

FRIENDS OF



# FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS

ISSUE 20

NEWSLETTER

December 2019

[www.footscraymeadows.org](http://www.footscraymeadows.org)

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*Merry Christmas*



*Happy New Year*

# Chairs Chat

It seems a while since my last article for this newsletter and I find that once again the Meadows are bedding down for the winter when the grey wet days may be brightened with some cool sunshine and possibly even a proper cold snap. Whatever, people will still be able to visit and we will all persist with our routine, complaining that it is wet underfoot but expecting the ground to recover in the spring.

In some ways that is very much the essence of Foots Cray Meadows a little piece of nature nestled within housing and industrial units of Bexley where people visit or get active. When I look back over the years we have delivered a Friends group for the Meadows I wonder if I really had an idea what I was letting myself in for. I soon found out that it is lot more than the 'five arches' and that it means many different things to so many, all of whom seem to have an opinion, Nevertheless with a trusted and committed committee and regular volunteers we have successfully worked to our founding aims.

It is time for others to join in the challenge of running a Friends Group, the committee feels unable to plan, organise and deliver a 'Fun Dog Show' next summer. We need more supporters for the capacity to hold this type

of larger event.

The irony is that this year has for the Friends been very productive by: working with the Charity Froglife on our pond habitat, an increase in the use of the Information Centre with litter picks.

We have supported school field trips and Foots Cray Meadows is now a destination site for the Children's University. Thames21 through Ray, the Head Volunteer River Keeper retain an active presence for the River Cray.

The Parks Team at Bexley, in recognising our collaborative contribution as the established group for the Meadows are setting up a 'problem solving partnership' to formally bring together agencies we have worked with in the past such as the Environment Agency, Thames21 and the Police, the future is bright for the Meadows and the Friends Group. All we need now is for you to come along and get involved.

Whilst we set up for more of the above in 2020 I reckon that there comes a time to stand aside and give the younger generation ago, it is after all about community wellbeing, the local natural environment and ultimately climate...

Come on step up and make a difference to the nature on your doorstep.

Michael Heath  
Comment by e mail [ffcm06@gmail.com](mailto:ffcm06@gmail.com)

## Keeping the Meadows Tidy

**When the Information Centre is open on the first Saturday of each month a dedicated band of members of the Friends don Hi Viz jackets and with plastic sacks, litter pickers proceed to various points of the Meadows to pick up litter.**

**As can be seen from the photo on the right large amounts are sometimes picked up, a mixture of paper, plastic are bagged up and placed at a point ready for the Councils staff to remove to the recycling centre. The metal cans collected are kept separate, bagged up sold and the money raised given to support another group working on the "Shuttle".**



**The group in the picture right was just one of a number active on the same day and ranged in age down to our youngest who is just 6.**



# Meadows Management Update



Foots Cray Meadows is our biggest outdoor space with significantly large areas of grass. As the contractor is running behind schedule at Foots Cray Meadows he has engaged a sub-contractor to assist with the mowing programme on site. This is at no additional cost to the Council and the sub-contractor was expected to commence work on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July. The contractor has been instructed to pay particular attention to some of the boundaries where there has been some encroachment from scrub and brambles and we will see some noticeable improvements around the edges of the Meadows over the coming months.

Cleansing operations are continuing in Foots Cray Meadows and a litter bin replacement programme is nearing completion. A vandalised recycle bin at Royal Park Playground and a number of heavy duty dog waste bins are also programmed for replacement. In addition to the scheduled cleansing operations we also have volunteer litter pickers on site including the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows and this service is also bolstered by park wardens and weekend duty staff. The Five Arch Bridge area continues to be a litter hot spot and resources will be directed at this location.

We are arranging to refurbish the existing benches where necessary and will replace some with all metal construction benches for future longevity. These will be installed where the wooden benches need replacing. Our grounds maintenance contractor has started work on restoring the permitted horse ride using a tractor mounted flail. Further work is needed, such as the area at the Water Lane entrance and a ride-on flail mower will be used in this area. Once the grass has been cut and standards are achieved we will programme tree canopy lifting work but this will be post bird nesting season.

An order has been raised for 33 replacement posts also arrangements for a site meeting with the Council's fencing contractor for the replacing the chestnut riven double rail fencing at Horseshoe (dead end) towards the Ellenborough Road. Arrangements are also in hand to replace the circular disks missing from the horse ride marker posts and Wardens have commenced work on repainting all the posts in white. replacements bollards have now been installed. It is

also proposed to install a fence on the Meadows between St. James Church and the start of Leaffield Lane as an anti-traveller incursion measure.

Parks and Open Spaces  
Bexley London Borough

*Editor: At the time of going to press a number of the items mentioned have either been completed or are in the process of being completed'*

## Committee Members



- **Chairman - Michael Heath**
  - **Secretary - Jan Harmer**
  - **Vice Secretary - Margaret Dodd**
  - **Treasurer - Margaret Dodd**
  - **Membership Secretary - Margaret Dodd**
  - **Events Manager - Lesley Grant**
  - **Newsletter Editor - Nick Grant**
  - **Publicity Manager - Sally Lands**
  - **Conservation Officer - Sid Wilkinson**
- Committee Members - Vera Heath, Steve Brown  
Raj Gajebasia, Ray Hudson , Co-opted Thames21**

[www.footscraymeadows.org](http://www.footscraymeadows.org)

email : [ffcm06@gmail.com](mailto: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.

## Community Engagement

Apart from working in partnership with Bexley Council encouraging public interest in, and the conservation of Foots Cray Meadows the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows also provide a focus for involvement by the community and users in the open space, to volunteer and work with the Council, in it's development as a public open space.

To this end over the past year we have engaged with a number of local schools delivering information, interpretive material and educational opportunities and it is hoped that this will lead to these schools becoming more involved.

The Information Centre is open on the first Saturday of each month except the winter months of December, January and February and also whenever activities that the Friends are organising or supporting. Volunteers

are on hand to explain the history of the site and the role they play.

This year volunteers have responded to requests to meet and give talks to specific groups at the Information Centre to explain the role the Friends have in supporting the Management of the Meadows by Bexley Council.

We are also actively engaging with London Borough of Bexley Parks and Open spaces team, who are to develop a Problem Solving Partnership This would include interested parties such as ourselves and key stakeholders such as the Environment Agency, the RSPB, the Police and Thames21 to review and develop a policy and plan of action for addressing the conflicts affecting visitors, (including dog and horses) the wildlife and particularly the wildfowl at Foots Cray Meadows.

FFCM

**River Cray Project - Foots Cray Meadows** Thames21 has received funding from Enover Community Trust and Bexley council for a project on the River Cray, which is due to run until spring 2021. The project involves citizen science, physical works to improve the River Cray at Foots Cray Meadows, and community engagement activities along the river. The funding has been awarded for "the conservation of a specific species or a specific habitat where it naturally occurs" – in this case chalk stream habitat.

Enhancement works have previously been carried out at Foots Cray Meadows by Thames21 and North West Kent Countryside Partnership. This project aims to build on and add to these enhancement works, with additional in-channel features and large wood. Designs for the river restoration are currently being finalised, following site assessment by the Thames21 river restoration team. The aim is for works to begin in spring 2020 following sign-off of designs and permits.

The works will focus on the river downstream of Five Arch Bridge, where key issues include over-widening, a very uniform (flat) riverbed, poaching and erosion from dogs and walkers, over-shading, and lack of in-channel and marginal vegetation. The enhancement works will introduce woody debris into the river to mimic natural processes: narrowing the channel, encouraging dynamic flow patterns and a varied riverbed profile; and allowing greater opportunity for in-channel and marginal vegetation to develop naturally. Increased habitat variability and availability will benefit wildlife including invertebrates, fish and birds. In-channel features will be installed during a series of volunteer events for the local community. For any works that are not suitable for volunteers to conduct, skilled contractors will be engaged. The woody debris in the form of trees and brash will be sourced on-site.

This photograph shows large wood 'in action' in London's chalk streams: this was taken earlier this year at Foots Cray Meadows, where a piece of large wood in the channel upstream of Five Arch Bridge was noted by the EA as having positive impacts on the river dynamics. In addition to the physical works, ten citizen scientists attended Modular River Physical Survey (MoRPh) training at Hall Place in September, and have been putting their training into practise and conducting surveys regularly since, despite the chilly weather!



For more information on MoRPh please see:  
<https://modularriversurvey.org/>.



### Editorial :

*Those who regularly visit the Meadows will have noticed that the islands in the middle of the Lake were heavily pruned at the beginning of the year which looked quite drastic . These islands are growing in shallow water and need pruning more regularly otherwise the plants and trees may get blown over in high winds. They are now growing back and in fact do provide a relatively safe nesting area for the Swans and the Egyptian Geese. Our Swans continue to be a source of interest to all visitors to the Meadows. Sadly we lost some of the very young cygnets this year and the Penn recently as the result of being attacked by a dog. It is natural for some dogs to chase birds such as the swans so please owners keep them under control by having them on a lead around the lake.*

# 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.

- |                    |                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1st March 2020     | History Fair at Hall Place        |
| May 2020           | “Paws for Tea”                    |
| 6th September 2020 | Bat Experience Foots Cray Meadows |

A number of other events are also being considered

Posters advertising FFCM Events are sent electronically to members as well as being in the noticeboards at the entrances to the Meadows at the following locations - Car Park, Riverside Road, Leafield Lane, Five Arches Bridge and outside Stable House and the Information Centre.  
Alternatively you can visit [www.footscraymeadows.org](http://www.footscraymeadows.org)

The Information Centre which is located behind Stable House is open on the 1st Saturday of each month from March through to November between 10.00am and 1.00 pm

## 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 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 and not passed onto any third parties.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Children's Names (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my/our subscription. £5

Enclosed is a donation to The Friends. £

*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**

We maintain a minimal information database on a secure computer which is used to notify members of our events.

We do not pass on this information to any third parties.

