



streathamcommon.org

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Streatham Common Kite Day returns

Bring a kite, buy a
kite, and join in the
fun!

Sunday 14 May 2023

Common Knowledge

From the Chair

This will be the last piece I write for *Common Knowledge*, as I will be standing down at the AGM later this year.

Looking back at my time as Chair, it has presented some challenges, a global pandemic being one of them! Reading through some of the pieces I have written in the past, there is a lot about the weather, whether it be excessive rain and mud on a flooded common, or extreme heat and a very dry Common .

I am pleased that we were able to install the chess tables at the top of the Common, opposite the café and I am really hoping that they will begin to get used regularly now that the weather is getting warmer. I look forward to seeing people of all ages making use of them. If you're not a chess player, why not bring another game along and use the tables anyway. It doesn't matter what you play, just enjoy sitting outside in the fresh air. We will be holding an event to celebrate chess event later in the year: keep an eye on our website for details.

The new swales or trenches that have appeared on the Common have caused a lot of discussion amongst the public. What are they? Why are they there? They are designed to catch excess water before it runs down the Common and to reduce flooding. There was a volunteer day back in January to plant trees in the area to create a new willow rain wood. It was a great afternoon with lots of people coming out to help plant around 100 trees. I was really pleased to see how many young families came along and it was great to watch the small children getting muddy, planting trees and engaging with nature.

Finally, my usual thanks to all the executive committee for their support during my time as Chair, and to all the volunteers that help us. Without these people, we wouldn't be able to do the things we do or deliver our much loved events. *Tracey Williamson*

Willow Rain Wood

At the end of January some large scoops of earth were dug out of the Common close to Streatham Common South and used to build banks next to the trenches that had been created. Puzzled looks appeared on passers-by. But once tree planting started a few days later, it became clear that the earthworks were part of the creation of a willow rain wood.

The trenches were designed to capture rain water, both to keep the new trees hydrated and to alleviate potential flooding. And the new plantings are designed to increase biodiversity and tree coverage on the Common, as well as to provide a new area that is attractive to diverse wildlife.

Many of the trees are willows, which will be growing near to three existing large willow trees. Others are alders which, like willows, like wet ground. And the rest are other species native to the UK, such as rowans, buckthorn, aspen and dogwood. There will also be some wildflower planting and the old, partly burnt-out willow that stands a little further down the Common will be fenced off permanently to protect it from further damage.



A view of the path bridging one of the trenches, with sleepers in the water.

Most of the 150 new trees were planted on a community planting day attended by about 100 people, with the rest planted by volunteers from the Streatham Common Cooperative.

Arguably slightly at odds with the future establishment of the willow rain wood, no attempt has been made to protect it: there is no fencing, there is a path down the middle and in the water-filled trenches there are wooden sleepers to encourage play (and very wet children?).

The willow rain wood project was largely funded by the Mayor of London's Grow Back Greener Fund with a contribution from Lambeth's tree budget.



A firecrest, like this one, was a rare recent visitor to the Common - spotted in the Rookery, to be precise - in mid March. This tiny bird, weighing about the same as a 20p coin, is a close relative of the much more common goldcrest. What distinguishes the two is the huge white 'eyebrow' of the firecrest. Both species are relatively tame as they flit non-stop from branch to branch, mostly in conifers, looking for spiders and other insects to eat. The first record of breeding firecrests in the UK was in 1962. Now there are a few thousand pairs and the number is still growing. Many more firecrests visit the UK from Scandinavia in the autumn, returning in the spring, and making what must be an arduous and not always successful crossing of the North Sea.

What's Up?

Dog control - unless a just completed public consultation changes anything, Lambeth will soon have new rules aimed at reducing antisocial behaviour by a minority of dog owners. Among the rules is one that limits private individuals from walking more than four dogs, two of which would have to be on a lead. Licensed dog walkers will not be allowed more than six dogs. Anyone found breaking the rules could be issued a fixed penalty notice of £100. As ever, enforcement will be the problem.

Bee roads - the grass verge that runs along Covington Way adjacent to the Common has now become a 'Bee Road' with the planting of wild flower patches along it. The existing topsoil was replaced with a more suitable mixture and then seeded, with an added germination fleece. Let's hope that pollinating insects are not put off from visiting the flower-rich patches that should appear by the exhaust fumes of passing vehicles.

Car Park - discussions continue about the future of the car park. Both a poll and a public meeting organised by the Friends last autumn pointed in the direction of converting the area into some kind of natural play area rather than reopening it as a car park. This could only happen if funding were to be found and it would need further consultation. Meanwhile the options are either to reopen the car park in its current rather poor state or to create a temporary play area.

SCCcoop- the Streatham Common Co-operative - needs your help to improve its community activities and keep the Rookery in award-winning condition. Please look out for a new crowdfunder launching soon, donate on the SCCcoop website - sccoop.org.uk - or contact vicky.peet@sccoop.org.uk for more information.

Forthcoming Events

Spring Bat Walk, 14th April, meet by the Rookery Café at 8.15 pm. The walk will be led by Dr Iain Boulton, from Lambeth Council, and will last about one hour. Bring a torch. Booking essential: email IBoulton@lambeth.gov.uk

Spring Bird Walk, 16th April, meet by the Rookery Café at 9.30 am for a leisurely walk around the Common led by Peter Newmark. Sturdy footwear recommended. Children welcome, as are donations to the Friends of Streatham Common.

Bird Box Survey, 7th May, meet by the Rookery Café at 9.30 am. Help us find out what birds are using which nest boxes on Streatham Common this year. Bring binoculars if you can.

Kite Day, 14th May, from 11.00am to 5.00pm on the lower Common. A free event with music, food and kites! Bring a kite, buy a kite, fly a kite, watch kite flying displays. For more information visit streathamkiteday.org.uk

Celebrate Chess, 20th May (date and time to be confirmed), at the chess tables near the Streatham Common car park/ café. Play, watch and learn about chess with the Streatham and Brixton Chess Club.

Wildlife and Habitats of Streatham

Common Walk, 3rd June, meet by the Rookery Café at 2.00pm. Led by Dr Iain Boulton from Lambeth Council.

Shakespeare in the Rookery: Twelfth

Night, 4th June, 3.00pm. Booking details will be on the Friends website in due course.

Butterfly Walk, 16th July, meet at 2.30 pm by the Rookery Café. Join Peter Newmark to find out what butterflies are around and learn a bit about them. A free event; donations to the Friends of Streatham Common welcome.

Kite Day Returns

Yes, Streatham Common Kite Day is back again in all its glory. After an enforced pause for Covid and then two years where we could only mount a low-key Wind Day, May 14th sees the return of Streatham Common Kite Day as we have known and loved it for many years. It will run from 11.00 am to 5.00 pm.



Once again, the Friends of Streatham Common are working tirelessly to put on the event, which has grown from humble beginnings in 1998 to the major community event that it has become and the largest kite festival in London attracting visitors from far and wide.

This year sees the return of single and multi-kite flying displays by some of the foremost kite flyers in the country. Wind permitting, there will also be some spectacular giant kites flying around the display arena.

But above all Streatham Common Kite Day is a community event and we expect visitors to be flying hundreds of ordinary - or not so ordinary - kites in the air all the time. If you don't already own a kite, there will be some on sale throughout the day.

If the wind drops, or if you have had enough of untangling your kite from others,

there will be plenty else to do. For children there will be face painting and a bouncy castle. And there will be plenty of stalls selling food, ranging from Indian to vegetarian/vegan and from hamburgers to jerk chicken. There will be plenty to quench your thirst, too, including beer from Inkspot, our local brewery.

Music will also be part of the event, some of it accompanying the kite-flying displays but some of it live performances from a local band.

Take some time, also, to visit the many stalls of local community groups, including of course the Friends of Streatham Common where you will be able to find out more about what we have been doing and why you should consider becoming a member if you are not already one. Other community groups present will include Streatham Society and the Streatham Common Cooperative. Come along, have some fun, see you there!

Streatham Common Kite Day is wholly organised and run by the Friends of Streatham Common. A dedicated team of volunteers first make sure that everything meets the approval of Lambeth Council and then lays on the kite-displays, concessions and community stalls. On the day itself, however, many additional volunteers are needed to keep things running smoothly.

If you can spare an hour or two to help out, we would be immensely grateful. There are many opportunities. You might be happiest acting as a steward or working the crowds for donations towards the event (which is free). Or helping out with the Friends stall. Perhaps litter-picking is your thing! We also need help in setting up the event in the morning and clearing up after it ends.

If there is any way you can help, please, please let us know by emailing volunteering@streathamcommon.org