

FRIENDS OF FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS



ISSUE 13

NEWSLETTER

March 2014

www.footscraymeadows.org

email : ffcm06@gmail.com

Meadows or Lakes?



Rear of High Beeches and the Spinney



Five Arches Bridge looking towards Royal Park

depth of the water table largely depends on the material that the earth underneath you is composed of and the amount of precipitation available.

Knowledge of water levels can help determine the likelihood of an area flooding.

Although in a Flood Plain most of the water you can see lying on the meadows is from the rain over the last few months. Whenever it rains, water drains through the soil until it reaches the point in the earth that is saturated with water, and moves no further. The



Chairs Chat

Sunshine and dry ground underfoot should return to the Meadows sometime soon! The gloom of the winter will seem long gone. But as the Meadows spring into a new season we must retain the tinge of concern for our open space because of the huge budget reductions facing Bexley's Grounds Maintenance (Public Realm) and strategic development (Parks & Open Spaces) Teams. This is ultimately how the infrastructure of our open spaces and parks are maintained. Yes Friends groups like ours make a difference and can and do work with the Local Authority to seek improvements. But without continued investment and commitment to maintaining our natural environment the past achievements of our parks teams will be irretrievably lost and Bexley will become a less pleasant place to live and work in. Our thoughts on this will have been made during the recent budget consultation but with Council Elections in May we should continue to raise the importance of the Boroughs Open Spaces for nature and people, you may wish to challenge the extent of the reductions to our Parks Service; why not?

I like many of the committee are founders of the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows. Together with a strong membership we are a proven, responsible and well respected group. We will remain a key partner working with Bexley to contribute to the protection of the Meadows, promoting their value and the need to balance their dual role as a natural environment and public amenity. Both of which are crucial to the health and prosperity of our community. We will continue with our activities and must seek to include others who responsibly use and enjoy the Meadows. Examples are: this year's Fun Dog Show which leads our programme of activities; The RSPB Bird walk will be led by a founder member of the Friends.

More than ever the Friends need to continue and Bexley needs similar groups throughout the Borough. Our continued success needs a programme of succession from new and active members; do consider the committee posts and yes even a change of Chairperson should be a good move.

For the last two years I have worked for Thames21 as their River Cray project officer and many of you are aware of this intrinsic link with the Meadows. Our short urban river is much loved by the people of Bromley and Bexley. However, it has been heavily modified over the last three centuries from its natural chalk stream model to today's often stressed river habitat. Surprisingly this is even so at and around Footh Cray Meadows where remnants of industrial use and aesthetic modification have left us with,

straight, concrete sections, reaches of over wide channel, uniform water levels and a lack of marginal vegetation at the river edges all of which minimises the River Cray's potential as a natural river corridor. We now have the opportunity to address this and improve the visitor experience the river brings to Footh Cray Meadows.

Thames21 with North West Kent Countryside Partnership (NWKCP) have secured funding for a wonderful opportunity for the community to be involved in the creation of river habitat enhancement downstream of the five arches. In stream the proposals are: for some gravel shifting and deflectors to restore a varied river bed giving a mixed flow velocity with riffles and pools. At the river edge areas of marginal vegetation will provide improved; river side wildlife habitat, with greater vegetation more insect's etc. better fish habitat and more Macrophytes (in stream vegetation).

We will also look to upgrade the river walking experience around these pockets of marginal river bank vegetation, and with restoration of some eroded paths. Walkers can enjoy and monitor their development as the natural environment benefits from less intrusion along areas of the river bank, to allow a home for wildlife. The loss of the three Poplar trees last autumn, their upturned roots and large wooden debris beside the river has started this process and shows how we can complement how the river wants to flow through the Meadows, without detriment to our flood control measures.

Last year a similar improvement programme was completed on the Cray at Hall Place and this has met with a positive reception. These types of water environment improvements are Central Government policy being delivered through the Catchment Based Approach to England's Rivers. Locally the River Cray Catchment Improvement Group brings together, Local Authorities, Environment Agency, NWKCP, Thames21 Landowners, other groups and communities to develop a local plan to improve our local water bodies.

Finally I report the death of Bridget Harrington, She and her Husband John were founder committee members of the Friends and while they differed over one woodland management issue we did as I often said have more common ground in our concerns for the Meadows. Bridget loved the Meadows in her own way and patrolled them for many years, long before I moved to Sidcup.

Michael Heath

Comment ffcm06@gmail.com
Michael.heath@thames21.org.uk

Editorial

Our apologies for not including a management update from Bexley Parks but it won't have escaped your notice that conditions on the meadows have prevented any work being carried out.

The rain and gales that have occurred over the past few months have been a timely reminder to me of the noticeable changes in our weather patterns and the need to ensure we do all we can to protect our environment.

Nick



Committee Members

- **Chairman - Michael Heath**
- **Secretary - Karen Wheeler**
- **Vice Secretary - Margaret Dodd**
- **Treasurer - Margaret Dodd**
- **Membership Secretary - Margaret Dodd**
- **Events Manager - Lesley Grant**
- **Publicity Manager - Sally Lands**
- **Newsletter Editor - Nick Grant**
- **Committee Members - Vera Heath, Jan Harmer, Raj Gajebasia**

We need a Conservation Manager.

www.footscraymeadows.org

email : ffcm06@gmail.com



This July the FFCM are going to be running another Fun Dog Show. Some of the previous favourite categories, like Prettiest Lady and Cutest Pup will remain but we are introducing a few new ones.

Although it is a bit early to say exactly who will be there, we are inviting a variety of stallholders to have stalls on the site including tombola and raffles, and we also hope to attract a few food caterers as well.

This year we will be returning to rosettes, certificates and prizes for placed dogs although photos with the judge, Rob Alleyne of TV's Dog Borstal fame, will be taken and will be available on the FFCM website for download or if preferred will be printed and sent to dog owners.

Volunteers to help on the day of the Fun Dog Show, SATURDAY 5th JULY 2014 will be gratefully accepted, please let Margaret Dodd, Show Organiser know of your availability and any ideas you may have by ringing or emailing on: -

07874217186 - maggie.dodd@hotmail.co.uk

Aims and Objectives

- Working in partnership with Bexley Council to encourage public interest in, and the conservation of Footh Cray Meadows (FCM).
- To protect the wildlife and its habitat within FCM.
- To provide a focus for involvement by the community and users in the open space, to volunteer and work with the Council, in the conservation of FCM and its development as a public open space.
- To advance the public's awareness of the open space by promoting FCM its plants, wildlife, landscape, sustainability and supporting appropriate recreational facilities for the benefit of community groups and the general public.
- To develop and deliver information, interpretive material and educational opportunities for FCM
- To raise funds for the purpose of achieving the above aims.

Global warming? Climate change? What's it all about?

We know some people find the whole issue of climate change confusing. A few still debate whether it's really happening, and its causes. Others argue over the best ways of controlling it. The key elements are: -

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) – a natural gas, essential for all life on earth. It's absorbed by plants as they grow, and emitted by all life forms when they respire and when they die (or are burnt as fuel). Other than water vapour, it's the most common 'greenhouse gas'.

Greenhouse gases (GHG) – including carbon gases like carbon dioxide and methane, are vital in the Earth's atmosphere in certain quantities because they help trap and retain some of the sun's heat (the 'greenhouse effect'). This makes life as we know it possible on Earth – without it the world would be mostly frozen. But too much is dangerous too...

Carbon cycle – the natural processes that emit and absorb carbon gases across the globe, determining the overall levels of carbon gases in the atmosphere.

Human activity – over the past 150 years, industrialised nations have unwittingly changed the balance of the carbon cycle by burning huge amounts of fossil fuels (like coal, oil, gas), as well as breeding vast numbers of methane-producing livestock, and cutting down the forests that naturally absorb carbon dioxide from the air. The extra carbon in the atmosphere has been raising global temperatures, and the speed of change has been faster than any natural process, and faster

than most natural systems can adapt.

Global warming – doesn't mean we'll all have warmer weather in future. As the planet heats, climate patterns change, with more extreme and unpredicted weather across the world – many places will be hotter, some colder. Some wetter, others drier. We know the planet has warmed by an average of nearly 1°C in the past century. Might not sound much, but on a global scale that's a huge increase that's creating big problems for people and wildlife.

2° is too much – a rise of just 2°C means:

- severe storms and floods in some countries, droughts in many more
- seas become more acidic, coral and krill die, food chains are destroyed
- little or no Arctic ice in summer – not just bad news for polar bears, it also means that the global climate warms faster (as there's less polar ice to deflect sunlight).

Beyond 2° – scientists predict possible rises of up to 6° this century if we don't drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions. We barely want to think about what this would mean. Rainforests dying. Increased melting of the ancient ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica. Dramatic sea level rises. And people and animals suffering along the way.

The good news is, if we accept that we're a major cause of climate change, we can choose to do something about it. But we have to do it soon.

AJ's bit



Come mud and high water my owners have still been walking me around the meadows. Nobody has seen the meadows with quite so much water and there are still places that you cannot walk without wellies not that that bothers me. There are huge numbers of gulls swimming around taking advantage of the extra ponds which nature has provided.

All the gales have also brought down branches which have given all my canine friends lots of sticks to play with. Sadly some of our big trees have come down making some areas of the meadows inaccessible. In past years I have been around with the friends group of volunteers when they have been planting whips which I hope will in time will grow and replace some of the ones we have lost.

I notice that the Fun Dog Show is to take place again this year. I will of course be entering 'The Most Obedient Dog' class. Those that know me will know that I shall definitely get first prize - I don't think!

Now it finally has stopped raining and the sun has started to shine my owners are enjoying our walks. At long last there are flowers and birdsong on our meadows.

Dates for your Diary: Future Events

We hope you are interested in joining in the many events we will be hosting or supporting in the coming months. At all the events listed there will be Committee Members attending. Dates (where known) and a brief description are below; look out for publicity in the weeks leading up to each date. For further information please contact the Events Manager on 07858762530

- ◆ **25th March - RSPB Bird Walk** (9.30am - 12noon meeting at Leaffield Lane)
 This gentle bird watching walk is suitable for all bird watchers but would be especially suitable for beginners and is being led by Ralph Todd (more information on this and other RSPB events log on to <http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/bexley/events/>)
- ◆ **April/May - FFCM "Bluebell Walk"**
- ◆ **10th May - FFCM "Paws for Tea"**
- ◆ **24th June - FFCM "Annual General Meeting"**
- ◆ **5th July - FFCM "Fun Dog Show"**
- ◆ **July - "Love Parks Park"** (possible history walk tba)
- ◆ **6th September - "Bat Walk"**

Posters advertising FFCM Events will also be in the noticeboards at the entrances to the Meadows at the following locations- Car Park, Riverside Road, Leaffield Lane and outside Stable House and the Information Centre.

Alternatively you can visit www.footscraymeadows.org

Join Today **Membership costs just £5 per household annually**

The Friends of Foots Cray Meadows is a voluntary group funded by its membership & fund raising activities.

Membership will grant you

- Seasonal Newsletters that will include updates on projects.
- Reduced admission on any talks or events that we are not able to host for free.
- Additional Meadows related contacts, whether you would like help with
- Getting an event off the ground or simply would like to share some ideas or concerns regarding Footh Cray Meadows.
- Early notification of meetings, events and talks.

Money raised will help to:

- Fund projects that will both protect and benefit The Meadows.
- Encourage interest & enthusiasm in the area.
- Organise outdoor events & talks.
- Improve facilities (initially the Wildlife and Information Centre).

Any names and contact information gathered by The Friends of Footh Cray Meadows will only be used by themselves or Bexley Council on their behalf and not passed onto any third parties.

Name Enclosed is my/our subscription. £5

Children's Names (if applicable) Enclosed is a donation to The Friends. £

Address *Please make cheque's payable to:*
Friends of Footh Cray Meadows
and send them along with your completed form to:

Margaret Dodd
FFCM Membership Secretary
32 Riverside Road
Sidcup
Kent DA14 4PU

Phone

Email

