



streathamcommon.org
Registered Charity 1166961

December 2020, Issue 71

Inside this issue

2. Composting; Virus Testing
3. Holly Christmas; Litter Picking
4. Find The Trees

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Wishing all members of
the Friends of
Streatham Common

Seasonal Greetings

Merry Christmas

Happy New Year



Common Knowledge

From the Chair

The past twelve months have proven to be very trying for the whole community. The words Covid and Lockdown (incidentally Collins Dictionary's word of the year!) will be forever embedded in our hearts and minds and I do not think anyone will forget the year 2020! As the leaves on the trees change colour and we leave autumn and head into winter, I am sure everyone will be looking forward to the time we can consign 2020 and Covid to history.

It is unfortunate that we have not been able to hold any of our popular events this year. In addition, it was a real shame that the Remembrance Day service in the Memorial Gardens had to be cancelled. Now, as we head rapidly towards Christmas, our annual carol singing around the Christmas tree on the Common has had to be cancelled, as has the Friend's annual Christmas party. However, we very much hope that we will be able to hold an event for our members in the spring.

Although our activities have been limited over the past twelve months, our work on the Common does continue, and I would like to shout out a big thank you to all our volunteers, and especially the litter picking group that has formed over the past few months. They have collected huge amounts of rubbish. Another thank you is due to the FoSC committee members for all their support and hard work over what has been a difficult year.

I have mentioned previously that FoSC is acutely aware of the diversity of the local community and users of the common but that this diversity is not reflected within our committee. We would very much welcome people from a broader range of ethnic communities to join our committee and help us with our work on the Common. So please if you are a member of the Friends and would like to get involved, or know someone that might be interested, do get in touch

We are looking forward to a more active year and hope to make progress with the installation of a Trim Trail on the Common. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our members a very Merry Christmas and an extremely happy and prosperous New Year; 2021 can only get better!

Tracey Williamson

Composting

The Composters is a community project led by us and based at the Rookery Gardens



We began in November 2020 and our main aim is to create high-quality compost in the greenest way possible. We do this by keeping things local, which, in turn, makes us able to cut down on miles and reduce our carbon footprint. We work with Ebony Horse Club, the Rookery Café, Inkspot Brewery, the Streatham Common Community Garden and The Rookery to provide them with a free way to get rid of organic waste. The compost will be given new life in The Rookery's gardens and we will ensure that any excess compost will be available for the local community to purchase. We are also looking for a way to support more of our neighbouring businesses and projects to become greener and reduce waste in Lambeth.

We make aerobic compost heaps at a temperature of 55-70°C. We find this temperature is perfect for our Streatham soil. We know that different plants and trees have various needs and requirements to keep them alive and happy, which is why we create bespoke compost, tailored to best suit the needs for each environment.

The Composters would love to teach and show people from the local community

how to create compost. We believe in making our project as accessible and inclusive as possible. We welcome all, regardless of ability, age, ethnicity or gender and we are LGBTQ+ friendly. Therefore, we encourage anyone who would like to volunteer or become part of the project to get involved.

So whether you are interested in joining us to turn a compost heap or two, to help us name some of our plant and tree 'children' that we are growing in different types of compost, or simply to have a chat with us about what we do, we look forward to hearing from you. Please contact us at comments@sccoop.org.uk

Ella Barnard & Lloyd Gough

Virus Testing

Since mid-October, the car park by The Rookery has been turned into a testing site for the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). News of this broke on October 17th and within a week the testing site was up and running. There were mixed reactions locally: some people welcomed more testing facilities, others worried about possible exposure to the virus from those coming to be tested.

Anyone coming for a test has to book in advance and is asked to avoid coming either by public transport, for obvious reasons, or by car, because of limited parking. Double-yellow lines rapidly appeared on one side of the road opposite the café – for some time these had been due to be put in place for other reasons. People coming for a test are asked not to use The Rookery or the Rookery Café.

Demand for testing is said to have been quite high although by mid-November had not exceeded the site's capacity of 468 tests a day. There is one other testing site in Lambeth, at Wheatsheaf Community Hall in Vauxhall, and there are others in Crystal Palace Car Park and at Merton College.

Holly Christmas

I do like my birds and welcome them into my garden with a tubular seed feeder, a bird table and various berry-rich bushes. But my welcome is rather limited when it comes to woodpigeons and ring-necked parakeets, species that are abundant on the Common and visit nearby gardens on the lookout for a meal.

The parakeets certainly add a splash of colour but are more than a touch aggressive. After they first started appearing on the Common in the '90s, they were soon taking seeds from garden feeders, including my own. That was fine except that when a dozen or more parakeets were in the garden, waiting their turn to feed, no other birds stood a chance of grabbing a seed. Sometime later I invested in a cage that fitted around my tubular feeder and was supposed to prevent the parakeets – and other large birds – from getting at the seeds. It worked for a while. But for their size, ring-necked parakeets, like all members of the parrot family, have very large brains and they soon solved the problem. I started to notice that some of the birds had learned to twist their heads through the cage's apertures in order to reach the seeds.

More recently, I have managed to find a cage/feeder combination where the cage is of sufficient diameter that even if a parakeet gets its head through an aperture, it is unable to reach the seeds. An expensive solution but less costly than the quantity of seeds that the parakeets were devouring and better for other species. When I'm feeling generous or want to distract a flock of parakeets from picking the buds/flowers off my winter flowering cherry tree – don't start me on that – I still put the original feeder out for them.

As for woodpigeons, they don't use the feeder but are very partial to red berries. They are more than welcome to those on my cotoneaster and pyracantha. But I do

like a few holly berries at Christmas and there should be no reason for me to fork out for some sprigs every year when I have holly with berries in my garden. The woodpigeons, however, have no sympathy with this view. Each year I try and protect a few berry-rich branches with netting or chicken wire but each year they defeat my efforts. My latest berry barrier has worked so far but as food gets scarce I dare say some woodpigeon will force its way in and gorge on 'my' berries. If not, Happy Holly Christmas!

Peter Newmark

Litter Picking

It's easy to walk past litter and mutter about other people's behaviour but some of our volunteers are going out and doing something about it. I've been doing it too and find it surprisingly satisfying to fill a bag with litter, get a little exercise and feel like I've made a small difference in the world.

The really depressing thing about modern litter is that it doesn't seem to biodegrade at all and whatever rubbish you see on the ground will simply stay there until picked up. We have found places where thick tree roots have grown completely over piles of old rubbish.

With the Covid lockdown it's obviously been difficult to have organised litter picks but one small benefit of holding a litter picker is that everyone keeps their distance. If you're walking on the Common and see anyone out there with a litter picker then please do thank them. And if you would like to join us on occasion, please send an email to volunteering@streathamcommon.org

Mike Robinson

Local businesses have again kindly provided the Christmas tree at the foot of the Common. In return, please support these businesses by shopping locally.

Many of us have come to know the woods on the Common better this year. But what about individual trees? All those shown here are on the Common or in Norwood Grove. Can you find (from the top right, anti-clockwise) The Split, The Crack, The Z Bend, The Spy Hole and The Mask?

