



streathamcommon.org  
Registered Charity 1166961

April 2021, Issue 72

*Inside this issue*

2. A Bad Idea On Boundaries
3. Helping Butterflies
4. Friends of Norwood Grove;  
Events Return To the Common

*Common Knowledge*, the newsletter of the Friends of Streatham Common, is edited by Peter Newmark.  
peternewmark@gmail.com

Chair of Friends of Streatham Common:  
chair@streathamcommon.org

Membership queries:  
membership@streathamcommon.org

You have only until April 12th to have your say on the proposed new wards in the Streatham Common Area. To see why the Friends of Streatham Common is opposing them, turn the page.

# Common Knowledge

## From the Chair

Well, as the song says, here we go again. Covid, rain, mud: not so much Groundhog Day, I feel as if I am in Groundhog year!

As I write this, it has been one year since the first lockdown was announced, and it was marked with a minute's reflective silence today at midday. It has been a difficult twelve months for everyone and a year that none of us ever want to experience again.

I would like to express the Friends of Streatham Common's thanks to each and every one of the key workers that helped to keep our community going, from the hospital staff to the health workers, to supermarket staff and of course those that keep our Common clean and tidy.

So, as we seem to be slowly exiting these difficult times, I would like to look forward. Assuming everything works in line with the Government's road map, we will soon be allowed to meet with friends and family again. I am sure, as the weather starts to get warmer and the evenings draw out, our lovely Common will be busy again, whether it be with family picnics, children's sports or possibly even a cricket match.

Although I have been involved with the Friends now for many years, my time as Chair has not really allowed me to meet and get to know as many of our members as I would have liked. Hopefully, I can put this right over the next year.

This year, we hope to be able to hold some small, low-key events on the Common such as our popular nature walks and birds of prey display. We would also like to press on with our plans for a "trim trail" around the Common.

As you will read further on, a new Friends group has been organised for Norwood Grove. This is tremendously positive news as we are such close neighbours and I even walk my dog there. Please can we all welcome the new Friends of Norwood Grove group and offer any support we can to them. I hope by working together we can build on the success we have achieved for the area to date.

*Tracey Williamson*

## A Bad Idea On Boundaries

At present, Streatham Common and the residential area to its south are included in the Streatham South Ward, which is represented by three councillors. But in a re-jigging of Lambeth's wards proposed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) these areas, together with a small area to the north of the Common, would form a small ward (called Streatham Common Ward) that would be represented by just one councillor. The Friends of Streatham Common (FoSC) will be opposing this change. Our full reasons for doing so will be on the FoSC website but a summary follows.

We believe that single councillor wards have risks compared with multi-member wards e.g. cover for illness or maternity/paternity leave; difficulty of addressing equalities issues among councillors; and the challenges of being in two places at once (e.g. a clash of a local meeting and a town hall meeting).

As the only single councillor ward in Lambeth, the Streatham Common councillor might struggle to be heard. We believe three voices are more likely to be heard on behalf of the Common than one.

There are also specific concerns about the proposed Streatham Common Ward. For a start, it would exclude many of our members who are currently in the

*As individuals, you may agree with our view or not; in either case, we urge you to send your comments to the Commission. You have only until April 12th to do so.*

*You can access the draft recommendations and find out how to comment on them, which can be on the website by email or by post, at <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/greater-london/greater-london/lambeth>*

Streatham South Ward. This would be disappointing as we would like as many of our members and other users of the Common as possible to live in a ward that includes the Common, reflecting its centrality to the community.

Secondly, while small events on the Common are popular, some of the larger events in the summer can create problems that require council intervention. This can be a busy time for the local councillors. It might be asking too much of one councillor to take this on. Similarly, our members, as well as other residents, occasionally have a different emphasis in their views within an overall appreciation of the Common and we think that a single councillor would find these varying opinions harder to handle than would three councillors with a slightly wider constituency.

In addition, maximising the Streatham Common Conservation Area within one ward will ease action on planning issues within it, whereas the proposed changes would put part of it into the proposed Streatham South Ward while most would be in the Streatham Common Ward.

We therefore believe that the interests of the Common and local residents are best represented in a three-member ward and suggest the Streatham Common Ward is joined with one of the two proposed, adjacent, two-councillor wards, Streatham Wells or Streatham South West. Either option brings significantly more FoSC members and other users of the Common into the same ward as the Common.

On balance we favour Streatham Common joining Streatham South West. This would strengthen community identity by bringing as many members of FoSC and users of the Common as possible into that ward. It would also provide effective and convenient local government in a ward that is reasonably compact. Furthermore, merging these two proposed wards would

better meet one of the Commission's main aims, which is that each councillor should represent roughly the same number of voters.

Finally, a word on the name of the new ward. We believe the revised three-member ward should be called Streatham Common Ward. *FoSC Executive*

## Helping Butterflies

With its grasslands, woods and gardens, Streatham Common is a haven for butterflies and it is about now that they will start to be on the wing. But how are they doing and can we help?

The best way to assess how butterflies are doing is through a systematic survey, ideally one that is carried out week after week in the flying season and year after year. We started a survey of this type three years ago, as part of a national butterfly conservation scheme, and would be delighted if anyone would like to help us continue with it – see box for details.

In our surveys so far we have recorded 25 different butterfly species – about 40% of the total found in the UK, some of which are very rare and/or localised. Overall, the butterflies seen most often on the Common, as in your gardens, are white in colour and three in number. These are the Large White, the Small White and the Green-veined White. For many gardeners these are lumped together as 'cabbage whites' and considered as pests because their caterpillars are very partial to cabbages and other cruciferous vegetables as well as nasturtiums.

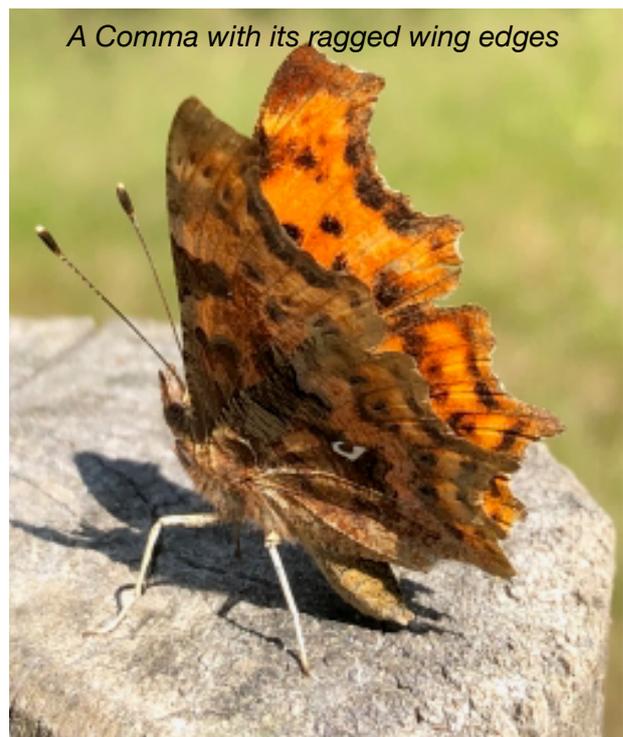
Also frequently seen on the Common are three butterflies that are predominantly brown in colour. These are the Meadow Brown and the Gatekeeper, both of which have orange areas on the wings, and the Speckled Wood, which is covered in pale spots. The first two of these are usually

found on grassland, whereas the Speckled Wood is a butterfly that is partial to dappled sunlight in wooded areas.

Two large and colourful butterflies regularly seen on the Common are the Red Admiral, with its smart black, red and white livery, and the Comma, with its unmistakable ragged wing edges. Much smaller colourful species frequently seen are either blue in colour - Holly Blue and Common Blue – or orange - Small Skipper and Large Skipper.

What gets the regular surveyors excited are the irregular visitors, such as Marbled White, Small Copper and Painted Lady, each seen only a couple of times a year. And what challenges surveyors most is spotting two small species that are generally only seen in tree tops – the White-letter Hairstreak atop elm trees and the Purple Hairstreak on oaks.

Quite what is found on any survey depends on a combination of chance, weather conditions and the date, as different butterfly species emerge from their cocoons in different months between April and September.



If we want more butterflies on the Common, we have to provide the habitat they need. This requires a diversity of habitats (short grass, long grass, woodland edges, woods that are not too dense etc), the specific types of plants on which different butterflies prefer to lay their eggs and, very importantly, sufficient nectar-rich flowering plants to sustain the butterflies.

Such plants are currently in short supply on the Common, apart from in the Rookery's flower beds. There are plenty of brambles and thistles (although even the latter were in short supply last year) but few other suitable wild flowers. We have plans to change this by planting some of the wild flowers favoured by butterflies, such as Red Clover and Knapweed.

You can help by making sure you have butterfly-friendly plants in your garden, too, so that whatever else may be causing the decline of many butterfly species on and around the Common, it is not lack of food.

If you are at all interested in joining our butterfly survey team, please let us know by emailing [friendsofstreathamcommon@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofstreathamcommon@gmail.com)

Surveys take place once a week from the start of April until the end of September. We walk the same route every time recording the butterflies seen within 5 metres of where we are. The data are then sent to the Surrey and South-West London branch of Butterfly Conservation. Each survey lasts about an hour. You would be welcome to join one and then, if you are interested in becoming a surveyor, we can provide training.

## Friends of Norwood Grove

Norwood Grove has always been separate from Streatham Common. It is administered by Croydon Council where the current financial difficulties mean that park budgets have been reduced to almost zero. It seems a dangerous time not to

have an active friends group representing the Grove so we have started one on Facebook called Friends of Norwood Grove.

Our aim is to protect the Grove and ensure that the park is properly maintained. We also aim to improve communication between the council and users of the park. As a community, we have already started litter picking, improving the paths and clearing the overgrown areas. We are also currently in talks with the council to replace the missing benches. We are only just beginning but if you visit the Grove and are interested in what goes on there, please feel free to join our Facebook group. If you'd like to help out occasionally then please email me at [friends.norward.grove@gmail.com](mailto:friends.norward.grove@gmail.com)

*Mike Robinson*

## Events Return To The Common

Remember what events were? Well we hope to be starting them again soon. If the current 'road map' out of lockdown does not change we will be putting on the following events for sure.

Shakespeare in the Rookery: Henry V - June 20th at 3.00pm.

Birds of Prey Flying Display - July 10th, 1.00-5.00pm.

Butterfly Walk - July 17th at 3.00pm.

Bat Walks - September 3rd and September 18th.

We may also be able to put on some type of kite-flying day and a dog show in September but these are yet to be confirmed.

Other events may take place on the Common, including a funfair, a circus, a music festival and an outdoor cinema, but these are all organised by Lambeth Council, not the Friends of Streatham Common.