



Newsletter

Autumn 2020

The Friends work to improve the condition of the Cemetery as a burial ground and to develop it as a place of quiet recreation for local people and a haven for birds, bees and small mammals

Review of 2020 by Kath, Chair of FoSC



2020 will always be remembered as the year when everything changed. Friends of Streattham Cemetery are committed to changes that foster a more sustainable future. After lockdown started back in March, the **cemetery became a haven** for local people who needed green space in which they could safely take exercise and enjoy nature. Then sadly, it was closed to the public on 4th April – as

part of Lambeth's response to the Covid crisis. However, after public pressure and a government briefing, it re-opened on 22nd April, as people's need for open space was recognised. While it was closed the apiary was vandalised (see following bee section). This indicates that when the cemetery is regularly used it deters anti-social behaviour.

In January, the Friends planned a series of events to draw people into the cemetery as in previous years. However everything was postponed once lockdown started and committee meetings were held online. It was decided to create a **bee poster** instead of the bee walk planned for the Summer. Thanks to beekeeper Guy's hard work this poster was published and is currently displayed on railings and notice boards in the cemetery, as well as on our web site. Lambeth management also circulated it via their communications team. FoSC committee now plans to produce posters on **bats** and **butterflies** as future projects. In addition, we decided to use grant funds to create an **information board on trees** in the cemetery and this work is ongoing. Our knowledge of trees was enhanced by **Roy Vickery** of the **South London Botanical Institute**, who led a **plant walk** in early August. The walk focused on trees in order to facilitate social distancing. Committee members Lea and Guy attended and took photos – see overleaf.

Bees in the Cemetery

Summer 2020

Welcome to Streattham Cemetery
a special place where you can enjoy peace and tranquillity while remembering loved ones, or just take a gentle stroll surrounded by nature.

While you are here, look out for beautiful and interesting plants, animals, birds, butterflies and bees that make this Cemetery their home. You will see bees visiting flowers and you may hear them buzzing as you walk.

There are **three different types** of bees here:

Bumblebees with large, rounded bodies and small wings live in nests in wall cavities or holes in the ground.

Common carder bee with a black gigger coat on its thorax (David Threlkeld)

Red-tailed bumblebees fly with such small wings!

Bees, like wasps, are Hymenoptera-type insects but unlike their carnivore wasp-cousins, bees are vegetarians. Bees can sting but are much more peaceful than wasps and will not sting unless seriously provoked.

Streattham Cemetery Honey Bees - note the larger opening in the middle

How can we help the bees?

Bees eat pollen and nectar from flowers and plants and bees near to their nests and they also 'sigh' water from puddles and ponds. People can help by allowing weeds and wildflowers to grow and providing air many plants and grasses for bees to forage for nectar and pollen. It is especially good to provide a single or a few plants that together will produce sufficient flowers throughout the whole year. As well as bees and ponds, we can install artificial bee hotels, made of wood, bricks or stones, for **solitary bees** to live inside.

Red mason bee on a 'bee hotel'

Will you get stung?

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How can a big bumblebee fly with such small wings?

It seems that when bumblebees fly, they create air currents and vortices around their small wings and bodies. That gives them plenty of lift, like an aeroplane's wings, enabling them to carry their body mass. So they fly just as well as other insects that have much bigger wings or lighter bodies.

Where are the honey bees?

Wild honey bees live in hollow trees but in London, honey bees live in hives. In 2010, friends of Streattham Cemetery created an apiary with wooden hives, on the hill in the north of the cemetery. Each hive has a colony of domestic honey bees, cared for by local beekeeping volunteers. Each colony can grow to size in 20,000 bees. The bees and their Queen. They collect surplus honey (beyond what the colony needs to feed itself) and this is shared in our community.

Honey bees (Apis mellifera) are 1cm in length with smooth and black and gold or brown bodies.

Many thanks to Ian Boulton at Lambeth Council for support with production of this poster. Printing by Lucinda Downing. Photos by Roy Turner and Guy Jaggs/foSC.

Bee poster - the first of several nature posters planned to interest visitors



Left: Roy Vickery examines the curious fan-shaped leaves of the Ginkgo or Maidenhair tree. Right: The stunning Japanese Pagoda tree forming a carpet of blossom and attracting our bees.

2020 Review by Guy, Head beekeeper for FoSC

At the end of last year **Rob McDonald**, one of our beekeepers, sent off a test-tube of our honey to the **National Honey Monitoring Scheme**. In March 2020 we received the analysis which made fascinating reading. It is often said that the complexity of London



Ribwort Plantain (foreground) and Cat's Ear (yellow flowers in background) - significant sources of nectar

honey is what makes it so delicious. Ours contained 52 different types of nectar, over half of which came from just three wildflowers: Ribwort Plantain, Yarrow and Crucifer. These are abundant across the cemetery as are Lime trees, Clover and Cat's Ear - other significant sources. Nearby gardens contributed nectar from hydrangeas and privet as well as some exotic imports: Eucalyptus, Woolly Tea Tree and Koromiko.

April heralded a spectacular Spring of warm dry weather - perfect for bees. Our two colonies rapidly became four and then five, a record number. Beekeeping continued throughout lockdown - bees are considered livestock and their care was classed as essential work! Sadly the brief closure of the cemetery saw the first act of vandalism in nine years: slashed mesh and a kicked-over hive. It suggests that a well-used cemetery is safer and better respected. (The bees were none the worse for their tumble.)

We had a good Spring harvest and gave nine jars of honey to the key workers of Streatham Cemetery to show our appreciation. In late May, when we thought the risk of swarming had passed, three queens took off with their swarms, leaving our bee population greatly depleted. However, we still managed a modest harvest over the summer months which was recently extracted by beekeeper **Stephen King** and his family - see his interesting photo, right. The honey will soon be sold locally to help fund next year's beekeeping efforts.



Light Spring honey (left) vs dark Summer honey (right)



Lockdown in the cemetery - by Gill, FoSC committee member

During and since lockdown my husband Alb and I have been taking socially distanced exercise. Locally there is very little green space and most of it accessed via busy roads. We have enjoyed the peace of Streatham Cemetery, the abundant wildlife and the shade of the well established trees. As Alb is over 70 he hasn't returned to the gym which was his regular pre-lockdown exercise but has taken up alternating exercising at home and early morning jogging round the Cemetery, which is looking tidier since they strimmed the grass.

Extra info - we live in **Rogers Road** so the **Broadwater gate** is very useful to us. Alb survived, relatively unscathed, a stroke in 2011 so benefits from regular, not too demanding, exercise.

Update on the Springfield Development

Kath recently attended an online meeting of the **Springfield Community Forum**. She asked when the new park adjoining Streatham Cemetery would be opened. The response was that it is happening in stages: first an area alongside Burntwood Lane should open in **2023**. Later the area near Streatham Cemetery will open, and an entrance is planned between the new park and the cemetery for walkers and cyclists. This stage should be completed towards the end of **2024** or early **2025**. The Friends are very keen to see this project finished and welcome the news, although it is taking longer than they hoped. More information from the website www.springfieldvillage.info or email community@springfieldvillage.info.

Fishponds Field

In January **Forever Fishponds** held a meeting in the vestry to reimagine the future of this large open space adjoining the cemetery. As a result of their campaign Fishponds Field was **opened to the public during the school summer break**, giving the people of Tooting an extra much needed open space to use and enjoy. Well done to **Lucy Neal** and Forever Fishponds! However the field is now closed and the campaign to keep it open continues. FoSC is committed to opening another gate from the cemetery into Fishponds field (see the old blocked gate, right). A new gateway would create a green walking/cycling route from Hebdon Road, Tooting to Burntwood Lane, near Wandsworth Common.



2020 saw Fishponds Field made available for local use but clearly there's not much nature to enjoy. FoSC Committee would like to see an imaginative development of this neighbouring space and the creation of a through route.

Please send your views to foreverfishponds@gmail.com



AGM

At **11am** on **Saturday 21 November** the Friends will hold their **2020 AGM**. Social distancing means this year's AGM will be conducted on Zoom. Members are invited to register their interest by emailing lucy@lucyneal.co.uk who will send the meeting link nearer the date.

Membership

Membership renewal for **2021** is due between now and the end of the year. As events have been cancelled, please contact us on FriendsofStreathamCemetery@gmail.com or email Carole, our membership secretary, on caroleaireland@aol.com for details about renewing.

More Links

Check out our website and Twitter account: see our bee poster and more on www.FriendsofStreathamCemetery.co.uk or http://twitter.com/FOSC_Tooting



To see pictures of wildlife in the cemetery, go to: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/StreathamCemeteryWildlife>

For information about local history walks organised by Geoff Simmons, please go to: www.summerstown182.wordpress.com

For information about burials in the cemetery email: bereavementservices@lambeth.gov.uk. The cemetery office is only seeing people by appointment (Tel 020 7926 4221).



Autumn brings it's own colours and pleasures. While the future is uncertain, one thing is sure: Covid-19 has really made Tooting residents value and enjoy this historic green space.