



streathamcommon.org
Registered Charity 1166961

April 2018, Issue 63

Inside this issue

2. Chopper Caper
3. Rookery Cascade
4. New Tree Line; Ground Damage
5. What's Up?; Events Coming Up
6. Wood Work; Music Festival Returns
7. Playground Bonus
8. SCCoop's Good News

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

Common Knowledge

From the Chair

So many positive things have happened recently that it's difficult knowing where to begin. It has taken 17 years but the new playground is now finally in place. There is still a little work left to do, as the kiosk which will offer coffees and snacks is yet to be built, but at this stage, I'd like to offer a huge thank you to everyone who's worked on this project over the years. We even managed to find a suitable resting place for the old helicopter climbing frame, as recounted on the next page.

At our recent public meeting, many concerns were raised over Lambeth's events that are held on the common. We brought in Lambeth's events team to listen to residents so they could understand all our frustrations. Fortunately, the meeting coincided with a circus arriving on the common and the events team could see first hand the amount of damage that heavy vehicles cause. Residents will be pleased to know that the circus will pay for the repair work that has already begun. I will be speaking with the events team to see how we can reduce damage in the future. On the flip side, I have been told that the show put on by the circus was excellent.

In the Rookery, construction work on the



Chopper Caper

It's freezing cold, it's Friday 23rd of February, it's not even 6am yet but three SCCoop / FoSC volunteers (Leo Hopkins, Dominic Leary and Mike Robinson) are up before the larks and at the Rookery barn preparing to load up and set off on a 300-mile round trip in a rented Luton van!

Our mission was to leave early in order to beat the traffic, deliver and install the vintage playground helicopter climbing frame that had been the much loved children's attraction in Streatham Common's old playground. Our destination - The Helicopter Museum, Weston-super-Mare! Why? Because we will be able to



generate £2,000 in donations / contributions for the Friends of Streatham Common.

However, before we even got started disaster strikes its first cruel blow of the day.

mobile phones, we research other vehicle rental companies, only to realise it's still only just past 6am and the companies don't open until 7.30 or 8am! So, we can do nothing but sit, wait and clock watch. More coffee and of course more swearing!

8am finally arrives. Many calls later, our savour is finally found in the form of Hunt Trucks of Wimbledon who happen to have one 7.5 ton truck available for immediate hire and which they guarantee has a rear opening bigger than 2 metres. We quickly jump in a car and set off with all our driving licences to collect our new and much larger hire vehicle.

It's now that the next problem reveals itself. For some unknown reason only Dom's driving licence gets approved by the DVLA to drive this 7.5 ton truck, even though between us we've been driving over 70 years and all have clean licences which are exactly the same. To add further excitement to the situation, Dom lets slip that he isn't a massive fan of driving, (a bicycle is normally his vehicle of choice) yet he now has to drive the three of us 300 miles and for over 6 hours in

a massive truck that he's never even seen before!

11am comes and goes, and we're back at the Rookery once again, five hours after we first got there. We finally load up, this time without a problem, and at last we are

see us. We now have a little over one hour of daylight remaining, so we waste little time with pleasantries and completely sacrifice any tour of the helicopter museum with its 80+ amazing helicopters of all shapes and sizes. We rapidly commence digging our own helicopter's ground foundations within the museum's new proposed playground and café area.

Amazingly, in one and half hours we're done! The helicopter climbing frame is fully rebuilt with its many concrete foundations setting nicely. It's positioned in pride of place at its new and final home. We say our thank you's and are quickly back on the road, this time now in the dark!

Finally, at 10.30pm we make it back to London, return the truck and each finally return to our homes and families, shattered but ultimately happy. Would we do it all again? Errmmm.... of course! £2,000 raised for FoSC to reinvest back into the local community, some of it perhaps via one of SCCoop's valuable projects, is always worth it. Furthermore Dom now likes driving again!

Leo Hopkins

Additional thanks to Lambeth Council for gifting FoSC the helicopter apparatus for our community fundraising efforts, and to Charlie Mitchell who assisted Leo and Dom in safely dismantling & removing it from the old playground back in 2017 before all the major playground works commenced. Details of the helicopter museum are at <http://www.helicoptermuseum.co.uk/>

Rookery Cascade

When the Streatham Common

cleared of large amounts of sludge and rubble. Their concrete foundations have been repaired and relined with three layers of fibreglass. Many of the waterfalls and gullies have been dismantled and rebuilt. Where possible, existing materials have been re-used. Despite the challenging weather conditions, the contractors are making good progress and the construction side of the project should be complete around Easter.

Meanwhile the project garden designer has been working with volunteers researching the surrounding gardens. We are taking a 'two hats' approach to the regeneration of this area. Firstly, we will be working with its history, taking cues for its planting; and secondly we will be considering current resources, planting for sustainable maintenance, and sustainability more broadly.

We have been fortunate in having had a wonderful response from volunteers. Their research has been probing around the



garden's design and its contents, rock work and planting. Were decisions in 1912/13, when the cascade was created, influenced at all by the Arts and Crafts movement that was current at the time? Was the renowned William Robinson an influence? What was the 'look', what were the planting aesthetics and what emphasis was there on exotic plants or new plant introductions?

We are also looking at the social history of the cascade's rock garden. How did visitors dress and what did they do there? Who came in, and how was it thought of? This information will help development of the planting design. We are planning to have designs showing to members of the public around June or July followed by finalising the design, ordering plants and an autumn planting, with some spring planting in 2019.

*Lee Heykoop (project garden manager)
and Dominic Leary (SCCoop manager)*

New Tree Line

Streatham Common has some magnificent mature trees on it, none more so than the line of London plane trees running up the south side. But these trees will not live forever. So if we want a continuity of mature trees we need to plant new trees now. The Friends of Streatham Common has been working with the Lambeth Council to do just that.

After careful consideration the council has agreed to plant a row of 16 English Oak

because, sadly, this species is under threat from a deadly fungal disease that is expected to arrive from Europe eventually.

The new row of oaks will be set in to the common from the existing trees on the north side to create a kind of avenue. In time (quite a long time actually!) they will form a magnificent line of trees to match the splendour of the London plane trees on the other side of the common. The Friends anticipate planting more trees in cooperation with the council in future years: if you have an opinion about this, let us know.

Tom Frankfort

Ground Damage

A few weeks before the circus arrived on the common in mid February, representatives from the Friends met up with an officer from Lambeth's Events team to inspect the extent to which ground damage resulting from last year's events – primarily the large music festival – had been repaired. It was agreed that some more restoration work was needed. Vastly more restoration is now needed following the circus's departure.

Not to put too fine a point on it, the circus should never have been allowed on the common, given the ground condition. The ground had been examined a week before the circus arrived and Lambeth gave the go ahead with certain provisos. One of these was to put tracking down so that the heavy vehicles would not sink into the



mud. Some of the planned tracking was put in place but the rest was not because Streatham Common South was closed to vehicles for a day while speed humps were installed. However, given the large area in which damage is evident, it is clear that tracking alone would not have prevented serious damage. The whole area was too soft and vehicle control was inadequate.

It may be the case that ground conditions worsened in the week before the circus arrived but surely the event could have been cancelled even at the last minute. One would expect the circus to have cancellation insurance.

It is the circus that will pay for repair of the damage and Lambeth said restoration work would commence within days of the circus's departure, which it did. When it will be finished to an acceptable standard is anyone's guess.

What's Up

Christmas crib – sad to say the crib was vandalised the night before it was due to be taken down. Signage was ripped off and several of the figures were broken as a result of shaking the crib.

Tennis court – a new net has replaced the old one which had become damaged through use (or misuse).

Entrance barrier – after a long wait, there is again an effective barrier at the vehicle entrance to the common opposite the builder's yard on Streatham Common South. Following the recent damage to the

Events Coming Up

More details will be found on our website or via Twitter, Facebook and posters. Alternatively you can sign on our website to be sent email alerts.

May 6th, **Bird Box Survey**, meet at the café at 9.30am.

May 13th, **Kite Day**, on the lower common 11.00am to 5.00pm.

May 19th, **Summer Bird Walk**, meet at the café at 9.30am.

June 9th, **Moths in Close-up**, in the Streatham Common Community Garden at 9.30am.

June 24th & 25th, **Small Mammal Workshop and Survey**, on the common, from 9.00am to 4.00pm.

July 1st, **Birds of Prey Flying Display**, on the lower common, from 1.00pm to 5.00pm.

July 7th, **Butterfly Walk**, meet at the café at 3.00pm.

July 8th, **Shakespeare in the Rookery**, *The Winter's Tale*, in the Rookery, starting at 3.00pm.

Wood Work

The monthly volunteer group that operates in the woodland has been hard at work improving the seasonal stream that flows down the boundary between Streatham Common (Lambeth) and Norbury Grove (Croydon), passing under the main, hardtop footpath. One completed task has been the diversion of a major channel of water that flows out of the woods after rainfall, turning a footpath into a sunken quagmire, into the stream.

Another has been to open up the culvert through which the stream passes under the main footpath that connects Streatham Common and Norbury Grove and to clear the surrounding areas. In doing that a rather mysterious brick structure (see photograph) has been exposed as has



Music Festival Returns

For the fourth year running, Streatham Common residents will be blasted by music for a weekend in July. The final go-ahead was given by Lambeth council on 22nd March for the event on 21st and 22nd of July. Faced with a combination of objections and demands from residents and local councillors, the organisers are under pressure to pull their socks up particularly with regard to drug use and parking.

A few days before the licence was granted, representatives of the organisers - We are The Fair - and Lambeth's Events team attended a public meeting organised by the Friends of Streatham Common. Mike Robinson, Chair of the Friends presented the pros and cons of the event before the public raised their own voices. Even though last year's event was the third, residents were still faced with serious noise and parking problems, he said, as well as trouble with litter and anti-social behaviour from people leaving the festival and drug use in public during it. The other problem is that of damage to the ground, especially during set up and take down, and the fact that the damage is not adequately repaired within the year between festivals.

On the plus side, the event generates around £6000 of much needed cash for spending on the common, although this is probably less than 15% of the total amount going to Lambeth Council and arguably insufficient to reflect the fact that a considerable area of the common is shut

discussions on Mumsnet have shown a roughly even split between those in favour and those against. However many local residents have objections to the event or to the problems it brings.

To try and overcome these this year, the organisers will make some changes. Regarding noise, they will have the main stage face Streatham High Road this year rather than facing up Streatham Common. This rather cynical move will simply mean that a fresh set of people are likely to complain about noise rather than yet again it being the residents of the streets that have suffered most for the past three years. Not exactly a solution, then. Parking will be controlled by a different company than the one that performed poorly last year. And there were promises of better prevention of drug taking in the proximity of the event arena and of anti-social behaviour.

In addition there will be improved distribution to locals of an information sheet about the event and about parking. This will also provide a single telephone number to use to report all problems to onsite personnel through the event and for some time after it.

Tickets are already sold out for the new event, *Kisstory on the Common*, on the Saturday. Sunday sees the return of *One Nation Festival*, which is likely to sell out once again.

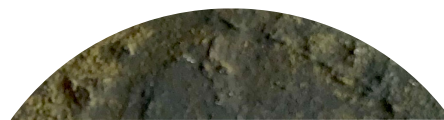
If your membership fee for 2018 is

Playground Bonus

This coin was unearthed during construction of the new playground on the common. The British Museum has identified it as a copper halfpenny from the reign of King George II. The coin was minted in 1729, when there would have been a pond where the playground now is. On one side a bust of the king is visible and the wording GEORGIVS II REX.



On the other side of the coin, although very hard to see, there is the figure of Britannia, the legend BRITANNIA and the date 1729.



SCCoop's Good News

After a fair degree of uncertainty, the Streatham Common Cooperative received word at the end of March that its core funding from Lambeth Council will continue at the same level for another year, starting in October. This is very welcome news as it means that the high horticultural standards in the Rookery can be maintained, the paddling pool kept open and conservation work in the common's Local Nature Reserve continued. With SCCoop's track record of successful external fund raising, one can expect to see additional projects come on stream too.

Advertisements

There are currently a few spaces available for beavers, cubs and scouts at one of the world's oldest groups – 1st Streatham Common. Email Gary Cooper tocoops@hotmail.com for more information.

Meetings take place at the group's own headquarters on Estreham Road, near Streatham Common station.
 Beavers (age 6-8) Monday 6-7:15pm.
 Cubs (age 8-10½) Friday, 6.15-8pm.
 Scouts (age 10½-14) Thursday 7-8:30pm



Black Cat Chimneys

07948 146066 / 020 8764 7689

Black Cat Chimneys offer a clean and efficient chimney sweeping service across south London, we are fully insured and issue a chimney sweeping certificate on each job as well as advise on any potential defects of your chimney.