

# FRIENDS OF FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS



ISSUE 15

NEWSLETTER

December 2015

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

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*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year*



## MEADOW SWANS

A number of people have been asking about the absence of the swans from the Five Arches Lake. As far as is known the adults appear to have decided to leave the lake with their young whether this is temporary or not we don't know. A few weeks back they disappeared



for about two weeks and then returned with all 8 youngsters. During a brief stay the male chased one of the young (perhaps a male) and then they were seen flying off with the rest. This pair have disappeared before, with their young but

on that occasion returning without them. It is normal for the parents to encourage the youngsters to leave usually at about 6 months.

We might see them back but if not another pair may decide to take up residence. The Lake itself is home not only to the Swans but also to Ducks, Coot's and Moorhens this why Five Arches Lake is designated as a local nature reserve and dogs are not allowed in it. *(nor are children and fishing isn't allowed either all of these have been suggested as reasons for the swans leaving - editor)*

### Some Facts about Swans

- They have grey or brown feathers until they're about two years old, but they grow up to become the most

beautiful of all water fowl. Adult swans usually have pure white feathers and a long, graceful neck.

- Swans usually mate for life and each mate is protective of the other. Occasionally they do divorce usually if they aren't able to produce cygnets

- Swans form nests near the water's edge made of mats of reeds and plants. Their eggs are about 4 inches long. When the babies, known as cygnets, are born, they can swim immediately.



- Swans even touch beaks to kiss. When they kiss, their necks form a heart.



- Swans are grumpy, especially when they're protecting their eggs or babies. They attack other birds that enter their territory. They've even attacked dogs or children that came too close. Swans live everywhere but Africa and Antarctica. Swans in Australia and South America are black or black and white.

- In England, the queen owns all mute swans. Every year the swans on the Thames River are rounded up. Their beaks are marked with the queen's brand. This is called Swan Upping.

*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 New Year*



# Chairs Chat

You will see from this newsletter that the Friends have been involved with a number of activities this year, once again bringing local young people out onto the Meadows with the National Citizen Service and latterly Bexleyheath's Redeemed Christian Church of God Bethels Court and others detailed in this newsletter. As in previous years much of our work has been in association with London's River Charity, Thames21 (see below).

Nick Grant and myself are members of the Cray Meadows Police Safer Neighbourhood Panel, where we raise any crime and antisocial behaviour issues affecting the Meadows. There is a committed team of police officers and an ongoing request for users of the open space to report any incidents to the Local Authority and the Police. As a result we have secured police patrols and with added publicity it occasionally may seem that Foots Cray Meadows is not the place to be. This is not so, whilst there have been issues of: unauthorised vehicle, breaches of the fishing ban, crass dog control and other poor behaviour; For the majority a visit to Foots Cray Meadows is a popular, safe and enjoyable experience .

I believe a vibrant, active Friends Group working with Bexley to support the open space is a great way to keep our Meadows a happy place for people and wildlife. So do renew your membership promptly for 2016 which will also be our tenth anniversary. This is a good time to celebrate (look out for our special events next year). But also this milestone is a time to look ahead particularly to the engagement of new key members to the team to take the Friends forward.

As always I look forward to the challenges each year brings, this time with an emphasis on celebration and progress.

With seasonal greetings to you all.

Michael Heath

Comment - [ffcm06@gmail.com](mailto:ffcm06@gmail.com)

## Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015

Under new laws that were made in February 2015 – it will be compulsory for all dogs over the age of 8 weeks in England to be fitted with microchips from 6 April 2016.

Dogs will need to be microchipped and registered with their keepers' contact details.

All keepers, including breeders, must keep these details up to date. The only exemption from the requirement is where

## Success for the River Cray Chalk Stream Challenge

Over the year the River Cray volunteers have welcomed new people and communities to our work.



They proudly respond to rubbish and other issues, delivering the aims and objectives of our Charity.

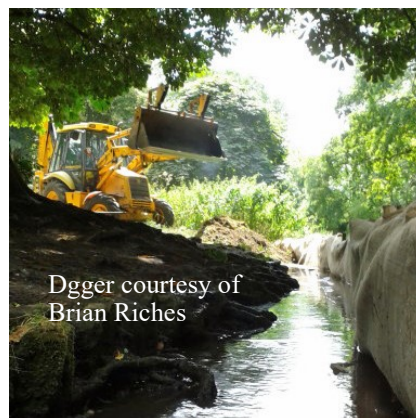
Concluded last month is the

'Veolia Environmental Trust' funded; Chalk Stream Habitat Improvement project at Foots Cray Meadows.

Cray Volunteer River Keepers working together with our Partners have extensively



worked to improve and recreate a chalk stream effect for the River at Foots Cray Meadows.



A challenging enjoyable and rewarding project where we have learnt new skills and now have a more natural bustling stream and greener bank habitats at a popular public open space.

a vet has certified in writing that a dog is unfit to be microchipped. Before the new requirements come into effect, pet owners or keepers can get their dogs microchipped free of charge in a number of places.

Many vets also offer free microchipping as do other animal welfare organisations such as Battersea Dogs & Cats Home (see a year on the meadows).

Once the new rules come into effect, if a dog without a microchip comes to the attention of the authorities, its keeper may be served with a notice requiring the dog to be microchipped, and may face criminal prosecution and a £500 fine if they do not comply with the notice.

## Paws For Tea

It always surprise's me how generous our members and the general public can be when raising money for a dog charity. The FFCM committee supplied hot and cold refreshments, biscuits and dog treats (for the dogs) and those on the committee that are great cake makers, had baked cakes. When we advertised that we were doing another "Paws for Tea" on behalf of the Blue Cross on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2015 at the Information Centre, you responded by joining us and donating, as we served liquid refreshments and cakes helping the Friends of Footh Cray Meadows raise £77 for the charity. The Blue Cross were very appreciative of our efforts and have invited us to join the next nationwide "Paws For Tea" in May 2016. I hope to see you at the Information Centre then, date to be announced later.

## Fun Dog Show 2016

It the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Friends of Footh Cray Meadows and it is with great pleasure that the committee can confirm that their 4<sup>th</sup> Fun Dog Show will be on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016. Details to be advertised later as we get various stalls and side shows organised. Basic outline for the day is that registration for the categories (to be announced) will start about 11am with judging starting at 12 noon and finishing about 4pm. Additional parking will be available for the event and entrants are invited to bring a picnic but please NO barbecues.

If you or you know of anybody who would like to have a stall or contribute to the show in some way then please let Margaret Dodd know. Email [Mag-gie.dodd@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Mag-gie.dodd@hotmail.co.uk) or contact her mobile 07874217186 or the Event Manager; Lesley Grant on 07858762530 with the details. We want everyone to enjoy the day.

Anyone breeding dogs will be responsible for microchipping their puppies before they sell or give them to new keepers.

All imported dogs will need to have a microchip. Breeders will be required to register their own details and these will be recorded against the microchip for the life of the dog.

Also any dog in a public place must wear a collar with the name and address (including postcode) of the owner engraved or written on it, or engraved on a tag. Your telephone number is optional (but FFCM would recommend this).

## Editorial

This addition of the newsletter has a number of articles in which dogs are mentioned. There has been an increase in paid dog walkers sometimes with up to 17 dogs, all off their leads using the meadows and also reports of incidents of a small number of dogs not being kept under control.

Sadly however responsible dog owners who are in the majority, are being vilified in some quarters as a result of the few owners and it is only a few, who are not acting responsibly.

*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.

[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 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.

# A year on the Meadows

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

## January

24th - St Pauls Academy Year 8 Educational and 7 Environmental activity day with a mixture of river habitat & woodland foot path clearance.

## March

24th - River Bank repairs Foots Cray Meadows in Partnership with Thames21

25th - River Bank repairs Foots Cray Meadows in Partnership with Thames21

## May

1st - FFCM "History Walk" from All Saints Church through the Meadows to St James Church with local historians Katherine Harding and Denise Baldwin

2nd - Battersea Dogs Home providing free Chip & Tags for dogs supported by Met Police

16th - FFCM "Paws for Tea" in support of the Peoples Dispensary for Sick Animals

21st - Battersea Dogs Home providing free Chip & Tags for dogs (supported by Met Police)

## August

14th - River Bank repairs Foots Cray Meadows with Thames21

## September

8th - FFCM Bat Walk

19th - Work day on the meadows for National Citizens Service a British voluntary personal and social development programme for 16 and 17-year olds in England and Northern Ireland.

26th - Work day on the meadows for National Citizens Service a British voluntary personal and social development programme for 16 and 17-year olds in England and Northern Ireland.

## October

29th - River Cray "Chalk Bed" Habitat Enhancement with Thames21

## November

28th - Battersea Dogs Home providing free Chip & Tags for dogs (supported by Met Police)

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.

One Friday evening in May we organised a walk led by local historians Katherine Harding and Denise Baldwin. We were able to have both churches open and the walk began inside All Saints where we were given an introductory talk explaining the history of the churches and their relationship to the houses that formed the estates from which the meadows that we know now evolved.

We were shown some memorials in the churchyard of some notable people. We then strolled cross the meadows towards Five Arches Bridge and St James Church.



All Saints

## CHURCH to CHURCH



St James

The walk ended in the church where we were given the the opportunity to have a good look round. So often we don't always know what interesting buildings we have on our doorsteps and to have Katherine and Denise there to answer our questions was really useful.

The walk finished in the Bothy at St James where refreshments were served and were most welcome as it was quite a cold evening.

Lesley Grant  
Events Manager

# 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

- ◆ 28th February - "Bexley Civic Society History Fair"
- ◆ 16th May - "Paws for Tea"
- ◆ 21st June - "Annual General Meeting"
- ◆ 25th June - "Fun Dog Show"
- ◆ 10th September - "Bat Walk"

## Information Centre now open 1st Saturday every Month

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](http://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 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