



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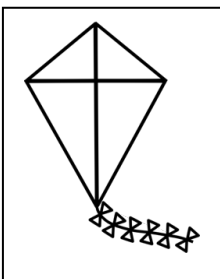
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Common Knowledge, the newsletter of the Friends of Streatham Common, is edited by Peter Newmark.
peternewmark@gmail.com

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

Membership queries:
membership@streathamcommon.org

**Our favourite events are back this autumn
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Common Knowledge

From the Chair

Freedom day arrived in a blaze of glory with the promise of everything returning to pre-pandemic normality, but with not quite the shining light we had all hoped to see. But we are closer and fingers crossed we can get there.

The Friends are working with Lambeth Council to put some new rubbish bins on the Common. We are planning to replace some of the older ones with fox and bird proof bins, which we hope will both encourage people to use them and help reduce the spread of rubbish around the Common from wildlife. We have also put forward a proposal to the Council to install three chess tables and chairs at the top of the Common, by the paddling pool. We hope this will attract people to come and socialise there and play a bit of chess. Of course it does not have to be chess: the board can be used for draughts, and the table top for any other game you feel like playing if you bring your own board. The trim trail is an ongoing project and we hope to make some progress on this before the end of the year.

I am also very pleased to say that, this year, the Friends have been able to put on a number of events that were not allowed last year. It was great to see the return of The Festival Players with their performance of Henry V in the Rookery in June. Towards the end of summer we will see the Fun Dog Show return and there could be an increase in participation with all those lockdown puppies. There will also be Doggy Splash Day. Finally, we are taking Kite Day back to its roots by having a scaled down version called Wind Day, which, some of you may recall, was the original name when it first started more than 20 years ago. These events are happening in September so, along with the various street parties around the Common, it will be a busy month!

I hope you all enjoy what remains of summer whether you are off to foreign climes or staycationing. Please remember to still follow the guidelines for Covid and stay safe wherever you go and whatever you do.

Tracey Williamson

Reporting Problems on the Common

We are aware that, for some residents who use and live near to the Common, the summer months can bring with them rising concerns about anti-social behaviour. We recently met with the local police team and Friends of Streatham Common to discuss the approach to be taken following the problems experienced last year. With limits on gathering numbers having been lifted from July 19th, we want the Common and all our green spaces to continue to be safe and enjoyable spaces for all to use.

We want to reiterate that if you have any concerns that illegal behaviour is taking place you should call the police on 101 (or on 999 but only if it is an emergency situation). Whilst a call to 101 might not always result in immediate police attendance, it does give the police a picture of what is going on which can help them plan their patrols. The police have also reminded us that whilst you will often see them in uniform, they also patrol in plain clothes, so they are around and about the Common more regularly than you might think.

If you see people breaking the Council's byelaws then please do let the Council know but be aware that there are no park wardens as such in a position to control behaviour. Nevertheless it is again important to have a good understanding of what the persistent problems are so that they can be looked into. You can email Lambeth Parks on parks@lambeth.gov.uk.

If you feel that people are gathering together for what the Council call an Unlicensed Music Event - i.e. there is amplified music and clearly an organised feel to what is going on - then please call 101 and the Council on 020 7926 1000. If necessary a borough-wide response unit will be sent to deal with it and the local police - if they are on duty at that time - will investigate and disperse the event at an early stage if possible.

If you are aware of a noise nuisance - either on the Common or in a residential area - you can find details of the Council's noise nuisance service at <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/noise-nuisance-pollution-and-anti-social-behaviour/noise-and-anti-social-behaviour/noise-nuisance> or call 020 7926 5000 when the noise service is in operation during the following times:

- Monday to Friday 9am-5pm
 - Thursday 8pm-4am
 - Friday and Saturday 9pm-5am
- Streatham South ward councillors*

Ward Boundaries

In an article in the last issue, under the title *A Bad Idea on Boundaries*, we explained why the Friends of Streatham Common opposed a proposed change to the ward boundaries in Lambeth that would create a new ward in the vicinity of Streatham Common represented by just a single councillor. We felt that it was better for the area to be part of a larger ward represented by three councillors, as now.

We urged local residents, whether agreeing with us or not, to let their views be known to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) who had made this proposal along with other changes within Lambeth. As a result of our plea and that of others, the vast majority of over 200 comments on the proposal for Streatham Common were against the proposal.

So what was the outcome? We simply don't yet know. In a letter to residents in July, we learned that the LGBCE wants to consult further on five of their proposed new wards but ours is not among them. Does this mean that LGBCE will stick to its proposal? Or that the comments were such that LGBCE has abandoned the idea of a one councillor ward and sees no need to consult further? If so, what will the new ward be? We will probably not find out until the final recommendations are published in the autumn.

Chess on the Common

Perhaps in part fuelled by the popularity of *The Queen's Gambit* series on Netflix, online chess playing boomed during lockdown. So it seems an opportune time to encourage outdoor chess on the Common.

The Friends are planning to fund three fixed chess tables somewhere in the vicinity of the paddling pool. Each comes with two chairs and both they and the tables will be close to indestructible. Anyone will be able to play - all one will have to do is bring along a set of chess pieces.

The Streatham and Brixton Chess Club support the idea as does Lambeth Council, with which discussions are underway on details of the plan.

Events Return

Because of lockdown restrictions, the Friends were unable to put on Kite Day either last spring or this spring. However this September we will hold a simplified version of the event, called **Wind Day** (which was also the title of the very first organised kite-flying day on the Common, held in March 1998).

This year's Wind Day will be on September 12th. The main aim of this community event will be to get as many locals as possible to bring their kites to the Common and fly them. Some local experts will be on hand, flying their own kites and offering advice. And, wind permitting, some spectacular large static kites will be airborne above the Common. There will a stall selling kites and both the Friends and the Streatham Common Cooperative will have stalls too. Food and drinks are likely to be provided by the Rookery Café.

We are also delighted to be able to bring back the **Streatham Common Fun Dog Show**. It will run from 11.00am to 2.00pm on September 5th opposite the Rookery Café.

The categories are Best Puppy (up to 11 months), Best Junior (12 months - 6 years), Golden Oldie (7 years and older), Fancy Dress (James Bond movie theme), Best Junior Handler (under 16), Best Rescue Dog, Waggiest Tail, and Dog That Looks Most Like Its Owner.



To speed things up on the day, entries this year must be signed up online in advance via Eventbrite (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/streatham-common-fun-dog-show-2021-tickets-161640901287>) but a suggested donation of £2 can be made at the event.

Frogs and Floods

Walk along the eastern edge of the main woodlands on the Common and down the edge of Hilly Four Acres (the meadow with the tennis court at its base) and you will see a number of changes. These have been made in the interests of both rain-water control and amphibian proliferation.

The changes include the creation of three rainwater holding pools, some fencing to



One of the new pools

prevent access to them and the exposure of the end of the pipe that channels water under the main footpath where it crosses the Lambeth/Croydon boundary. Still to come is fencing around the other pools, stabilisation, seeding and planting of their banks and, perhaps, the creation of another pool by the exposed pipe end.

The work, funded largely by the London Mayor's Grow Back Greener Fund, has been carried out by the Streatham Common Cooperative and the charity Froglife.

Three pools have been created by digging out the existing channel and creating dams. These will hold back rainwater, slow down the flow into the River Graveney and help in some small way to prevent flooding.

In time, the pools will become a home for frogs, toads, newts and other water life, especially after the edges are stabilised, seeded and planted up. Much of the work has been carried out by volunteers, with some special sessions for people with dementia.

Ice Store, Water Cistern, Cess Pit?

When a damaged metal cover in the top tier of the Rookery grounds had recently to be removed, what was revealed was a bit of a mystery but has become less so.



One initial thought was that it was an ice cellar that was attached to the house that stood nearby until 1912.

However it turns out that the structure had been partially

excavated by the Streatham Society in 1997 after a hole had appeared under a lawnmower.



That excavation revealed a circular, domed brick structure with a maximum diameter of 10 feet and sides traced down to 4 feet, with two lead pipes and one ceramic pipe projecting into it. But the question is what was it used for?

To quote the Streatham Society publication *Norwood Grove & The Rookery, Streatham Common*: "It is possible it was a cistern for the storage of mineral spring water, prior to drinking or bottling, a well head to which a pump was attached, or a cess pit" "A full interpretation can only be assessed if the rest of the structure is excavated." Excavators please step forward!

Path Improved

With strong encouragement from the

Friends, Lambeth Council has replaced the decayed wooden edging along the path around the outer edge of the Rookery that starts at the main gates and finishes by the side gate. The



Conservation Volunteers (formerly known as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) carried out the work. Thanks to all involved, this footpath will no longer be unpleasantly muddy and slippery in winter.