



Common Knowledge



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Celebrating the Rookery's Centenary

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Photo of the Rookery Carpet Bedding installed by Lambeth Council taken by Tessa Newmark

HLF Success!

On July 23rd, 2013 the Rookery on Streatham Common celebrated 100 years since it opened as a public garden. Thanks to the efforts of many people and organisations, the Rookery was looking much better on that day than it has for many years, having inevitably suffered from reductions in budgets in recent times. As part of the plans for the Rookery's centenary, an application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to restore the Rookery to its past glory, to give local residents new reasons to involve themselves with the Rookery and to provide opportunities to learn about its history and horticultural heritage. On June 6th we heard that the bid was successful.

The bid to the HLF was prepared by local volunteers, mainly from the Friends of Streatham Common, in particular Sophie Hussey, working with the Streatham Common Community Garden and officers from Lambeth Council's Parks and Green Spaces department. It was submitted under the name of Lambeth Council.

The success of the bid has resulted in £50,000 being awarded from the HLF. This is supplemented by £8500 that has been raised by a fund-raising group set up by the Friends of Streatham Common and led by Tracey Williamson, and a further £5000 from Lambeth Council.

The bid was primarily aimed at addressing problems with the physical heritage of the Rookery. There has been a gradual decline in the standards of its appearance, hastened in recent years by inevitable budgetary cuts to Lambeth Council Park's department. An intensively planted garden such as the Rookery requires a great deal of upkeep for it to live up to its Grade II listing; in the 1970s there were seven dedicated gardeners, while now three contractors cover the whole of Streatham Common and the Rookery, covering both gardening and litter picking.

The historic White Garden and Old English Garden in particular have suffered. The White Garden lacks a coherent planting design and has had extensive bare areas, while the Old English Garden has in parts been choked with weeds and also badly needs a new planting design.

Time has also taken its toll. Most of the paths in the gardens are made up of crazy-paving slabs. It is inevitable that some areas have become worn, broken and unsafe, and the rate of wear has accelerated due to some recent severe winters with long periods of cold and ice.

While Lambeth Council's Parks and Green Spaces department has deployed all its available budget and efforts towards the restoration of the Rookery for its centenary, the works described below are beyond their budgets. That is why the success of the HLF bid will make all the difference.

The Friends of Streatham Common will take the lead on the projects funded by the bid and will appoint a Garden Projects Co-ordinator to ensure their completion. In addition, a Centenary Gardening Group of volunteers will be set up with the help of the new co-ordinator. The projects are planned to finish in June 2015 but the gardening volunteers will, we hope, become a permanent group.

The HLF funds will be used as follows:

Improving the visitor experience

The physical structure of the garden will be in better condition once the crazy paving is relaid, making the Rookery a more attractive and safer place to visit. Two new large weather-proof boards will be made up and installed at the entrances to the Rookery to provide information about history and horticulture. The boards will include a map indicating a wheelchair-accessible route around the site. Interpretation signs will be installed for



significant plants. Directional signage will be installed from public transport.

White Garden project

After researching Edwardian garden design and white gardens, the Centenary Gardening Group will work on creating a new planting plan for the Rookery's White Garden. It will combine the best of the old with a sustainable future. Feedback and



guidance will be given by qualified garden designers to help develop the plan to a high standard. Finally Lambeth's Parks department and the Centenary Gardening Group will install the new plan.

Old English Garden project

A planting plan for this garden was commissioned from well-known garden designer and specialist in heritage gardening Stephen Crisp in 1988 but the current planting does not reflect this plan. The Centenary Gardening Group will return to this plan, review it in light of current circumstances regarding budgets

and climate, and commission an up-to-date planting plan. Lambeth's Parks department will work with the Centenary Gardening Group to purchase and install the plants.

Learning opportunities

An essential component of the HLF bid was that it should create opportunities to learn heritage skills. This will be achieved in part by researching the planting plans already mentioned. Participants in the research will learn much about fashions and techniques of garden design circa 1913. In addition, Streatham Common Community Garden's education programme will provide opportunities to learn skills used in Victorian kitchen gardens to grow food.

Richard Payne and Sophie Hussey

Centenary Gardening Group

Over the past year, interest has grown in volunteering in the Rookery. The idea is for volunteers to support the gardeners and energize their work, bringing about closer contact between them. The centenary year has seen five volunteers events, three involving gardening and two involving helping out with horticultural tours. Volunteers were able to learn at some of these events from gardening experts from Capel Manor College and from Matthew Wilson, a specialist gardening expert and Gardeners' Question Time panelist.

Now we are hoping to set up a continued programme of volunteer work with sessions both in the week and at the weekend. These are intended to support the ongoing management of the Rookery and the HLF-funded projects listed above.

If you are interested in joining in, please contact Barbara Wright via the Friends email and/or come to the meeting about this project - see page 7 for details.



Unveiling of the Centenary Commemorative Plaque in the Rookery on July 23rd, exactly 100 years after it was opened to the public. The plaque, provided by Streatham Society and the Friends of Streatham Common, was unveiled by Mark Bennett, Mayor of Lambeth (in the straw hat) and Matthew Wilson, from Gardeners' Question Time (in the blue jeans), photographed with Councillor Sally Prentis. Middle - Barbara Wright and Peter Newmark lead guests through the White Garden. Bottom - Andrew Simpson (in the white suit) makes a point in the Streatham Common Community Garden after the opening of the fruit garden. *Photos by Marion Gower.*



'Playing the Rookery' on July 13th. During the afternoon, local schools performed pieces created in workshops by Hannah Grayson and Vanessa Howells of *Music Off Canvas*, visitors left their memories of the Rookery and volunteers led tours of the Rookery Gardens and the Streatham Common Community Garden. *Photos by Roxanne Grant.*

Vandalism

An almost unbelievable act of vandalism took place on the Common in mid June. The builders of a new house just beyond the Common's eastern boundary (parallel



to Ryecroft Road) apparently needed to lay some kind of drains. This they did after first bulldozing a strip of the Common's woodland, destroying all the trees and undergrowth. The builders have admitted to their act

of destruction and the matter is now in the hands of the Council, which will soon be writing to the builders to ascertain what drains were laid and to ask them to pay the costs of full reinstatement of the lost woodland. The Friends believe that the builders should pay an additional sum by way of compensation and that there could be a case for charging them with criminal damage ♦

Green Flag Success!

More good news has arrived at the Rookery in 2013 adding to the many successes taking place around its centenary year. It was announced on July 29th that it has been given a Green Flag Award, the national standard for quality public parks and open spaces, for the very first time. This means that the Rookery is now one of 1,447 parks and green spaces across the UK that have earned the right to fly a prestigious Green Flag in 2013, and is one of eleven sites in Lambeth that are now at Green Flag Award standard.

Securing a Green Flag Award for the Rookery is made even more enjoyable in that it comes in the 100th year that this attractive garden has been open to the public, and recognises the incredible effort of the local community, represented by the

Friends of Streatham Common, to protect, promote and improve it, culminating in the unveiling of a commemorative plaque on July 23rd, exactly 100 years after it was first opened to the public.

Securing a Green Flag is no easy matter; although any green space open to the public is eligible to enter for an award, all applications are judged against eight criteria which are assessed by external judges who examine each site to ensure it is up to the standard to fly a coveted Green Flag. All sites applying for a Green Flag Award must have a management plan which is used to maintain standards and ensure it improves year on year. Judges must be satisfied that actions in this plan are relevant, realistic and achievable, and what is promised is delivered on the ground. To make it even harder, awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status.

It's a tough order to win a Green Flag Award, so the fact the Rookery is judged to have met the standard, and has the potential to continue to retain it, is public acknowledgement of the efforts of council and community to reach this achievement and keep the Rookery there for many years to come.

*Iain Boulton, Parks Project Officer,
Lambeth Council*

WANTED

A volunteer **Webmaster** for the Friends new website. You will be taught how to edit the website and add new content - news, events, photographs etc. You'll need no more than a few minutes a week for updating the site.

**A Rookery Centenary Gardens
Project Coordinator**, 42-49 hours per month at £20 per hour for 18 months.

If you are interested in either position, please email us by September 4th:
friendsofstreathamcommon@gmail.com

Thanks

The improvements to the Rookery this year and the events that were held to celebrate it would not have taken place had it not been for the Rookery Centenary Steering Group, chaired by Barbara Wright and comprising Tony Pizzoferro from Lambeth Horticultural Society, Simon Vyle from Capel Manor College, Stephen Blann and Andrew Simpson from the Streatham Common Community Garden, Alastair Johnstone, Iain Boulton, Clarence Riley and Angela Li from Lambeth's Parks and Green Spaces, Brian Bloice from Streatham Society, Sophie Hussey from Friends of Streatham Common and Alison Card, garden designer.

We would also like to thank the following donors without whom we would not be able to fulfil our ambitions of celebrating the Rookery's centenary and restoring it to its former glory:

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Tesco plc
- London Projects Ltd
- Cavendish Lodge Nursery School
- Bowles & Wyer
- Streatham Action
- Joan and John Corfield Charitable Trust
- Friends of Immanuel and St Andrew's Primary School

And many thanks, too, for the tireless efforts of the members of the three Rookery Centenary Volunteer groups:

Community Fundraising Group: Tracey Williamson (Chair), Hayley Allen, Becky Barnham, Chrissie Dillon, Tracey Germain, Fatima Nollen-Reardon, Ide O'Shea.

Press & Publicity: Russ Foster, Jo Gaukrodger, Rebecca Pearce.

Learning and Events: Rita Courtney and Jane Parke.

Dates for Your Diary

(more details on our website and on posters).

September 1st, **Fun Dog Show**, starting at 1.00pm opposite the café.

September 13th, **Bat Walk**, meet at 7.15pm by the café.

October 9th, public meeting on **Volunteering for the Centenary Gardening Group**, 8.00-9.00pm, Sainsbury's Café (to be confirmed).

October 13th, **The Big Draw** for children, in the playground from 1.00 to 3.00pm.

November 2nd, **Bird Walk**, meet 9.30am by the café.

November 13th, public meeting on **Improving Youth Facilities on the Common**, time and place to be announced.

From the Chair

It's been a great few months since our last issue. As you may well already have read elsewhere in this one, there is great news for the Rookery from the successful Heritage Lottery Bid and the Green Flag Award. Also the centenary celebrations were a huge success. All this has only been possible by the hard work of many volunteers, supported by our members. Thank you to you all.

As you may already be aware, Lambeth is now consulting on their Cooperative Parks Programme. You can find out more on the Lambeth website, www.lambeth.gov.uk/cooperativeparks, and you can attend a public meeting, one of which is from 2.00 to 4.00pm on September 4th at English Martyrs Church, 2 Mitcham Lane.

As part of this process, the Friends are proposing setting up a local cooperative to manage Streatham Common. You can read more and support the idea at www.sccoop.org.uk.

Looking forward, we're going to be holding a couple of public meetings later this year, one on setting up a Centenary Gardening Group for the Rookery and another on how we can improve youth facilities on the common - it's about time we did something about the derelict paddling pool, changing rooms and under-invested playground!

Thanks once again for all your help and support in making all our events and other activities possible. We always welcome new volunteers, so let us know if you want to help.

Richard Payne

New in the Rookery

Two centenary presents to the Rookery are a sundial and a birdbath (or planter). The sundial, made of Welsh slate but with a brass gnomon, was presented by the Friends of Streatham Common and replaces a brass sundial that was stolen 18 months ago, presumably for its slight value as scrap metal.



The birdbath was given by St Leonard's Church, whose vicar was looking for a new home for what had wrongly been assumed to be a baptismal font. In fact it had been a garden ornament in a house called The Shrubby, which was built by the then Rector of Streatham in 1768/9. When the house was demolished in 1933, the birdbath ended up the church's crypt. Through the mediation of John Brown, the



church's archivist, it is now on permanent loan to the White Garden, where the birds (flowers) will no doubt appreciate that they are using one of the oldest surviving artefacts in Streatham.

Advertisements

(to advertise, please contact the editor)

SEA Plumbing

We are a local company that can provide a reliable plumbing service from a new tap washer to a complete bathroom refit. If you would like any advice or a free estimate then please call us on 07973 430295 or email seaplumbing1@aol.com

Alexander Technique

You can improve your posture, mobility and reduce pain. Why not find out more with a £10 introductory workshop or £26 individual session (usually £30)? Find out more at www.alexandersouth.co.uk

Local daytime, evening and Saturday sessions available; call Geraldine Gleeson on 0208 679 6131 or 07568157000, or email info@alexandersouth.co.uk

Vale Veterinary Clinic

David Salisbury Jones has been looking after Streatham's pets for the last 25 years at his clinic at 130 Streatham Vale.

To discuss your pet's needs or book an appointment call 0208 679 6969. You can take a virtual tour of the surgery or download information sheets at <http://www.valevets.com/>. Or check our "Vale Veterinary Clinic" Facebook page.