



April 2020, Issue 69

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*You may notice that this issue has half the usual number of pages. Blame 'the virus'.*

No space is needed to list the many forthcoming events that had been planned.

No article is needed to explain how Kite Day was going to have to be more regulated because it London attracts many visitors.

No point in writing about what should have been the third year of a weekly butterfly survey on the Common with the aim of recruiting more help.

Although there is the excellent news that the fundraising target for the Streatham Common Community Woodland Project has been reached, there is nothing else to say as volunteering has ceased.

# Common Knowledge

## From the Chair

Well, what strange times we find ourselves in! After all the rain we have had over the winter months, I expected to be writing about how saturated the Common has been and wondering if it will ever dry out, but not the case. Not so much the calm before the storm, more the storm before the storm.

I am writing about things I never thought I would witness in my lifetime, social isolation (who knew those two words would ever exist together), empty supermarket shelves, panic buying, etc. I see fewer people each morning when I walk my dogs, and now the Café has been forced to close. Kite day has been postponed and, for the first time in many years, we will not have an Easter Egg Hunt for the children in the Rookery.

At the time of writing, the Common is still open to the public, as is the Rookery, although with a late opening time. I hope that as long as the spaces are open for public use, people will continue to be able to get some fresh air and enjoy some of the outdoor spaces, whilst maintaining a safe distance from others.

But it is not all doom and gloom, there are positives to be found from this coronavirus. Pollution levels have dropped significantly in China and Northern Italy. Perhaps we will see the same here in London. Also, we might get a fallow year on the Common, which will enable it to repair itself from previous year's events and all the recent rain.

It is imperative on all of us to take care not to spread this terrible virus further and important that we take time to help all those who are less fortunate or who may be housebound for whatever reason. So please take care of yourselves and help others where and when you can. I hope to see you all out enjoying the Common when these strange times come to an end.

*Tracey Williamson*

## Stream Garden

The Heritage Lottery funded project to restore the area of the Rookery now known as the Stream Garden is finished. And how splendidly the area has been transformed.

The project had several aims. One was to renovate the pools and gullies through which the water flows and to improve the recirculation system. After the open tap from which the water had long flowed was replaced by a recirculation system about a decade ago, it slowly became apparent that water was continually being lost through leakage. Attempts were made to patch up the leaks but the Stream Garden project enabled the whole watercourse to be properly re-lined and for the recirculation system to be improved. Although there have been a couple of glitches with the recirculation system (out of action at the moment), when the water is flowing it is mesmerising and the pools are in fine state.

Another aim was to improve the areas immediately adjacent to the pools by replanting and protecting them. This has been sensitively done with rope between wooden poles and close access to the water is now limited to specific paved viewing areas (see photo).

A third aim was to refresh and replant other areas of the garden. This meant removing the ivy that had covered much of the ground around the rhododendrons and



### What's in a name - 1?

Somewhat controversially, the project team have renamed what has almost always been named the Rock Garden as the Stream Garden. In the booklet, this is justified by the fact that the team's research indicates that the rockery that presumably led to the original name "was never executed to a high or even good standard". And that Cascade Garden, a term that has sometimes been used more recently, is not as appropriate as Stream Garden.

azaleas that provide much needed spring colour, improving the soil and putting in a diversity of low maintenance plants. Along the way, many rocks were removed and repurposed as edging for flower beds. All of this was carried out largely by volunteers. As much of the area's crazy paving as funds allowed was professionally lifted and re-laid.

The results of all of this are evident to the visitor. What is not is the Education Room that was created as part of the project. It is located in the Streatham Common Community Garden and is being used by the local community and volunteers for workshops, presentations, apprentice training etc.

### What's in a name - 2?

In the booklet's section on the overall history of the Rookery, mention is made of the acquisition for public use in 1928 of "a field known as Five Acres to the south" of the Rookery itself. This is a reference to the area in which the tennis court is located. However, it is usually known as Hilly Four Acres. Which is correct? Local historian, John Brown has a map of all the field names in the area that categorically supports the latter. However, it seems that the adjacent fenced-off area, known as The Orchard, was included in the acquisition thus probably accounting for the fifth acre.

Also less than evident is the considerable amount of research that went into exploring the history of the site. This was a requirement of the Heritage Lottery Fund award and was carried out by volunteers. Not only did the results inform the planting and design, but they also form the core of "The Stream Garden At The Rookery - a short history", a 40 page booklet packed with interesting text and old photographs. The booklet was written by members of the volunteer group and led by garden designer Lee Heykoop, who had the ultimate say in the design and choice of plants for the whole project.

### PIL Spending

As you may know, a modest proportion (around 15%) of the money that Lambeth Council charges for events that are held on the Common is specifically spent on the Common. This is termed the Parks Investment Levy and the Friends have a strong voice in how it is spent. The great majority of it comes from any large commercial events on the Common, of which the only one in past years has been

the weekend music festival (Garage Nation originally, Kisstory last year).

So how much did Streatham Common get via this levy and how was it / will it be spent? The amount was around £7000. The most obvious ways in which this has been spent are on two benches to replace ones that had reached the end of their life and on new information maps around the Common. The old maps were out of date and in a couple of cases incorrectly orientated. The new ones, which are closely based on the map created by the Friends for the Streatham Common Nature Trail, thankfully include a "You Are Here" sticker, which will mean far fewer visitors than previously will be seen puzzling over the maps and trying to work out where they are. An example of the new style of map shown below.

Smaller sums have been used to install replacement fencing opposite Lewis's builders yard on Streatham Common South and to replace the ageing barrier gates into the car park as well as the gate into the paddling pool.

## Welcome to Streatham Common

With spectacular views across South London and to the North Downs, Streatham Common has a rich history, being recorded as far back as the Domesday Book. Originally owned by the Crown and then the Church Commissioners, it has been used and recognised as a common for centuries. It was taken over by the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1863 and an Act of Parliament ensured its protection for public use and enjoyment as a metropolitan common. During the Second World War much of the lower part of the Common was used as allotments and temporary housing was placed around the perimeter.

Streatham Common offers both casual visitors and regular users many different facilities, including a café and kiosk, a children's playground, a paddling pool, a tennis court and pitches for cricket and football on the lower Common. It is popular for fairs and events during summer and autumn. Streatham Common contains features of wildlife importance, such as acid grassland, woodland and a meadow. As a result, part of the Common has been designated as a Local Nature Reserve, which contains a nature trail for all to enjoy. The Rookery includes several beautiful gardens. Streatham Common is an important stop on the Capital Ring, a long-distance walking route around Greater London, and is also popular for walking, jogging and sports.

Help us look after your parks and open spaces.

This site is managed by Lambeth Landscapes in partnership with the local community. Please help us keep it clean, green and safe for all to use and enjoy.

For further information please contact Lambeth Council on 020 7925 9000 or email [parcs@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:parcs@lambeth.gov.uk).



Still to come are some 'A-frame' notice boards that can be used for notices about not having barbecues or not leaving litter on the Common. These will be chained to lamp posts over the summer.

No large events were signed up to come to the Common this year, and even if they had been they would now have been cancelled. So there will be next to no Parks Investment Levy this year. The Friends had been pushing for a fallow year to allow the ground to recover from past events. Either way, that's what we have.

### What We'll Be Missing

Many of this year's planned events have already been cancelled or postponed and it is likely that others will go the same way. This year's Kite Day (May) was an early casualty and the annual open air Shakespeare performance (July) soon followed. It would have been Henry V (Once more unto the breach dear friends...). Tree, Bird and Bat Walks in the coming few months have been cancelled as has the Birds of Prey Flying Display and the Dog Show. It seems very unlikely that any other events planned for the next six months will go ahead. These were to include visits from Benson's Fun Fair, a Yoga Fair and Rookfest.

Volunteer work has ground to a halt, affecting planned work on the Common, in the Rookery and in the Community Garden. Also cancelled is the weekly butterfly survey. The Rookery and the Rookery Cafe is currently closed and the Paddling Pool will not be opening.

On the other hand the number of people exercising on the Common has increased dramatically and wild life may thrive.

### Rookery Woes

It is sad to report that in recent months the Rookery has been hit by a spate of thefts and vandalism. This has been costly and has led to increased preventative measures.

For a start, the bird feeder funded by a donation to the Friends was stolen over the Christmas holidays. It had been hung on a bracket fixed to a tree trunk and required a ladder to reach it. It has now been replaced and chained to the tree trunk. Also stolen were some newly planted camellias and rhododendrons. This was particularly upsetting as they were memorial plantings. Steps are being taken to make the gardens more secure.

Then there have been several incidents of wanton vandalism. For example, all the benches on the top tier were pushed down the slope one night. They have now been cable-tied together for security but nonetheless a couple have been pushed down again. Recently the side panels of the Covington Shelter were kicked in (see photo) and will need replacing and the mechanism that runs the fountain in the Old English Garden was sabotaged. The list goes on - fencing kicked in, locked tennis court broken into, graffiti. There have always been some incidents of this kind in the Rookery, as in all public spaces, but their frequency seems to have increased.

The option of installing CCTV at key locations is being considered. Crowdfunding for this has already reached nearly £2000.

