Bonfire Event in November. We also organise some events that cost us money, such as the popular Birds of Prey Display in the summer.

Project spend is about £2000 a year. In recent years we've paid for the installation of the fountain in the Rookery round pond and bought a new sundial, after the old one was stolen. We also installed the



Streatham Common Nature Trail. This year we have donated £1700 so that the northern circular beds in the Rookery can be completely replanted to a new design.

We also spend an average of a few hundred pounds each year on leaflets. Some of these are campaigning, such as the "Restore the Rookery" leaflets, some advertise our events and others provide information, such as the Nature Trail or Rookery leaflets. If there's anything left, the final use of the money is for small donations to other groups such as the Community Garden.

So hopefully you'll carry on being a member and help our fundraising, which is more important than ever with the 60% cut to park budgets.

Richard Payne

Saving Our Seeds

Saving seeds at the end of a crop's cycle is essential in order to grow the same crop the next year, and yet very few gardeners in the UK still practise the ancient art of seed saving. Instead, most gardeners rely on purchasing their seeds from large distributors, with the result that seed-saving skills have been largely lost from our gardening culture.

While having been involved both in the Rookery gardens and the Streatham Common Community Garden, I became aware of the precarious nature of our seed system through the work of the London Freedom Seed Bank, a network of gardeners dedicated to saving and distributing seeds. I discovered how important it was to save seeds but was also aware that it wasn't something that was widely known about. I wanted to find out about community seed projects in other countries and what they were doing to help protect their seeds.

I was lucky enough to be awarded a Travelling Fellowship by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and embarked on a ten-week research trip to America and Canada in September 2015. I visited 23 projects, including gardens, farms and libraries, in nine states/provinces in order to observe their practices and learn from their experiences.

I found out that community seed projects in America and Canada have been instrumental in helping to protect seed diversity. Gardeners in different regions have exchanged seeds, helping to increase the genetic diversity and resilience of specific varieties. One result is that countless varieties, including many heirlooms, have been saved from the brink of extinction.

Back in the UK, I'm working with groups in South London to bring back seed-saving skills and promote better awareness. I have donated numerous varieties from the

community seed collections that I visited to the Streatham Common Community Garden including *Schweizer Riesen* pea, an old Swiss variety, and *Bushy* cucumber, a Russian variety that was introduced to America in 1992. Volunteers at the Garden will in turn be saving seeds to donate to the Freedom Seed Bank.

For more information, go to www.seeddiversity.wordpress.com

Charlotte Dove

Charlotte was the Rookery Centenary Project Coordinator for the Friends and Community Gardener for the Streatham Common Community Garden.

Sound Of Music

If some of you find the noise from large commercial events on the Common unpleasant, or even unbearable, there may be worse to come. In an attempt to attract events - and therefore much needed income - that might otherwise be held in such places as Hyde Park or Victoria Park, Lambeth Events is proposing to increase substantially the allowable levels of sound on all its larger green spaces, including Streatham Common.

The Friends have voiced strong opposition to this proposal, saying that it would be wholly inappropriate for the sound levels on such a small space as our Common to be equal to those on far larger spaces. We can only hope Lambeth sees sense.

Are you getting our useful emails about events and news? If not, all you have to do is visit our website, streathamcommon.org, put your email address into the empty box on the right hand side and click on the Subscribe button.

Note that you may already be getting emails regarding membership and meetings but you need to subscribe separately to get our news and events emails.

The Rookery Café

Many of you have been wondering what is going on with the café since it was taken over by the people who run the Skylark café on Wandsworth Common. Here is an update from one of the owners of the company that has the new lease.

We are currently operating on a Tenancy at Will and have established a simple operation over the past few weeks. We are serving a small menu of freshly prepared hot and cold food with a slightly expanded offer at the weekends, as well as hot and cold drinks, snacks and bakery. We have had a *lot* of requests for ice creams and can now provide a range from Jude's, a family-owned dairy farm in Hampshire.

We have been opening from 9am to 4pm but will extend these hours when the temperature comes up and footfall increases.

As the main lease process has taken longer than expected, our team has been a bit stretched running two sites, which has led to the occasional squeeze on service. We are recruiting temporary staff in the short term to improve the consistency and speed up the rate of our overall service and to increase the range of products we can offer.

We are setting up a Facebook page to help with communication on opening times and menus and also to allow customer feedback.

Lease process

There was an initial delay from a miscommunication at the outset which meant we did not receive a first draft lease (which kicks off the legal process) until a few weeks ago. We were reluctant to start spending money on surveyor's reports etc until we had a first draft lease but the survey process is now also underway.

The lease process itself is ongoing with Lambeth Council. It involves a long document with a lot of detail although we

are not currently experiencing any specific problems with the Council as such – it is a case of working through the clauses. We would expect to focus down to any key outstanding issues over the next couple of weeks as our surveyor also completes his work and we know where we are on the building, in particular the public toilets which clearly need a lot of work. We understand that the separate coin-operated disabled unit is to be removed and we are interested to know if the Council intends to make the remaining facilities compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act as part of any upgrade.

We hope that the lease process will be concluded over the next few weeks and then we will be in position to renovate. Our plan is to make the key changes in as short a timeframe as possible to limit closures. Changes will include full redecoration inside and out and the installation of new equipment to improve the speed of service. We may decide to relocate the kitchen area. At our café on Wandsworth Common (albeit a larger site with more room to operate in) we managed to keep total closure to enable electrical upgrades to only three days but it depends on how the builders get on and what they find once they start removing the old wiring etc. Hopefully we will do this work in late April once the Easter holidays are over, the lease is concluded and before the summer starts – fingers crossed!

Overall, we have been made to feel very welcome by SCCOOP, the Community Garden and the Streatham Common community in general so we would very much like to express our thanks to everyone concerned for the support and patience they have shown to date. We're really looking forward to concluding the lease process, getting the Rookery Café properly established and then working with everyone to make the most of this very special place.

Charlie Oppenheim

“Common Folk”



Nick Mawbey has been Assistant Head Gardener in the Rookery since February 2015

What experience did you have before coming to the Rookery?

I served a three year apprenticeship in horticulture at Holland Park, completing level 2 and level 3 awards. I have had the privilege to have worked in some key historical gardens and have gained a wealth of knowledge through those experiences and have gained many qualifications.

What new experience and/or skills have you gained since starting?

I have gained experience in teaching horticultural practices to staff and work-groups. I have also gained more experience in woodland management.

What have been the greatest changes since you arrived?

The greatest changes in the Rookery have been to the gardens, flower beds and borders, allowing trees, shrubs and plants to flourish, with general maintenance tasks keeping the rookery tidy and a welcoming place to be.

What season(s) do you like best and why?

Spring-summer. Spring is a joyful time of year and the gardens highlight the change in season most. Crocuses, snow drops and daffodils spring to life as do trees and shrubs. The welcoming smells of freshly cut grass are an invitation to the pleasures of the rookery.

What do you particularly like about working in the Rookery?

My favourite thing since starting has been taking on the manual work load, creating a sense of change for the better to the gardens. It has been nice to have so much appreciation from the public for the changes and improvements in the gardens.

What projects have you enjoyed working on?

All areas of the gardens have created mini projects. For example, clearance of a corner in the Old English garden that had been lost in time to bramble, bindweed and ivy revealed three healthy established bamboo plants and some beautiful shrubs. We were able to create a tranquil stepping-stone pathway appearing to lead through a dazzling bamboo structure, a big improvement on how the area previously looked.

The Friends would like to acknowledge with gratitude a generous legacy left to them by Joyce Honor Moss, Joy to her friends, who died last year, aged 88. Joy, along with Laurie Whiting, Gerry O'Brien and Gordon Richardson, was one of the founder members of the Friends. Joy used to walk dogs for people and it was her suggestion to start what is now the annual dog show, She ran it for four years as a much smaller but more intimate event than now: most of the participants were people she knew. She always invited Keith Hill, who was then the MP for Streatham, to help her judge it. He still tells me how much fun he used to have doing it. Joy remained on the Friends' executive committee for a while but even when she became too frail to participate in other events she still took a great interest in the dog show and was pleased to see it develop into such an important part of the Friends' calendar.

Shea Richardson

Planning And The Common

The Common has long had its own Conservation Area (CA). Lambeth is currently in the process of reviewing all of its 62 CAs and has recently published a new draft Appraisal on Streatham Common CA.

CAs are designed to preserve the character of specific areas by, for example, controlling the demolition of buildings and restricting extensions. Trees in the area are protected.

The revised appraisal includes impressively detailed descriptions of the Common and the buildings that ring it. The CA boundary takes in the Common itself and most of the buildings immediately adjacent to it. In some places the boundary goes a little deeper. The only proposed change to the boundary is to add the Thrale Alms Houses which are on Polworth Road.

The Friends have responded to the Council's consultation (now closed). Perhaps the main message we wanted to give is the need for the Council actually to use the powers it has. This has not been evident in the recent decision to allow replacement brightly-illuminated LED advertising hoardings on the High Road. The Council's general policy is against such hoardings and they are not sympathetic to the CA.

In general, however, the new Appraisal appears helpful and so we have welcomed it. The detailed description it offers will, we think, help maintain the character of the Common. We suggested some other boundary changes to include some buildings adjacent, but not currently included.

The Council will publish the final version of the CA Appraisal/statement later in the year.

David Malley

Dates For Your Diary Friends and SCCoop Events

April 3rd. **Bird Walk**. Meet by the Rookery Café. 9.30-11.00am.

April 30th. **Barn Dance** in the Streatham Common Barn. 7.00-11.00pm. **Tickets from <http://buytickets.at/thefriendsofstreathamcommon/47388>**

May 8th. **Bird Box Survey**. Meet by the Rookery Café. 9.30-11.00.

May 11th. **Public Meeting** about local issues plus a talk on **Dinosaurs in Crystal Palace**. In the Rookery Café at 7.45pm.

May 15th. **Kite Day** on the lower Common. 11.00am to 5.00pm.

May 20th. **Bat Walk**. Meet by the Rookery Café at 8.30pm. Booking essential: email IBoulton@lambeth.gov.uk

May 28th. **Moths Close Up**. Take a close look at the moths that have been trapped overnight. Meet by the Rookery Café at 9.30am.

June 12th. **Band in the Rookery**. 3.00-6.00pm. An afternoon of relaxed acoustic music.

June 18th. **West End Show Tunes**. Run in the Rookery by SCCoop.

July 3rd. **Shakespeare in the Rookery**. The Festival Players present *Hamlet* starting at 3.00pm

July 7th. **Informal Music Night**. In the Rookery. Run by SCCoop

July 16th. **Streatham Common Nature Trail Walk**. Starting at the Rookery Café at 3.00pm.

Then And Now

Lest you think that the main woodland on Streatham Common has always been there, compare these two photographs, taken in the dip along the path towards the White House. As you will see, in 1892 what is now woodland was then grassland. Although the area was originally part of the Great North Wood, which covered a large swathe south of London, that wood was felled long ago. The current trees presumably grew by natural succession once the grassland was no longer grazed or managed. (The 1892 photo comes from Lambeth Archive.)



Tom The Rat



Just about every other morning, as I walk my little grandson to Crown Lane Primary School, we see this black rat

emerge from the brambles and run across our path. It heads straight for the tree stump on which someone regularly leaves bird food, much of which the pigeons spill onto the ground, thus providing the rat with breakfast. Apparently such creatures were once known as 'Ship Rats' or 'Old English Rats'. We call this cheery companion of our morning walks, 'Tom'.

Nick Macadoo

Editor's Note: attitudes differ on rats. SCCoop and the Café have declared war on them, recently reducing their numbers considerably by means of traps.

I was very involved in the centenary celebration of the Rookery in 2013 and thought it was worth recording in a photo album how the celebrations came about, what we did and what the legacy of the event has been. The album, produced via Photobox, is full of pictures of the Rookery during that lovely summer and finishes with some scenes through the year in the Rookery. It was expensive to produce and costs £33.95 for 30 pages (unless someone decides they would like to front fund a batch of 20, in which case I could obtain a 40 % reduction.)

If you would like to purchase or first see a copy please email friendsofstreathamcommon@gmail.com and I will get back in touch.

*Barbara Wright
Ex Chair Rookery Centenary Committee*

What's Up?

SCCcoop - the Cooperative has secured funding from Lambeth, bar a last minute hiccup, for maintaining the Rookery for the next six months. The funding is less than before and any repairs will now need to be paid for from fundraising efforts. Negotiations will soon commence on SCCcoop taking over the whole Common from September.

Charity Application - the Friends submitted their application to the Charity Commission in February.

Playground Upgrade - Lambeth should soon be appointing a project officer, public consultation will follow and the complete rebuild of the playground should take place over next winter.

Paddling Pool - SCCcoop has costed a proposal for keeping the paddling pool open following Lambeth's decision to withdraw funding. The Friends strongly support the proposal and SCCcoop will now seek funds.

Brewery in the Barn - planning permission has been granted so work will shortly be proceeding, starting with creating a drainage connection to the mains. Installation of the brand new brewing system is at least three months away but the first brew will be at the end of summer if things go well.

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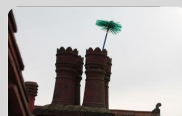
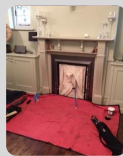


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