



Common Knowledge

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11am - 5pm



Surviving the cuts

Our last editorial was after the sad decision to cut the fireworks on Streatham Common but the Christmas tree was saved for 2010 at least. Now we face the pain of a 20-25 % cut in the maintenance budget for the Common and the Rookery and the loss of the Park Rangers. What will this mean? We are unsure in detail, but will know more once the Parks Department has been through its restructuring and the budget is actually allocated in May. At least we will still be doing our quarterly walkabout with a parks officer to assess the need for repairs and maintenance to the Common and the Rookery. So there is some continuity there – just less money to play with. Losing the Park Rangers will have its own consequences, not only for the public but also for the events put on by the Friends, as detailed in the box on page 3.

I am keen to meet all the volunteers we have who help us throughout the year and anyone new who might be interested in running or helping at events or becoming a member of the Executive, so will be inviting you to a get together during May or June. It will be good then to hear what you think about the way forward with all the changes going on – including localism, which I think we are doing anyway!

On a different note – a representative of Sustainable Streatham attended our last Executive committee to talk about how we can build links with them. We have some wonderful events over the summer. I hope to see you on the Common or the Rookery at one of them over the next few months.

Barbara Wright, Chair of the Friends

Budget Blues

On February 23, Lambeth Council set the seal on budget cuts that will have a considerable negative effect on Streatham Common and the Rookery. The cuts were opposed by, among others, the Lambeth Parks and Green Spaces Forum, which represents our own Friends Group as well as all the others in Lambeth. A delegation from the Forum had been promised a chance to address the council but in the event was denied the opportunity after protestors took over the Council Chamber leading to the Councillors to move to another room, where they voted to hold a closed session and not receive delegations. As Peter Bradley, the Forum's Delegation Leader put it, "I had one of the most dispiriting and undemocratic experiences of [my] life."

Be that as it may, we now have to face the consequences of Lambeth's decision and, of course, there may be worse to come if green spaces are considered a soft option for further cuts.

The main cut to affect us is the closure of the Park Ranger Service. Within days or weeks, the Park Rangers will go. For seven years, they have helped patrol the Common, reduce crime, prevent misdemeanors and run, or assist with, community events. To quote Lambeth's website, "*Our Park Rangers act as the 'eyes and ears' of the council and community in our parks and green spaces. They provide a friendly presence at key times, and advice and assistance*".

Without them, will the council be both blind and deaf to matters concerning our Common? Well, not quite, as there will still be council officers responsible for the Common and the Friends will continue to have quarterly walkabouts on the Common with council representatives, which will be more

important than ever as we try and monitor and minimise the effects of the cuts.

However, without the Rangers the public will find it harder to seek help and report

Thanks and Goodbye

Although the Park Rangers may be around for a short while yet, their days are numbered. So we would like to take this opportunity to give a huge thanks to them for all the help they have provided the Friends over the past seven years.

In particular we would like to thank Diane Nash and Lara Bonfici, who have not only turned up at our executive meetings but also organised and run increasing numbers of events, especially for children and for conservation work.

In recent weeks, for example, they have run two sessions of Giant Chess in the Rookery and two Volunteer Days on the Common, in which neglected areas near the playground and the café were dug out and planted with shrubs.



So goodbye Diane and Lara, and good luck; we shall miss you.

problems, and crime may well increase. Lambeth is talking to the police's Safer Neighbourhood Teams to see if they can increase patrols and responses but there is no certainty that they can.

And, without the Rangers, the Friends will find it difficult, if not impossible, to run so many events (see boxes).

The other major cut that is likely to affect the Common and the Rookery, is the 20-25% cut in the budget for maintaining green spaces across Lambeth. Quite how this will pan out is not yet clear but there are certain to be less people to carry out the work. Priority will be given to litter clearance, grass cutting and the maintenance of gardens, so perhaps the effects will not be too obvious at first. But as, for example, minor damage caused by wear

and tear or vandalism, is not attended to, or spreading brambles are not cut back, a slow deterioration of the area will set in.

It could be worse, however. Although there have been rumours that the public toilets on the Common would close, this is not the case, at least for now. Also it is likely that Volunteer Days, started by the Park Rangers to involve the community in conservation work, will continue under the auspices of Veolia, the company with the contract for carrying out all maintenance work on the Common ♦

Canine Matters

- If there seem to be even more dog walkers, with more dogs, on the Common these days, and fewer in Norwood Grove, it is probably because Croydon Council has recently reduced from six to four the number of dogs that any one person can walk with, while Lambeth Council has no maximum. Wandsworth also limits the number to four, although dog walkers can obtain a licence for up to eight dogs. Some dog walkers on Streatham Common regularly have over a dozen dogs and with the best will in the world, cannot possibly keep track of all the 'droppings' of their charges.

- Speaking of which, it is no longer the case that dog poo has to be placed in dedicated bins. A change in some legislation or other now allows this form of waste to be mixed with less noxious forms in any of the Common's bins,

- Rumours have abounded recently that poison has been put down to kill off rats and other vermin, and that some dogs have been badly affected. Lambeth Council officers state categorically that no poison has been laid, nor would it be. It is not out of the question that Croydon Council has used poison but perhaps more likely that the original rumour was simply false ♦

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

by Friends of Streatham Common

Following Lambeth's lamentable decision to axe the Park Ranger service, the Friends of Streatham Common will not be able to put on as many events as in recent years unless more volunteers step forward to help.

In particular many of the events for children, such as Treasure Hunts in the Rookery and the Big Draw in the playground, have depended on the Park Rangers. So would some parents whose children have enjoyed past events like to help keep them going?

We will also need volunteers if we are to continue with Dog Show in September, Volunteer Days doing winter conservation work on the Common, etc.

If you are willing to help out, or even take a lead, with any of these events, or want further information, please email friendsofstreathamcommon@gmail.com

Forthcoming events

More details of individual events will appear on posters on the Common.

April 9th. Spring Bird Walk. From 9.00 to 10.30 am. Meet by the café for a leisurely stroll designed to spot as many species as possible.

April 10th. Kite Day. From 11.00 am to 5.00 pm on the lower Common. Watch displays, visit stalls, sample food and drink but, above all, fly your own kites.

April 25th. Royal Easter Parade. At 1.00 pm sharp in the Rookery. Watch notice boards for details.

May 8th. Bird Box and Song Survey. Meet at the café at 9.30 am. Ends at 11. Help with our annual nesting survey and

learn to identify some bird song.

May 15th. Cake Baking Competition. In the Rookery café from 1.00 to 3.00 pm.

June 19th. Band in the Rookery. Free event. Music by John Brown and friends. From 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm.

June 22nd. Friends of Streatham Common Annual General Meeting. In Sainsbury's Cafe at 7.30 pm.

July 9th. The History and Natural History of Streatham Common. This walk, starting at 2.30 pm by the Rookery, is jointly organised and led by Streatham Society and the Friends of Streatham Common.

July 10th. Shakespeare in the Rookery: *Much Ado About Nothing*. Starting at 3.00 pm.

Friends of Streatham Common: Proposed Constitution Changes

There will be a special meeting held (immediately prior to the AGM) at 7.30 pm in Sainsbury's café on 22nd June 2011 to decide upon some proposed changes to the constitution of the Friends of Streatham Common. The overall aim of the proposed changes is to make the constitution better reflect the actual operation of the Friends, as this has evolved since the original constitution was written in 1997.

A summary of the proposed changes follows. Details are available on request.

Section 2: The changes proposed are to have the effect of removing the automatic link between the Friends and the Streatham Common Management Advisory Committee (MAC), which has become moribund recently.

Section 4: The changes proposed are to have the effect of formalising the role of the Vice Chairperson, and allowing officers to serve for longer periods, and removing the link with the MAC.

Section 5: The changes proposed remove the automatic right for officers of the MAC to be on the Committee.

Section 7: The changes proposed are to have the effect of removing both the MAC and Lambeth from the Friends' spending decisions.

Section 8: The changes propose to reduce the number of public meetings to two a year, and to remove the need to hold them in conjunction with the MAC.

“Common Folk”

Tom Smurthwaite turns 90 in July but seldom misses his daily walk.



For how long have you lived close to Streatham Common?

For the past 33 years we've lived on Streatham Common South.

How often do you use it, which parts of it, and for what?

I use all parts of the Common for my almost daily stroll, having previously used it for walking my dog.

Which season do you like most and why?

Spring is my favourite season because one can see everything coming to life after the winter.

What do you particularly like about the Common?

I like the diversity of its different parts and how even the weather changes from one part to another, especially with a north wind blowing across the top and then entering the Rookery. The view from the top of the Common is something else I am fond of.

What do you dislike?

The litter bins that can be emptied by crows and foxes, leaving an unsightly mess.

What improvements would you like to see to the Common and its facilities?

A hedge of willows close to the A23 would help mop up the mud and close the Common to the traffic. I'd also like to see the path from Valley Road to the corner of the A23 with Streatham Common South being widened, with a separate cyclist's track.

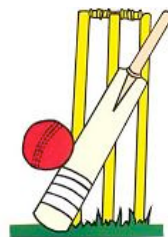
What changes have you noticed over the years? And which are for the better and which for the worse.

Very little has changed except that there is nobody rides horses on the Common any more ♦

Cricket in Streatham

Although the new artificial cricket strip on the Common awaits completely satisfactory installation, which has been promised for the summer, locals have already voted with their balls and can be seen bowling them at speed at padded-up batsmen.

Assuming the strip is completed by the summer, the Friends and Streatham Society will hold an event to jointly celebrate both its opening and the publication of a new book written by Colin Hutton, and just published by the Streatham Society, that tells the history of local cricket. It is entitled *Streatham and the Summer Game* and subtitled *A History of Cricket in Streatham 1731-2010 and the Streatham Cricket Club*.



The 148-page book is profusely illustrated and includes such gems as Rule 15 of the Streatham Cricket Club in 1807, when the Common was serving as its home ground, which states that "Any Gentleman playing in coloured Jackets, Breeches, or Pantaloon, shall be fined Half a Crown; Nankeen or White may be worn at pleasure." And quite right, too! ♦

Whats Up?

Community Garden - A small steering group has been meeting regularly to set up a community garden in the old nursery garden in the Rookery. A draft proposal has been written and sent to Lambeth Council. The group hopes to meet with officers to discuss practicalities. In the meantime the group will be adopting a constitution with the aim of becoming a charity. The group is looking for more members to join – and will also be looking for volunteers to get the garden underway after agreement with the council. If you would like to become a member contact Kasia Brookes on 07986 407396.

Playground - Two smart new benches have been installed in the playground thanks to our local Councillors, who provided funds from the Ward Purse. A new notice board to follow will enable the Friends to bring its events to the attention of many parents of young children. And there is a reasonable chance that some new picnic tables will soon replace the current ones, which are very popular but showing their age.

Trees and Shrubs - four of the recently planted willow trees near the playground will be replaced, following their death from neglect. Also largely dead or vanished are the beech saplings that were planted to fill the gaps in the hedge inside the playground railings. Whether another (better) attempt will be made to establish a complete hedge remains to be seen. New rhododendrons have been planted in the Rookery to replace some of those that died in the summer before last. In all three cases, it is probable that lack of watering caused the problems. Let's hope the lesson has been learnt.

Rookery Pond - at the Friends' request, some signs have been placed near the

water features to try and keep people off the grass and stop them interfering with the pond life. This year was a good one for frog spawn (or was it newt spawn?) but it is all too frequently 'harvested' by visitors ♦

Advertisements

(to advertise, please contact the editor)

Lambeth Mediation Service

To celebrate 20 years of mediation activities, Lambeth Mediation Service is launching "Friends of LMS". For further details, email friends@lambethmediation.org.uk

Or come and hear how you can support us at a public meeting about *Tackling Conflict in Lambeth* on 5 April at 7.00 pm in Stockwell Community Resource Centre, 1 Studley Rd, SW4 6RA.

Norwood Grove Bowls Club

New members welcome. Beautiful bowling green. Friendly club for anyone over 16 – ladies and gents.

Free trials and coaching available. For information or to join contact Peter Sedton on 0208 764 3762

Alexander Technique

Can improve your posture and mobility or reduce pain. Try an introductory session for £20 (usually £28). To find out more, go to www.alexandersouth.co.uk

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

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