



streathamcommon.org
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Inside this issue

2. Looking Ahead; Magic Moths
3. Great North Wood
4. Tale Of Two Music Festivals
5. Recent Events; Long(er) Grass
6. What's Up?; Dates For Your Diary
7. Kite Day 2017
8. The Friends Executive

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

Don't Miss This Year's Scruff's Dog Show

September 17th, opposite the Rookery Café starting at 12.00 noon.

Prizes for

- Cutest Puppy
- Prettiest Bitch
- Handsomest Dog
- Best Rescue
- Best Veteran
- Dog and Spoon Races
- Seven-Legged Races
- Fancy Dress



Also parade of *Pets as Therapy* dogs and numerous stalls.

Common Knowledge

From the Chair

When you sit down and admire the common you could be forgiven for thinking that everything around you is unchanging but nothing could be further from the truth. Many people are hard at work behind the scenes. Work on a new playground should start straight after the summer holidays. This is the culmination of a couple of years of planning and proposals. We are in discussion about installing an outdoor gym at the bottom of the common. Another project is placing up-lighters on a few of the trees at the bottom of the common with the Streatham BID kindly offering to do this for us. The micro-brewery should also finally be up and running by the end of the year and they're even looking into the possibility of drilling a small bore hole to take drinkable water from under the common!

Obviously it's wonderful when these plans come to fruition but we also have to be prepared when the best laid plans falter. We had been pursuing Heritage Lottery funding to repair the cascade in the Rookery but our application was rejected at the very last hurdle, which was very sad for everyone involved. Fortunately our colleagues in SCCoop are already looking into alternative solutions and we'll try and assist them as much as we can. The Rookery itself has been looking quite spectacular with its new planting scheme and it received a Green Flag award this year. Let's all keep our fingers crossed and hope the gardeners achieve a London in Bloom award later on this year.

The common is a lovely place to come and walk or just relax but it's the efforts of all the people that work behind the scenes that make it such a wonderful place to be. So please join me in thanking them all!

Looking Ahead

The Friends and Lambeth's Parks Development group are in the process of discussing how the Common can be improved and where the funding might come from. Together we have drawn up a wish list and are now in the process of setting priorities. Not surprisingly, funds are limited. At most, there will be £6000 from the events held on the Common this year. The Friends currently has a surplus of a few thousand pounds, some of which we will be putting towards improvements. And there are possibilities of extra money coming from the funds that anyone developing property in Lambeth has to contribute for community use. The main items on the list under discussion are as follows. Let us know what you think.

- Installation of an outdoor gym.
- Repair of eroded woodland path near to the entrance to Norwood Grove.
- Reduction of brambles and small trees around woodland edges.
- New vehicle access bollards opposite Lewis's builders yard.
- Post and rail replacement along footpath parallel with A23.
- Planting of new trees around the Common's edges to anticipate eventual loss of existing trees.
- Refurbishment of existing bins and installation of additional high-capacity bins.
- Provision of signs to note the Local Nature Reserve on the Common.
- Creation of a fenced-off seasonal pond.

Magic Moths

If I asked you what word you would associate with "moth", the chances are you would say "clothes" or "spray". Or perhaps your 'word' would be "those annoying things that flutter around my reading light on summer evenings". I beg to differ.

A few years ago I became intrigued by moths and decided to find out what

Clockwise: Lime Hawkmoth, Leopard Moth, Jersey Tiger Moth. All found locally.



species are around in my garden, right by the Common. Although there are a few species that fly during the day, the great majority of them fly only at night. Rather than catch those fluttering around my reading light, I bought a simple moth trap – essentially a light attached to the top of a box into which the moths fall and are trapped. Placed in the bottom of the box are some cardboard egg trays in which the moths hide out come dawn. After breakfast – or even before, if the excitement is too much! – I open the trap, see what is in it, and capture any interesting moth in a plastic container so that I can identify and photograph it before releasing it.

When I say "any interesting moth", I mean any that are of a largish size and that I can't identify immediately. Over 2500 species of moths have been recorded in Britain, compared with 58 species of butterflies, but only about 800 are large or largish. As a beginner, I stick to these larger species, which are easier to identify than the many tiny ones. Local expert, Mark Trasentser (shown on the opposite page inspecting his catch), who runs an annual public moth event for the Friends in the Streatham Common Community Garden – you just missed this year's – can identify most of the micro-moths too.

Like any butterfly, the life cycle of a moth is from egg to caterpillar/larva and then to pupa/chrysalis and finally to the adult. The adult's purpose in life is to find a mate and start the process again. Most moths live for only days or weeks and in some cases the life cycle can be repeated two or three times in a season. Some species fly early in the season, others later. For example, of those shown, Lime Hawkmoths can be seen from May to early July, Leopard Moths from late June to early August, and Jersey Tiger Moths from mid July to early September.

Of course, the moths shown here are among the most attractive and easy to identify. There are plenty of species that are much duller looking and sometimes so similar to other species that identification is difficult. In some cases, the only way to tell one species from another is by examining their genitalia. I draw a line at such invasion of a moth's privacy!

I have already said I do not try and identify the micro-moths. They are too small, too numerous and, worst of all, most only have Latin names that are hard to remember. The macro-moths all have common as well as Latin names. The common names may reflect some colouring on the moth (Specked Yellow, Light Emerald, Green Silver Lines) or some prominent marking on it (Figure of Eighty, Hebrew Character, Heart and Dart). Other names refer to the plant favoured by the moth, both for its nectar and as a target for egg laying



(Privet Hawk, Oak Eggar, Willow Beauty). Yet other names are, to me, enigmatic (Uncertain, Mother Shipton, Vapourer).

Most moths feed solely on nectar – they are the night shift that take over from butterflies in this respect and play an equally important role in pollination of flowers. It is their larvae/caterpillars that can be the problem - for us. Clothes moths don't eat your woollens – in fact they don't eat at all – it is their caterpillars. Similarly it is the caterpillars of the Oak Processionary Moth, which is bound to turn up on Streatham Common within the next few years, that strip leaves of oak trees and whose thousands of tiny hairs can cause itching skin rashes.

So keep on admiring butterflies by all means, but get to appreciate their often overlooked relatives, too.

Peter Newmark

Great North Wood

Streatham Common is to benefit from a major new project run by the London Wildlife Trust. The Great North Wood project, which is to receive nearly £700,000 over the next four years from the Heritage Lottery Fund as well as a number of smaller contributions, aims to revive and reimagine a wood that once covered a large swathe of land lying south-west of London, of which only fragments remain. Both educational activities and woodland management will be carried out on at least ten sites, of which Streatham Common is the most westerly.

Quite what the project will bring to Streatham Common has yet to be decided but it will certainly include some work in our woodlands. The main area of woodland is suffering from soil erosion. This and the thick canopy of the trees means that there is very little plant life under the trees and virtually no young trees that will be able to take over as older ones succumb to disease and age. Among the measures that might be taken to

secure the future of the woodland could be reducing the removal of top soil by rain run-off, selective removal of less healthy trees to allow more light in and measures to channel walkers into certain areas so that other areas suffer less from compaction.

London Wildlife Trust has selected four flagship species as indicators of the state of the woodlands included in the project. These are oak and hornbeam trees, the great spotted woodpecker and the purple hairstreak butterfly. The Great North Wood project will enable volunteers to be trained to survey and monitor these species on Streatham Common.

The project will also enable volunteers to be trained in woodland skills and will run a variety of other educational activities focusing both on the history of the Great North Wood and the need to look after its remnants.

Streatham Common sat on the western edge of the original Great North Wood, which once covered the high ground between Deptford in the north and Selhurst in the south. In the middle Ages the wood

A start to monitoring the indicator species for the Great North Wood project was made in mid July when an expert from Butterfly Conservation came along and taught representatives from the Friends and London Wildlife Trust how best to survey purple hairstreak butterflies. These are oak tree specialists and spend their time flitting around the tops of the trees feeding on the honeydew secreted by aphids, finding a mate and laying their eggs. They are only around during July and August and are most active on still, warm evenings. As that particular



evening was very windy, only a couple of sightings were made but more have been seen subsequently.

was an important source of timber, especially for ship building, firewood, charcoal and tannin – for leather making industries. But the Industrial Revolution, land enclosures and suburban development subsequently took their toll and few fragments of the original wood remain. The current woods on Streatham Common are not one such fragment as there are few, if any, ancient trees in them. Nonetheless, the Great North Wood would have been close by – in the 16th century Norwood Grove was a part of an extensive wooded common and Biggin Wood was being coppiced – and our woodlands are well suited to fulfil the project's aims of reimagining the original wood, boosting south London's natural heritage and, as Project Officer Sam Bentley-Toon says, “encouraging Londoners to value, enjoy and care for their local wildlife hotspots”.

A Tale Of Two Music Festivals

A new music event, Rookfest, took place in the Rookery on July 1st and was followed three weeks later by the third annual Garage Nation Festival on the Common. The two could hardly have been more different.

Rookfest was organised by the Streatham Common Cooperative (SCCoop), in association with local businesses Turnstyle Records and Deli Lama, as a fundraiser for SCCoop's work in the Rookery and within the Common's nature reserve area. The festival ran from 11.00am to 10.00pm and was run by volunteers. The bands all had local connections and performed for free. Beer was provided by Inkspot, who will soon have their microbrewery up and running in the Rookery yard, and Pimms by the Friends of Streatham Common. The music was an eclectic mix, ranging from soul to sea shanties. Close to the maximum allowable number of 500 people attended the event, including families with children early on in the day. Only one complaint about excessive noise was made. SCCoop

raised around £4000 from the day. There was no public access to part of the Rookery for a day.

Compare this with Garage Nation, a two-day commercial event that raises substantial income for Lambeth Council – and no doubt a healthy profit for the organisers – and about £5000 specifically for the Common (the Friends have some influence on how this is spent). The musicians are presumably all paid – some are big names in their own field – and come from all over London and elsewhere in the UK. The festival caters to a particular audience – mostly 25-35 year olds, mostly female – and offers a limited spectrum of music, largely Garage, Old Skool, Drum & Bass and Grime. It was a sell out, with 7500 tickets sold for each day. In all likelihood there will have been plenty of complaints about the noise, plus some about anti-social behaviour. There has been some damage to the Common, but less than expected given the rain while the festival was on; the organisers have to pay for repairs, which Lambeth carries out (inadequately after last year's events). A substantial area of the lower Common was shut off from the public for over a week and some roads around the Common were supposedly accessible only to residents over the weekend but in fact the control was lax and parking became a problem.

A tale of two musical festivals: which comes out best? Those at Garage Nation seemed to be having a great time. Locals would doubtless vote for Rookfest!

Recent Events

The 22 species found on the **Spring Bird Walk** on April 8th, included two migrants who had very recently arrived to spend the summer breeding on the Common. Later in the month, the **Bat Walk** produced more sightings (or sonar detections) than usual to an appreciative crowd. Two days later, on the 23rd, a large crowd turned up for a new event, **Walk With Insects** although it was too cool for much to be flying.

May events began with the annual **Bird Box Survey** on the 13th, which revealed 13 boxes occupied by blue tits or great tits. On the following day, **Kite Day** was one of the best ever – great wind and a huge crowd. See page 7 for photographs.

The first **Plant Walk** for some years attracted over 30 people on June 2nd. They were shown 27 species of plants and 13 of grasses, sedges or rushes. **Band in the Rookery**, two days later, was the usual very relaxed enjoyable occasion, enjoyed by many on the Rookery lawns. On a summer **Tree Walk** on June 16th around 30 people were educated on the types of trees on the Common and there was discussion on the effects of climate change as well as the need to plan for replacements for ageing trees.

July 9th was the date for this year's Shakespeare performance by the Festival Players on the Rookery lawn. Some 200 people watched the all male cast perform **The Merry Wives of Windsor**. A moth trap set overnight in the Streatham Common Community Garden was opened up to the public on July 22nd so they could see **Moths In Close Up**. Despite heavy rainfall overnight there were plenty of moths inside, including a couple of unusual species for the area.

Long(er) Grass

The Friends, SCCoop and Lambeth Parks have agreed on an experimental new mowing regime, in which the areas around three of the edges of the lower Common are only mown at the end of the growing season rather than being cut every two weeks or so. The results are evident – the various grasses can show their different shapes, heights and colours; the clover and other low lying flowers last longer; and plants which would otherwise never have had the chance to flower now can. As a result, there are bees, butterflies and no doubt many other insects and possibly small mammals in areas that were previously bereft of such wildlife.

So Lambeth has to mow less and wildlife and plants can flourish. Are there any downsides? It has been noted that litter is harder to spot and clear when it is trapped in the long grass than when it is on mown areas. Also some of the plants now appearing for the first time could become invasive – in particular ragwort and thistles. And, of course, there is a reduction in space for activities that require short cut grass, for example football and cricket, although the areas involved are either too steep or too close to roads to have been used much for sports. Let us know what you think of the change.

What's Up?

Rookery – the gardens have again been awarded a Green Flag, following an inspection by the manager of the royal parks – Regent's Park and Hyde Park. The result of judging for a London in Bloom award will be known in September.

Inkspot Microbrewery – the brewing equipment is in the process of being manufactured in China, with installation expected in September and brewing well before the end of the year.

Back Copies – all issues of Common Knowledge from April 2009 to the present are now available to browse or print from our website, streathamcommon.org

Drinking Holes – It's all change for drinking establishments at the foot of Streatham Common. Following the opening of *The Mere Scribbler* pub on one side, the *Greyhound* Pub has changed



names to become *The Rabbit Hole*, with giant rabbits and roses adorning the outside and *Alice in Wonderland*

themed murals inside and in the garden.

Playground – work on the brand new playground is due to start in September.

Streatham Common South – speed humps and 'raised tables' will be installed on Streatham Common South in September, preventing the use of the road as a virtual racing track by some drivers.

Dates For Your Diary

Friends and Rookery Events

August 10th-14th. ***Alice in Wonderland*** in the Rookery. Timings and tickets from www.sixteenfeet.co.uk

August 13th. **Family Tennis Day** on the tennis court from 11.00am to 3.00pm. Free one hour sessions must be booked via the Open Days section of clubspark.lta.org.uk

August 20th. **The Rocks On Which We Stand**, a walk led by Lambeth's Iain Boulton exploring the geology of Streatham Common. Meet by the Rookery Café at 11.00am.

September 5th. ***Midsummer Night's Dream*** in the Rookery performed by the 'boy' Handlebards. Starts at 7.30pm. Tickets at handlebards.com

September 6th. ***As You Like It*** in the Rookery performed by the 'girl' Handlebards. Starts at 7.30pm. Tickets at handlebards.com

September 8th. **Bat Walk**. Meet by the Rookery café at 7.45. Booking essential, email lboulton@lambeth.gov.uk

September 17th. **Scruffs Dog Show**. Our 20th annual fun dog show starts at 12.50pm opposite the Rookery Café.

October 8th. **Doggy Splash Day**. From 11.00am to 4.30pm in the paddling pool (and raising money for it).

Kite Day 2017



At the Friends of Streatham Common's Annual General Meeting, the following were elected to the Executive Committee

Chair - Mike Robinson

Vice Chair - Camilla Ray

Secretary - Tom Frankfort

Treasurer - David Malley

Events - Amy Chalkley

Promotion - Lizzie O'Grady

Fundraising - Tracey Williamson

Membership Secretary - Louise Gu

Newsletter Editor - Peter Newmark

Park Watch - Ambika Bowles

Volunteer Coordinator - Heidi Nicholson

Members - Joyce Bellamy, Andrew Simpson (SCCG), Dom Leary (SCCoop), Richard Payne, John Rhodes, Shea Richardson (Streatham Society).

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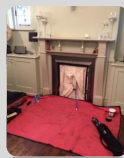


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