



Common Knowledge

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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

Dates For Your Diary. (More details on the Friends' website: streathamcommon.org)

August 13-16th. *Wind in the Willows* promenade performances in the Rookery*.

August 23rd. Birds of Prey on show and flying. From 1.00-5.00pm on the lower Common.

September 6th. Fun Dog Show on the upper Common. Starting at 1.00pm.

September 8th/9th. *A Midsummer Night's Dream/Hamlet*. In the Rookery at 6.30pm*.

September 16th. Open-air screening of *Beetlejuice* at 8.00pm in the Rookery*.

September 18th. Bat Walk, starting by the café at 7.10pm.

September 23rd. Open-air screening of *Up* at 8.00pm in the Rookery*.

October 17th. The Fungal Internet. A walk in search of fungi starting by the café at 7.10pm.

* hosted by SCCoop.

Change of Chair

With this issue we say goodbye to Richard Payne as Chair and hello to our new Chair, Mike Robinson. It has been an exceptionally active three years for the Friends of Streatham Common under Richard's chairmanship, marked by three major projects.

One of these, the Rookery Centenary Project, has recently been completed. It resulted, among other things, in the Rookery's White Garden and parts of the Old English Garden being re-designed and replanted, as well as parts of the crazy paving being relayed. There is more on this on page 4.

A second major project has been the setting up of the Streatham Common Co-operative (SCCoop), which is now a separate entity from the Friends. Richard has been the main driver of this project, and SCCoop has led the way in delivering Lambeth Council's plans to change the way in which its parks are run. SCCoop took over the management of the Rookery in February of this year and improvements were immediately obvious.

The third major project driven by Richard is far from complete but well advanced in planning. This is the redevelopment of the playground and yard at the bottom of the Common. Read his update on this project on page 6.

Much else has changed under Richard's leadership. We now have a very successful fund-raising group, a new Nature Trail, a Park Watch scheme, etc. And without a doubt, Richard's proactive approach has put Streatham Common high on Lambeth's agenda. The Friends and the Common thank you, Richard.

Peter Newmark

Brewing in the Rookery?

The prospect of a microbrewery being set up in an unused barn in the Rookery took a large step forward when it received overwhelming support at the Friends Annual General Meeting in June. The biggest hurdle now is that of planning permission.

The barn (or, more accurately if less romantically, the shed) is located within the gated yard that one passes on the right when walking on the main path to the White House. It was used until recently for storage of equipment by Veolia, the company that is contracted by Lambeth to carry out much of the work in its green spaces. When the Streatham Common Cooperative (SCCoop) took over management of the Rookery six months ago, the barn became empty.

The proposal now is that it houses the Inkspot Microbrewery, which is looking for a new home and particularly one in Streatham. In part this is because the brewers would like to produce their existing St.Reatham beer in the district and in part it is because one of its founders, Bradley Ridge, was the owner of a restaurant in Streatham for many years.

Their plan is to start with one brew a week, which produces around 1650 litres of beer, and to scale up to three a week if the demand grows. Before installing the microbrewery itself, the power in the barn would need to be upgraded, the floor sealed, the drainage unblocked and a water supply provided, conceivably from a borehole. Those improvements apart, the building is essentially fit for purpose according to Bradley and his business partner, Tom Talbot.

At the AGM, the pair were subjected to questioning on a number of issues. First was smell. This, they say, is only

noticeable for an hour and a half during each of the 1-3 brews a week. Second was noise. There would be very little, if any, outside the barn, they assured the audience. Third was traffic to and from the microbrewery. The brewers reckon traffic would amount to no more than about three trucks a week. Note that the same route is already taken by litter collecting trucks, vehicles delivering to the Rookery or Streatham Common Community Garden, and by cars belonging to the Friends when taking equipment to and from their storage unit.

In addition, concern was expressed that once the barn was allowed to be used for one industrial purpose, there might be no constraint on what replaced the brewery should it fail or require larger premises.

With some degree of wishful thinking, Inkspot's owners suggested a number of synergies between the microbrewery and the Rookery. The most realistic of these is that the spent hops could be used as mulch, although this is not as straightforward as it might seem. In addition, waste water might be useable for irrigation and the steam generated in the brewing process might be used for heating greenhouses, should there be any.

SCCoop had already welcomed the microbrewery proposal before the AGM, in main part because it would generate rental income and perhaps a share in profits in addition. Lambeth Council has apparently made encouraging noises. But the idea could have been vetoed had those present at the AGM been largely against it. As it turned out when a vote was taken, the great majority of those present were unreservedly in favour. The fact that free Inkspot beer was on offer before the vote was taken was doubtless irrelevant.

If a lease can be negotiated and if planning permission is granted, brewing could yet begin this year.



Then and Now

Children's fashions have changed rather more than the White Garden in the past 100 years or so. The view on the postcard shows more white flowers in the past but the replanted garden should catch up in this respect in a year or two. The white benches have multiplied over time as a result of memorial donations. A higher fence now hides the building behind it and trees have come and gone. (Thanks to John Brown for the postcard)



White Garden Opens, HLF project ends

A ceremony to mark the opening of the replanted White Garden in the Rookery brought to a close the Rookery Centenary Project that the Friends of Streatham Common began in 2013 to mark 100 years since the Rookery was opened to the public.



Barbara Wright and Joyce Bellamy open the White Garden

Replanting the White Garden, which predates the famous one at Sissinghurst, was the foremost achievement of the project and one largely carried out by an enthusiastic team of volunteers. Their first task was to research the heritage of the garden so that it could be redesigned and replanted in a contemporary reflection of the original. Unfortunately, the one missing piece of evidence was the original planting plan. But much was learnt about plants that were popular in the early 20th century, when the original garden was planted, as well as plants that were associated with other white gardens and with influential garden designers of the time. Old postcards of the Rookery provided further evidence.

The researchers gave their suggestions of plants to designer Alison Alexander, who added some additional choices of her own and then put together a design that she describes as both decidedly old-fashioned but also providing year-round interest

while requiring minimum maintenance by having plenty of ground cover.

Removal of all but a selection of the existing plants, preparation of the ground and replanting in accordance with the design was all carried out by volunteers – about 50 in all – throughout 2014 and into early 2015.

The results speak for themselves: already the new White Garden looks splendid, although as Alison Alexander said at the opening ceremony its original glory will not be fully restored for a couple more years when the new plants are fully established.

The section of the old English Garden nearest to the water cascade was also replanted, according to a design created by Kate Daley. Again the work has been mainly carried out by volunteers but with the very welcome assistance of the Streatham Common Cooperative gardeners. Designs for other sections have been created but will only be brought to life if further funding can be secured.

Another major achievement of the Rookery Centenary Project, which aimed to restore the Rookery to its former glory, has been the relaying of the original crazy paving in a large area centred on the sundial. This too looks splendid.

The project also had educational aims, namely teaching people about the heritage of the Rookery. Local schools were involved in a major performance, volunteers led tours that focussed on the garden's horticultural heritage, heritage gardening workshops were held in the Streatham Common Community Garden and interpretation panels were installed in each of the five garden areas within the Rookery. The panels contain both historical information and descriptions of plants of special interest. They have created great interest. (So too did a Rookery Horticultural Leaflet which preceded the panels and the HLF grant.)

Finally, a number of signs have been installed around Streatham Common directing people to the Rookery.

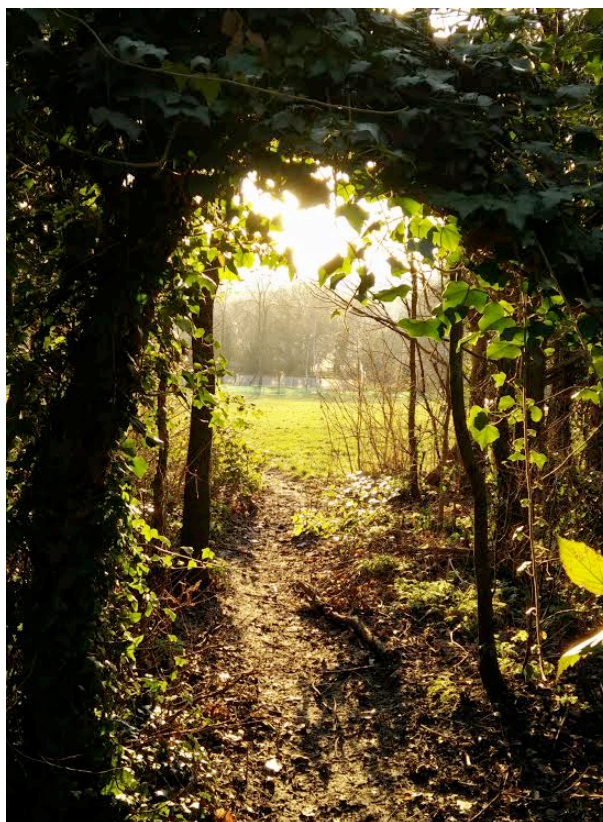


The Rookery Centenary Project was largely funded by £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund that was to be used both to restore parts of the Rookery to their former state and for educational purposes. A fund-raising group set up by the the Friends contributed a further £6,500 and Lambeth Council chipped in with £5,000. The project was initiated and overseen by the Rookery Centenary Steering Group chaired by Barbara Wright of the Friends and Charlotte Dove was the excellent Project Coordinator. Streatham Society, Streatham Common Community Garden and Lambeth Council partnered the Friends in the project and, among others, the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, Streatham Action, Cavendish Lodge Nursery School, the Joan and John Corfield Charitable Trust, the Friends of Immanuel and St Andrew's Primary School and Tesco PLC all provided support in various ways.

Summaries of the research that was conducted as part of the project will be included when there is a second edition of Streatham Society's excellent *Norward Grove & The Rookery, Streatham Common* by Brian Bloice and Daphne Marchant. And seven different postcards featuring views of the Rookery, some historical and some modern, have been produced to mark the end of the project.

Photo Competition Results

First prize for the best photograph of Streatham Common or the Rookery goes to [Alex Owens'](#) view of the Common.



The runner-up is [Marion Gower's](#) Rookery tree in blossom.



Playground Plans

Over the past year residents, the Friends of Streatham Common, SCCoop and others have campaigned to get long overdue investment into Streatham Common. When Lambeth's investment plans were first published, Streatham Common had no planned investment, but now we have a commitment for £1 million to redevelop the playground and lower yard area, which has been in steady decline for a number of years.

At a public meeting about investment on the Common that was held in November 2013, many requests were made but it was clear that there was a consensus for a better playground, with something to be done about the disused paddling pool, and for more facilities for older children and sports. This led to the creation of a scheme to redevelop the bottom yard and playground area.

The Friends commissioned the company LUC to draw up some draft plans, keeping within the existing footprint and integrating these with a plan drawn up a number of years ago to redevelop the adjacent yard area. The latter re-instates the lost changing rooms, provides a new community meeting room, and includes a café with a terrace overlooking the playground.

LUC was chosen as it has worked on local improvements to Brockwell Park, Dulwich Park and the Horniman Museum

as well as on major sites further afield.

LUC presented the draft proposal at a very well attended public meeting in March. The proposal is to put all the junior play equipment in one place, and mitigate the pollution from Streatham High Road with planting. A sand play is proposed as sand is a good play medium, although it would require daily raking. There would be a separate area for the middle years and also larger equipment for teenagers. In addition there would be table tennis tables, swings and a picnic area. Parents will be able to keep an eye on the younger children from the café. The perimeter fence will be retained, but some of this will be hedge rather than a fence.

The scheme would need to pay for its own repairs and upkeep. That's one reason why there would be the café, the rent from which should be able to fund this. It would have the added advantage of providing a staffed presence at the facilities. The changing rooms would encourage more sport to be played on the lower parts of the Common. A water-play area would have been popular but has been avoided as the costs of upkeep would have made funding problematic.

The draft designs received almost unanimous support at the meeting in March, although some design

changes were made as a result of comments.

Before going to wider consultation with the draft design, we felt it necessary to engage



Section of the new plan: the yard area would house changing rooms, a café, etc and the derelict paddling pool would become a sand play area.

a quantity surveyor to price the scheme. After some negotiation with Lambeth, we managed to get funding for this. Unfortunately, the total price came back at £1.4 million, including a lot of contingency and inflation adjustments. After discussions with the architects and Lambeth, the decision was taken to 'value engineer' the scheme. It should be possible to reduce the total by using different materials and less ground works and the like, while still delivering the overall scheme. Meanwhile the Friends have prepared the consultation documents that are ready to go both online and on paper.

So we now await the revised scheme and as soon as we have it we will start the consultation process, with the aim to get it completed by the end of the summer. If so, and if the scheme is approved, work can start to be planned for this winter. However, should things slip further, the build is likely to be delayed until after next summer, as we wouldn't want work going on during the peak usage of the playground over the summer months.

Richard Payne

Large Events in Retrospect

Kite Day, Day of Portugal and Garage Nation each attracted thousands of people to the Common on dates in June and July. The first was a free public event organised by the Friends of Streatham Common. The second was a ticketed event (£3 a ticket) for London's Portuguese community. And the last was a frankly commercial event, with top-priced tickets at about £50. So how did they go?

Kite Day was blessed with fine weather and a good wind. Several thousand people attended over the day to watch kite-flying displays and fly and/or buy their own kites. Throughout the day, volunteers stewarded the event and picked up litter.

Several thousand people also came to the **Day of Portugal**, which seemed well



A huge batman kite flown by an expert and one of the kites, flown by non-specialists, that inevitably ended up in a tree.

organised and trouble-free. There were some complaints about the sound level of the music that was being played and particularly the amplified sound of the MC's voice, especially from residents in the direct line of the speakers. Traffic, parking and crowds seemed well controlled and the site was left in a clean and undamaged state.

Garage Nation ran over two days. The first was a sell out, with the 8,000 tickets being snapped up. The second had less than half that number of ticket sales but numbers were boosted by giving away free tickets. The median age of those who bought tickets was 31 and over 60% were female. What follows are largely my personal observations on the first day of the event and the morning after, as I made myself scarce for much of the second. No doubt other views will be expressed and more comprehensive post-mortems will follow.

Security was tight with large numbers of security guards, eight of them with dogs, and 14 police. This seemed effective.

Noise levels were monitored at three designated sites, and others on demand, to ensure they were within the agreed levels. Nevertheless, living in the

immediate vicinity of the Common I found the sound intolerable in the garden and unpleasant in rooms facing the Common. A few comments from other residents indicate that everyone close to the Common found the noise intrusive, at least, but the noise levels rapidly dropped off a couple of streets away.

The council had issued a parking ban on nearby streets, except for residents with a permit, but failed to enforce it. There were no cones and virtually no traffic wardens. As a result, on Saturday, at least, there were angry scenes on the narrower parts of Streatham Common South, which became blocked. And cars took to parking on the grass verges on the upper part of Streatham Common North.

There were more people than usual on the Common on Saturday evening, enjoying the music, and therefore more litter than usual to be cleared. Garage Nation undertook clearance around the perimeter of the site, while Lambeth cleared the rest. The more obvious litter was largely cleared by midday, as was also true on Monday. Some of the litter was drug related and there have been complaints about drug taking with children around.

A small amount of damage was caused during the setting up of the site. Of more concern was the lack of stewarding while vehicles came on site, using and crossing footpaths being used by the public. Similarly for the first two days, while the fencing around the site was incomplete, members of the public could walk across the site in the path of moving vehicles.

I am writing this before take down of the site is complete so do not know if vehicles will be better controlled then or what residual damage might be found. I also don't know much about the behaviour of the exit crowds but gather that a certain number of problems did arise on the north side of the Common and on the streets leading to the stations.

As for the event itself, a brief visit on Saturday indicated, unsurprisingly, that the 8,000 revellers were enjoying themselves a good deal more than I was! If you think the litter was bad outside the arena, you should have seen it inside. Strangely, the noise was more acceptable inside than out.

Peter Newmark

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