

FRIENDS OF FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS



ISSUE 16

NEWSLETTER

December 2016

www.footscraymeadows.org

email : ffcm06@gmail.com

Merry
Christmas

To all members of the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows may we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year we look forward to your continued support in the coming year

FFCM

10th Anniversary of the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows

The Friends of Foots Cray Meadows have been in existence for 10 years this year having been formed in 2010. To celebrate this 10 established new trees were planted in the meadows below Stable House.

with the trees such as issues with stakes and the cages that enclose the trunks. Then hopefully the maintenance, above what the contractors will do, can be undertaken by FFCM or other volunteers and reports for problems with the trees can be highlighted early on.



- 1 Pin Oak - *Quercus palustris*
- 2 Foxglove Tree - *Paulownia tomentosa*
- 3 Paper Birch - *Betula papyrifera*
- 4 Japanese Elm - *Zelkova serrata*
- 5 Sweet Gum - *Liquidambar styraciflua*
- 6 Elm Cultivar - *Ulmus Lobel*
- 7 Hop Hornbeam - *Ostrya carpinifolia*
- 8 Walnut - *Juglans regia*
- 9 Norway Maple - *Acer platanoides (crimson king)*
- 10 Tulip Tree - *Liriodendron tulipifera*

On Saturday 4th June FFCM members gathered for the official opening ceremony and an explanation of the trees chosen (see below for details of the species). This was followed by a short master-class in tree care. Included in the master class was, what maintenance is essential and what is desirable as well as a demonstration in enlarging the tree pits and the mulching of them.

Also given were indicators of potential problems

Repairing our River



Regular visitors to Foots Cray Meadows may have seen the Thames21 volunteers and the students of St Paul's Academy working hard to restore the banks of the river. Here is a little insight into the work we've carried out over the past few months and what plans we at Thames21 have to improve the river and protect its habitats. Foots Cray Meadows has continued to be a hub for volunteers since I took over from Michael Heath as Assistant Project officer for the

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Chairs Chat

I have just come in from a bitterly cold windy day on the Meadows beside the River Cray with a St Pauls Academy Geography Field Trip. It's taking some time for me to warm up so as I start to write my thoughts are that winter is coming and will it be (unlike recent years) a harsh, hard frozen season, snow and fun for some, testing for others!

I recalled that I have opened my winter edition article in this way before. But why not make the reference again to the changing seasons. 2016 has been the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows (FFCM) ten-year anniversary and winter will take us into the challenges of our eleventh year. Whilst the Meadows settle down for possibly a long hard winter, the committee will be planning ahead. Also, as always people will continue to visit the meadows and enjoy the opportunity to be out in the open close to home, in winter when nature on the lake and in the woodlands, settles down a little. Will the 'Five Arches' I wonder (as my cup of tea warms me up) this year be under a blanket of snow and ice.

The picture below was taken in February 2009 and reminds us of the pleasant experiences we may have walking the Meadows this winter but there will be waterfowl on the lake and we should continue to respect the Meadows as a Nature Reserve as well as our amenity.



Looking at that picture I note that the willow behind the bridge came to the end of its life and has gone but has been replaced, the other willows around the lake have this year or will be cut back to extend their life; Trees have been a feature of the Friends many of the whips we planted have become well established and ten new trees were recently introduced in celebration of our first decade between Rectory Lane and the Lime avenue. We did some volunteer work to look after them but the main credit for caring for them must go to Sid Wilkinson who ensured they were watered

during the dry spell.

The committee continued working to engage with visitors and promote the good health of the Meadows as Natural Open Space and a public amenity with, stalls at the Bexley History Fair and at the Sidcup Pageant, our events included, paws for tea, opening the Information centre and our biennial and ever popular Fun Dog Show. Besides the FFCM the Meadows are looked after by other people: there are: the volunteer river keepers who know a lot about the Cray, others who pick up the litter as part of their daily walk, schools, youth groups, local interest groups all visit and use the Meadows. Some compile wildlife reports and some of these are published on www.bexleywildlife.org others report any issues to the authorities and together we all play a part in looking after the site.

What an open space we have to enjoy and look after! The landscaping by Capability Brown and his like in the 18th century was so effective that today even being situated in Outer London the impact of isolation can be astonishing, spectacular and therapeutic all in the time of a short local walk. Thus, the Meadows being on our 'doorstep' are very popular and the reality is that: the footfall from, people; horses and dogs will wear away the popular walking routes and the river banks. There will be some instances of anti-social behaviour including: unauthorised vehicles, too many dogs with one walker, horses being ridden off the permitted ride, litter and so on; We can and do lament on this behaviour; the lack of security patrols... but I have mentioned above the care people give in their own time, we do have a committed Parks and Open space team; albeit restricted by budget and finite resources. We speak directly to the local police safer neighbourhood team. Whilst saddening as these negative issues are, they should be seen in context of the numbers who do come and use the Meadows responsibly for which the vast majority; their visit will be very enjoyable and trouble free.

Being as busy as ever I wonder if it is time to invest in a survey of the people who do visit the Meadows? We have the aforementioned regulars; but what do we know about the Meadows as a public amenity; how many people visit, why and from where do they come? To comment or tell us why you come and what you enjoy most from your visits by email the friend's ffcm06@gmail.com

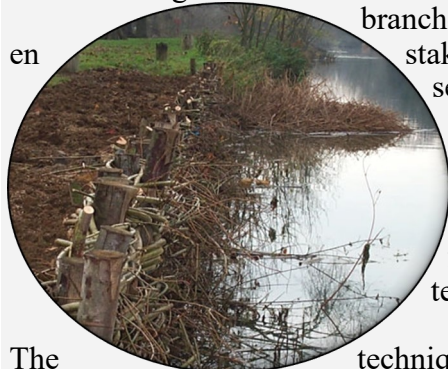
In the meantime, do come along to enjoy the Meadows during winter, we will be back in the new year with more events and will be looking for your continued support by renewing your membership and why not make a difference: bring your ideas along and help 'run' the friends or join in.

Michael Heath

River Cray in December 2015.

This year, one of our main focuses has been the challenging job of rebuilding the banks of the River Cray. River bank erosion is caused by two primary components; the flow of the waterway and human activity. The force of the water wears down the banks and eventually causes it to collapse, so it has been our duty to rebuild this and prevent it from happening by using a method called willow spiling.

Willow spiling is a traditional technique used to stabilise eroding banks. It consists of weaving willow branches between wooden



en stakes which we have secured to the bed of the river. This may sound simple but it's actually tough work for our volunteers! The technique involves using a heavy metal pole to create a hole in the bed of the river and using a mallet to whack in the stakes. The space behind the willow wall and the existing bank is then filled with soil and gravel from the river bed to recreate the original bank. In some areas, you may see that we have not filled in the areas fully-our plan for 2017 is to use a digger to fill in these gaps (some tasks can't physically be carried out by Thames21 volunteers alone!).

Working alongside us have been the hardy students of St Paul's Academy. They have been hauling heavy tools, rambling around in waders, and splashing about, in spite of the cold weather, helping Thames21 to maintain the River Cray. This has been an exciting opportunity for students; a chance for them work outside and connect with nature.

A huge thank you to the many volunteers who have put in so many hours supporting Thames21 and their local environment. We look forward to a new year of hard work; continuing our bank restoration project, clearing the river and banks of litter, and planting new sedges to keep the waterway at Foots Cray Meadows a healthy place for wildlife and a tranquil place for the public.

Whether you're a school looking to learn about your local waterway or an individual who wants to lend a hand - whoever you are, we're always looking for new volunteers. To get involved please contact me by emailing joanna.barton@thames21.org.uk.

Editorial

Our apologies to all Members for the non-publication of our summer newsletter, which was due to the number of events requiring publicity material being prepared.

Also, there have been recently a number of publications suggesting that there has been an increase in "attacks" on the Meadows. Emotive use of language which actually refers to one or two instances of dogs going for other dogs the fact is very few owners let their animals run riot.

Editor



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, Steve Brown**

**We need a Conservation Manager.
Please contact us if interested.**

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email : ffcm06@gmail.com

Aims and Objectives

- Working in partnership with Bexley Council to encourage public interest in, and the conservation of Foots 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.

A year of FFCM

Over the past 12 months we have either organised or supported a number of activities and events.

February

28th - Bexley History Fair

May

16th - FFCM "Paws for Tea" in support of the Blue Cross Animal Charity

June

4th - FFCM 10th Anniversary Tree Planting

18th - Sidcup Great War Pageant

25th - Fun Dog Show

September

8th - FFCM Bat Walk

Between March and November the Information Centre has been open on the first Saturday of each month. In addition it was also open in support of many of the activities described.



BEXLEY Meadows Management Update
As the owner of the Meadows Bexley Council are responsible for the Management of the site. We thank them for this update. Editor

The main maintenance activities to be undertaken on the meadows this winter.

- Two of the weeping willows next to the lake have been re-pollard to improve light levels in around that section of the lake. Pollarding tree is known to help increase the life expectancy of a tree considerably especially if done on a regular cycle 8-15 year's.
- Later this winter work will be undertaken to prune back willows growth that has grown out from the islands and across the river. This is causing problems for water flow in places and allowing dogs, foxes and other animals to get on to the islands and thus threatening the habitat of many birds.
- The main glade in North Cray woods just off from the central ride will be opened up once more as the regenerating woodland has enclosed on it in recent years. This will help spring wild flowers such blue bells put on a far better show in the spring and provide woodland edge habitat that is important for many butterflies and other insects as well as some bird species.

Parks Team

"Bexley Civic Society History Fair"

Hall Place was the venue for the fair and a large number of organisations were represented. The Friends of Footh Cray Meadows had a display stand telling people all about the Meadows and its historical connections. A steady number of visitors came to see the display during the day and members of the executive committee took turns in manning the stand.

"Sidcup Great War Pageant"

This event organised by Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society took place on Saturday 18th June in Sidcup High Street to commemorate life on the Home Front during World War 1. There were many Groups taking part and FFCM had a display stand telling people all about Footh Cray Meadows which was visited by a large number of people during the day.

Paws For Tea Thank you for your support at the event on 14th May at the Information Centre. Many thanks to Jan and Lesley for donating some lovely homemade cakes and helping serve the other refreshments and dog treats (for the dogs) provided by the Friends of Footh Cray Meadows. We managed to raise £50.40 for Blue Cross and we look forward to raising more for them 1st May 2017 when I hope to see you again.

The 10th Anniversary of the Friends of Footh Cray Meadows was celebrated by organising their 4th Fun Do Show on 25th June 2016. The day started dry and sunny and everyone seemed to have a lovely day with entrants judging at 12 noon by Rob Alleyne and various stalls to look around and enjoy. Light rain set in when the Show had packed and tidied up so timing was great. Details of the winners are available on the Friends website. We hope everyone enjoyed the day as we did.

Margaret Dodd

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 07858 762530

- ◆ 5th March - History Fair
- ◆ 1st May - "Paws for Tea" Blue Cross Animal Charity
- ◆ 27th May to 4th June - London Tree Week
- ◆ 20th June - "Annual General Meeting" (to be confirmed)
- ◆ 14th July to 23 July - Love Parks Week
- ◆ 9th September - "Bat Walk"

The Information Centre opens on the 1st Saturday of each month (10.00-1.00) between March and November

Posters advertising FFCM Events will also be in the noticeboards at the entrances to the Meadows at the following locations - Car Park, Riverside Road, Leafield 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

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 Foots 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 Foots 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 Foots 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 _____