

FRIENDS OF FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS



ISSUE 22

NEWSLETTER

December 2020

www.footscraymeadows.wordpress.com

email : ffcm06@gmail.com



We Wish all
our Members
SEASON'S GREETINGS
AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR



End of Year Message

It's likely that many of us will be glad to see the back of 2020, surely one certainty as we look to a more settled 2021 is that warm sunshine will return with Spring.

The Meadows having been discovered will continue to provide open space for the wider community and the amenity is likely to retain the high footfall we have seen this year.

Wellbeing is rapidly coming to the forefront of our society and being outdoors and close to nature is a key element of enhancing lifestyles and inspiring. This new aspect to the demands of Parks Management will be challenging for a cash strapped Bexley. We as a Friends group should embrace this challenge which can be an opportunity for the Meadows. We have the capability to engage with, raise awareness and improve the visitor experience, as well as the all important balance of protecting the Natural Environment.

Our Aims as an independent Group continue to resonate our purpose, what we as a group need is a greater capacity to deliver these. This can only be with your support as members, as leaders and volunteers. Next year is a great opportunity for a New Start, be part of it and make a difference. Join us and get involved.

On behalf of the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows: do keep well, we wish you seasonal greetings and a prosperous New Year.

Michael Heath

Chairman
FFCM



Civic Recognition Award

The Civic Recognition Awards were introduced by the Council with the aim of encouraging and giving civic recognition for voluntary service to the community to groups or to an individual. The Friends of Foots Cray Meadows were put forward as being eligible and were successful. The awards were due to take place in April of this year but sadly were postponed and were re-scheduled for Saturday 19 September 2020. Again, due to the current situation, holding the event was held at different times over the day with a minimum number going into the Civic Offices at any one time. Steve Brown FFCM Committee member represented the "Friends" and received the award from the Mayor of Bexley, Councillor James Hunt, who presented the certificate, albeit socially distanced.

Ponds Update

There may be many of you that hadn't realised that there are a number of ponds on the Meadows. Two are fairly obvious, one being at the start of the road leading to the car park (on the right, just as you come off Rectory Lane) and of course the new "toad pond" as it is known, with the new fencing around it and 2 water lilies that were not planned to be in there! However, there are also 8 other ponds nearby, (behind a fenced area accessible through various gates) which sadly have not been regularly "looked after" (last time was about 5 years ago) and had been in danger of reverting to dry land. Luckily, one had retained enough water to allow frogs, toads and newts all to breed, as was confirmed by a survey carried out by the Friends group, with the support of "Froglife", about 18 months ago.

In an effort to improve the pondlife diversity, encouraging damselflies, dragonflies and a variety of insects to thrive, Thames 21 in conjunction with the Friends group and with local Council advice and agreement, has begun work on what is hoped will be a programme of maintenance on all the ponds. The intention is to tackle 2 ponds each year, in a cycle that will ensure they are all kept in the best condition, whilst minimising the impact on the wildlife ahead of their breeding season.



If you have walked alongside the fencing lately, you will probably have noticed piles of vegetation and coppiced willow near the gates. The vegetation consists mainly of reed mace that has overwhelmed the ponds. The willow was taken from the edges of the ponds and had been casting shadows across them, rather than letting in sunlight. The work has only been done recently but already it can be seen that the ponds are retaining more water than before. They may look a bit "scruffy" but please remember that they are wildlife ponds, not ornamental garden ponds, so they don't need any water lilies added.

Finally, although Covid-19 has had an impact on so many of us, volunteering is still allowed, subject to the obvious guidelines, as is going for health-boosting walks. Why not take a look next time you are on the Meadows? Perhaps by joining an evening pond surveying organised by the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows to check on the presence of toads, frogs and newts.

Ray Hudson
FFCM/Thames21



Meadows Management Update

Grounds Maintenance work is ongoing at the moment in relation to Sweet Chestnut Trees and is unique in that the work will require certain woody materials to be burnt on site (if conditions are correct) to control pests and diseases harmful to Sweet Chestnuts and fencing has been erected to the area being used for burning.

Fencing has also been erected along stable meadows where it abuts North Cray Road between St James Church and Leaffield Lane to prevent unauthorised access onto the meadows.

It is proposed shortly to carry out some work on the west side of the lake from the bridge back towards the Willow Trees by installing Sussex fencing as a means of preventing access into the lake. In addition the Friends will be in-filling with suitable plants lifted from other parts of the lake.

Editorial

We will probably all agree this has been the most unusual year for many of us. At the time of writing this, we are not too far away from Christmas which clearly is going to be very different this year. However, I'm sure most of us, have improvised and adapted to the situation brilliantly, and have done so with good spirit.

The meadows have proved a god send to many people especially during the summer months, although this has also brought with it problems with the increased use by the public many of whom didn't know it existed and the pressure subsequently put on Bexley.

The Friends have been unable to run their usual activities but have been working in the background on achieving our aims and objectives. A big thank you for all your support during the last year.

Editor



FFCM Committee



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

www.footscraymeadows.org email: 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.

The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

This summer despite corona virus restrictions Foots Cray Meadows has seen not only local residents using the meadows but also a large number of people coming from quite a distance, many of these were unaware of the site and expressed surprise at its existence. It was nice to see people enjoying the summer weather and enjoying the surroundings.



However the increase in people accessing the meadows brought with it a number of problems.

The local roads on the east side of the river were subjected to massive parking problems and picnickers also brought with them disposable BBQs, not a sensible idea given the dryness of the meadow grasses and also not allowed on the site. The downside

The Lake is a Wildlife area and has Mallard, Tufted Duck, Cormorant, Grey Heron, and for many years a pair of Mute Swans.



Sadly we have lost both the Male and Female Swan due to a mixture of natural causes and dogs going in the Lake. We have a minority of irresponsible people who ignore the signs telling them dogs, swimming and fishing isn't allowed.

On the plus side we have gained a pair of Egyptian Geese who have made their home on the Lake in the last two years, producing a number of Goslings on each occasion.



It is hoped we might be lucky in attracting a pair of swans to settle on the lake soon.

was the rubbish generated was in many cases too much for the existing bins. Whilst most people are not litterbugs, the summer witnessed stacks of rubbish abandoned beside overflowing rubbish bins, or just left where they ate, often subsequently strewn about. Fortunately help was at hand by an invisible army of independent volunteers who chose to go out every morning and evening with gloves & bags (and hopefully a litter picker) to clear up. This was all in support of the Parks Team who did increase Borough wide their litter collection service and set up a scheme in support of these volunteers providing bags and equipment and sensible guidance. Wear gloves, be aware of your surroundings, capabilities and rubbish disposal and do not open that bottle to empty the liquid, it may not be 'what is say's on the tin'! Well done to all you unsung Volunteers.



The Friends continue to organise monthly litter picks out of the Information Centre and we should (if there is interest) this winter be organising 'deep cleans' in some of the woodland areas.



The picture on the right is the amount collected in one 2 hour session by members of the Friends of Foots Cray .

Sadly there are, some, who have less concerns for the Meadows and don't see anything wrong in dumping their rubbish which results in a cost to Bexley Council who have limited resources to remove.



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.

During the current health crisis there are no planned events. As and when some normality returns the following arrangements will return

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.wordpress.com

The Information Centre which is located behind Stable House is open on the 1st Saturday of each month from March through

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 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 and not passed onto any third parties.

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

Name	
Children's Names (if applicable)	
Address	
Phone	
Email	

Annual subscription is £5 payable each January and you can do this in the following way, by -

Cheque payable to **Friends of Footh Cray Meadows**

Bank transfer to **Sort Code 40-42-01 Account 61550985**

Annual direct debit **Sort Code 40-42-01 Account 61550985**

In each case please tick which method used and send your completed form to:

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