



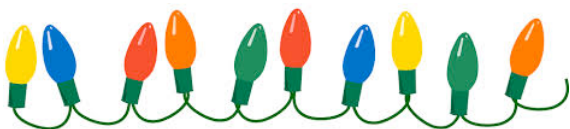
Common Knowledge

December 2015, Issue 56

Inside this issue

2. Café to Change Hands; Woodland Work
3. VC Stones; Wish List 2015/2016
4. Budget Cut Consequences; Coming Our Way?
5. Charity Status For FoSC
6. Large Events 2016; Cedar Tree
7. Dog Show 2015
8. Renewal Time

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



PLEASE JOIN US

Thursday December 3rd

Pub Quiz in aid of the Friends, at The Railway on Greyhound Lane. Starting at 7.30pm. Tickets £6 in advance from rookery100events@hotmail.co.uk

Wednesday December 9th

Carols and Friends Christmas Party.

Mulled wine and mince pies from 7.00pm, carol singing at 7.30pm, both by the Christmas tree at the bottom of the Common. Party from 8.00pm in The Bull. Members only but membership available on the night.



From the Chair

Firstly, I would like to quickly introduce myself. My name is Mike Robinson and I have recently taken over from Richard Payne as the new chair of the Friends. I have lived in Streatham for 30 years and I have watched the area evolve throughout this time. At present the Common itself is going through a period of considerable change. The funding for parks has been severely cut yet the running costs haven't altered at all. This has made it necessary to consider other ways of funding the Common.

The recent Garage Nation event will pay to fix the flooding paths at the bottom of the Common and perhaps also go towards new planting in the Rookery. The Streatham Common Cooperative has made great strides towards improving the Rookery while doing so at lesser cost. I'd like to congratulate the head gardener, Dom, who has been doing a fantastic job. The Friends are looking to become a charity for reasons that you can read about in this issue. At last year's AGM we supported Inkspot's proposal to set up a small microbrewery in the Rookery's disused barn. They understand the limitations of running a small business there and their ideas seemed very positive. Their beer was rather nice too! I mention all this to simply illustrate all the changes that are happening behind the scenes.

I've been truly impressed by everyone I've met in the Friends. They dedicate their time (for free) to make the Common a better place for everyone. It's also been a great learning experience for me. At the end of the day though, I've simply enjoyed being a part of the whole process whether it was helping set up the dog show, being entertained at the birds of prey event or just feeling a part of the wider community while laying a wreath at the war memorial service.

I hope to see you all at one of our events or simply out and about enjoying the Common.

Café to Change Hands

The café by the Rookery should be in new hands by early January. Although the current leaseholders were given the first option on another lease, Lambeth's terms were not acceptable to them. The main issues seem to have been the increased rental (from £18,000 to £27,000 a year) and care of the public toilets outside the café, responsibility for which will shift from Lambeth to the café.

At a public meeting organised by the Friends on 12 November, strong support was voiced that the new leaseholders should be experienced in running cafés, should aim for high quality rather than cheap price, should work with the community and should be committed to a complete refurbishment of the premises. This gave guidance, at least, to SCCoop's manager, Dom Leary, who was on the selection board when a shortlist of four applicants was selected for interview on November 20th. This newsletter went to press before there was news of who the new leaseholder would be.

The current leaseholder will keep the café open at least until the end of the year and perhaps until the new leaseholder takes over, hopefully early in January. At that stage we will be bidding a fond farewell to Graziella and her family who have been running the café for many years. They rebranded the café as the San Remo a few years back. It would nice if it became the Rookery Café again in January.

Woodland Work

You may have noticed a group of volunteers from the London Wildlife Trust, along with some from the Friends, hard at work in the Common's main woodland. This is part of the biodiversity project, funded by Network Rail, that has seen many new tree whips planted on the Common over the past two years

The work in the woodland has a number of aims. One is to remove dead elm trees

and thin out the yews in an area that is densely wooded and dark, in the hope that this will allow an understory to flourish. The trees that have been removed have been used to create a dead hedge around the area.

Another is to create a path with a clear sightline through the same area of wood to make it more walker friendly. Both of these should have the added benefit of making the area less attractive to the men who use it for antisocial behaviour. A further aim of the project is to try and reverse, or at least, contain, the spread of brambles into the centre of the wood. Work on this has not yet begun.

London Wildlife Trust has scheduled further work days on three Mondays – 7th December, 18th January and 1st February. Do please come along for some or all of the day and help out. The group meet near the cafe at 10.30am and finish at about 3.30pm. Tools, gloves and training are provided but not lunch. The aptly named work leader, Daniel Greenwood, would prefer to know in advance if you are coming so that he can arrange insurance. Contact him on 020 7252 9186 or by emailing dgreenwood@wildlondon.org.uk



To all Friends of
Streatham Common
and their families.

VC Stones

This is one of two plaques commemorating local Victoria Cross holders from World War I that were laid in the Streatham Memorial Garden on 29th September, in one case 100 years to the day after the deed for which the VC was given. 2nd Lt Frederick Johnson was born close to Streatham Green in 1880 and was awarded his VC for outstanding bravery



during an attack on a German position on 25th September 1915. The other plaque is for 2nd Lt Arthur Fleming-Sandes who was

born in Northstead Road, just outside the Streatham Parish, in 1884. His VC was given for an heroic deed against German forces in France on September 29th 1915.

Wish List 2015/2016

This time last year we published a list of things we hoped would happen during 2015. Unfortunately most of them have not come about, although some progress has been made. Here is a progress report. It includes an update on two additions made to the list during the past year, namely flooding footpaths and the paddling pool.

Playground. Goal: a new fit-for-purpose playground would replace the existing one. Status: Lambeth have almost certainly agreed to a £1million capital investment in the playground and the surrounding buildings/area. But when plans were drawn up and costed they exceeded the budget. So they need to be cut back, Lambeth needs to fully commit and say when the funds would be available, and public consultation on the proposal still needs to be carried out.

Rookery cascade. Goal: to have it running again and without problems. Status: a full investigation has revealed that a few major and many minor repairs are needed. The total cost would be around £45,000. Even to repair the major leaks would cost £13,000. Next year's budget provided to the Streatham Common Cooperative (SCCoop) by Lambeth for the Rookery could not begin to cover these costs. SCCoop will be investigating whether an external source of funding can be found.

Main woodland and paths into it. Goal: straighten and open out two paths and stop encroachment by brambles. Status: work on one path has been completed and brambles are scheduled to be tackled early in 2016 by London Wildlife Trust (see p2).

Woodland between Streatham Common North and South. Goal: to skim the treetops to restore views and to carry out work to stop encroachment on to acid grassland. Status: Much of the latter has been completed by volunteer groups but the former has not been tackled and next year's budget is unlikely to allow it to be.

Benches. Goal: replace the two most damaged benches on the Common. Status: should be completed this year.

Flooding footpaths. Goal: reengineer a section of the footpath near the playground and a section near Sainsbury's so that they do not become impassable during wet periods. This will be funded by money from the Garage Nation event, has been commissioned and will be carried out either this year or early next year.

Paddling pool. Goal: to keep it open in face of Lambeth's plan to close it for budgetary reasons. Status: the Friends and SCCoop will seek a solution that is likely to involve limited opening, some volunteer support and possibly an entrance charge.

Budget Cut Consequences

Because Lambeth Council will be cutting the budget for its parks by £2.4 million a year from 2016, it plans not be paying for the paddling pool or the toilets on Streatham Common in future. These are among the outcomes proposed in a council document entitled *Culture 2020* and likely to be implemented. To avoid closure of the toilets by the café, the new leaseholders will be required to keep them going (see p1) and if and when the redevelopment of the playground takes place, the café/kiosk that forms part of it will keep the toilets there going. As for the paddling pool, see p3.

Further consequences of the budget cuts are that there is no money to get the cascade in the Rookery going again (see p3) and that some of the flower beds in the Rookery will be planted with herbs and perennials rather than showy annuals. There may also be changes to the grass cutting regime on the Common.

Coming Our Way?

The oaks on the Common and the box trees and hedges in the Rookery (and our gardens) are under threat from the caterpillars of non-native moths that have either already reached here or are on the way.

The threat to oak trees comes from Oak Processionary Moth caterpillars, so called because of their habit of moving in nose-to-tail processions, sometimes several rows abreast in late spring and early summer, on or beneath oak trees. In large numbers the caterpillars can strip all the leaves off an oak tree. What's more, the caterpillars are also a hazard for people as their tiny hairs can be blown around in the wind and can cause itchy skin and irritations of the throat and eyes. Pet animals can be affected too.

The moth is a native of southern Europe but has gradually been moving northwards and was accidentally introduced to

A very successful fungal walk on the Common was lead by Eleanor Dare on October 17th. She



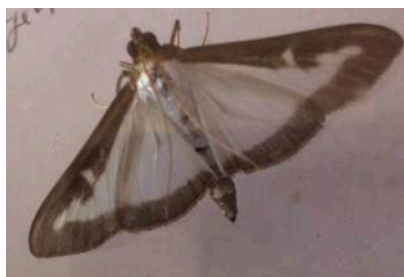
fascinated about 30 people with her knowledge and by showing them a variety of species,

including the bracket fungus that she is drawing attention to in the photograph and a 'fairy ring' of fly agarics, the poisonous red-with-white-spots toadstools of children's story books.

England in 2005 probably by means of eggs on imported oaks. Three years ago there was an outbreak of breeding moths in the boroughs of Bromley and Croydon that has been impossible to eliminate. Instead the Forestry Commission and its partners are focussing on controlling the spread of the moth. One thing they do is to inspect oak trees for the nests in which the caterpillars congregate a few weeks before hatching out into moths and immediately remove any that are found. Another is to set traps containing the moth's pheromone to see if there are any moths in the area. Both are carried out in our area. This year one tree in the vicinity of the Common was found to have nests but all other inspections were negative. With oaks being far and away the most frequent species of tree on the Common, we can only hope that the moth does not become established here.

The Box Tree Moth is native to east Asia but became established in Europe in 2007. It first reached the UK the following year and by the end of 2014 had become established in parts of London and surrounding counties. It is definitely in Streatham because I caught the specimen shown in the photograph in my moth trap

this summer. It is not the moth itself that attacks the foliage of box trees but the caterpillars. These are greenish yellow with thick black and thin white stripes down the body and can be 4cm long. The caterpillars produce webbing over their feeding area and this may be the first sign of their presence. They can cause very serious leaf loss, stripping the trees bare, so the caterpillars should be dealt with



immediately. Where possible, the experts say, they should be removed by hand and killed.

Alternatively a pathogenic

nematode is available for biological control or insecticides can be used as a last resort as long as the plants are not in flower.

Peter Newmark

Charity Status for FoSC

The Trustees and the Friends of Streatham Common (FoSC) have started the process of registering with the Charity Commission as a charity. A summary of the reasons why FoSC is becoming a charity and what it means for members follows. The summary is drawn from a more detailed document that is available at <http://streathamcommon.org/about/>

governance/ or can be posted to you if you leave a message on 020 8679 4203 or email membership@streathamcommon.org

By becoming a charity, FoSC will be able to attract support from organisations that prefer to deal with registered charities and will also be able to reclaim Gift Aid from subscriptions and donations. Moreover the requirements of the Charity Commission will make sure we focus on the needs of our members.

Very little should change in the operations of FoSC when it becomes a charity. We will still run our programme of events and activities and there will still be an Executive Committee whose members, as now, are elected to manage the general running of FoSC. However, we will need to be a little more 'professional' than before in order to manage FoSC as a charity and elected Trustees will have a legal responsibility to ensure that FoSC is run solely for charitable purposes and in accordance with the constitution.

The Trustees will have to clarify and document policy on, for example, what events it is appropriate or inappropriate to support, what types of membership there are and their associated voting rights, and what procedures should be followed should there be disagreements between trustees or within the membership.



www.sccoop.org.uk


CHRISTMAS FAIR

SUNDAY 20 DECEMBER 2015

THE ROOKERY, STREATHAM COMMON

11AM – 3PM

SPONSORED BY

Carter Jonas

Sullivan Thomas

Very little should change for members, either. We will need to contact you to ensure your details are up to date, to explain why we are introducing Associate and Ordinary Memberships and offer you the choice of which you prefer, and to ask if you are able and willing to allow us to claim back as Gift Aid the tax you have paid on your subscription and any donation.

The Friends would like to thank, in advance, Sainsbury's for providing mulled wine & mince pies before our Christmas carols, The Bull for hosting our Christmas party and Anthony Gold Solicitors for donating Fortnum & Mason hampers for raffles at the party and at quiz night.

Large Events 2016

Both the Day of Portugal and Garage Nation will be applying to be on the Common again next year, on July 9-10th and June 12th, respectively.

The organisers of Garage Nation have already held two debriefing sessions, one of which was open to the public but poorly attended, to listen to complaints and suggestions. The major issues concerned noise, parking and the behaviour of crowds leaving the event. That said, the general opinion was that the event was well run in general. The organisers will be putting in an application to hold the event again in 2016 within weeks.

Day of Portugal very recently consulted with the Friends and were told of concerns about noise - more from amplified voices than from music - and uncontrolled parking on the north side of the Common.

The Friends will be looking for evidence that both organisations will take all criticisms on board and ensure that last year's problems are not repeated should the events go ahead in 2016.

Cedar Tree



Looking to the future, a new Cedar of Lebanon tree has been planted in the Rookery on the site of one that used to stand there. Will the magnificent mature cedar seen behind the new one in the photograph, and at least 100 years old, still be standing when the new one rivals it for size? The oldest living British cedar was planted in 1658, so there is hope!

Brian Bloice

It is with deep regret that we note the death on October 29th of Brian Bloice, Chair of the Streatham Society. Brian was a loyal supporter of the Friends of Streatham Common and actively involved in the Rookery's centenary project two years ago, particularly in providing access to historical sources. To coincide with that, Brian coauthored a Streatham Society publication entitled *Norwood Grove and the Rookery, Streatham Common*, contributing the erudite section on the Rookery. We will miss Brian's cheery presence and his invaluable knowledge of Streatham's places, buildings and history.



© Joanna Guthrie



© Joanna Guthrie

Dog Show 2015

Top - fun and spills in the dog and spoon race for children. *Middle*, left to right - Bella, winner of the Bonny Girl category, being taken for a run. John Rhodes, the show's brilliant organiser and master of ceremonies. Martha, winner of the 7-Legged Race, and her co-runners. *Bottom* - Sanchez - winner of Cutest Puppy, with friends. Thanks to Joanna Guthrie for the photographs and to Vale Vets, Streatham Hill Vets and The Vets, Mitcham Road for their support and providing judges.

RENEWAL TIME. If you pay your membership annually, now is the time to renew it using the enclosed form. For any queries about renewal or membership, please contact the Membership secretary by emailing membership@streathamcommon.org or by writing to 9 Strathbrook Rd, SW16 3AT.

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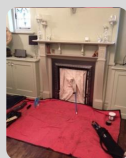


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