

FRIENDS OF FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS



ISSUE 11

NEWSLETTER

December 2012

www.footscraymeadows.org

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GOLD AWARD

There was success again this year for the London Borough of Bexley and Foots Cray Meadows in the 2012 London in Bloom Competition.



Hearty congratulations to all those involved with the Boroughs awards from the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows. Foots Cray Meadows was again awarded a Gold in the Country Park category and held onto its Best in London title for the third year running.

*The Deputy Mayor Councillor Brian Beckwith,
Nick & Lesley Grant with the Award
and Certificate*

FFCM Dog Show



23rd June 2012 was the day the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows held their 2nd Fun Dog Show. The day started well and the weather was dry, it was well attended and entrants were eager to demonstrate their attributes to the 8 main categories.

Rob Alleyne from TV's 'Dog Borstal' agreed to do the judging and the winners were issued with gold, silver or bronze medals along with a photo of the great moment. Everybody seemed to enjoy themselves and we are looking forward to the next one which will be in 2014.

Chairs Chat

Margaret again did brilliantly organising our second fun dog show last June with a celebrity Judge (Thanks to Rob) some kind weather (given the hose ban had resulted in heavy rain) and a great turn out; everyone seemed to enjoy the event. Thanks to all who helped; although not me I was chastised for not reporting my absence having been sent for more milk by Mrs Heath. This and our other events and projects which include: our woodland management programme with Sid and some activity in the River Cray with Thames21 and the Information Centre during events open for visitors. By way of a self appraisal this I feel confirms that the Friends remain a vibrant and effective organisation and this is recognised with this year's Awards for Foots Cray Meadows.

In my last chat I mentioned the need to introduce new people to drive the group. I am pleased to welcome Raj Gajebasia to the committee. We are now well established as an independent event driven group who work in partnership with Bexley Council. We are rightly proud of our achievements and believe we are making a difference for the Meadows as an open space and natural habitat. Your membership promotes community belonging, your active participation (whatever you and your family can give there is no minimum requirement) will bring greater rewards for the Meadows do join in.

Visit our website www.footscraymeadows.org or contact us by e mail at ffcm06@gmail.com for further information



Thames21 are a London wide environmental charity, which works hand in hand with communities across London to improve rivers and canals. The project officer based in Bexley on the River Cray

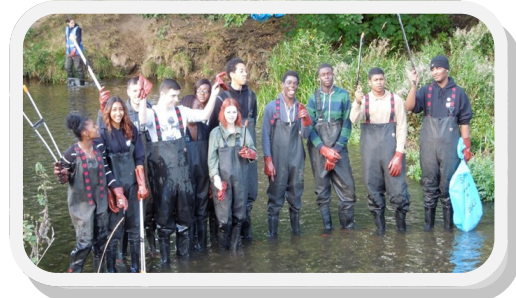
is also the Chair of FFCM. This role includes the delivery of practical activities that engage local communities with their local waterway and develop volunteer opportunities.

Thames21's work in Bexley is an example of its varied community projects across London, which aim to improve rivers and canals for people and wildlife my project, is funded by Cory Environmental Trust. The charity has worked on the Cray for many years and is committed to working with Bexley for the long-term benefits of the environment and community. Thames21 have a second member Joanne Bradley for the River Shuttle.

This then explains the volunteers in waders removing rubbish and debris from the Five Arches, occasional youth groups including The Challenge in September along the Cray. Earlier this year

we secured the support of the Environment Agency and Bexley Council in recovering the inlet down by the wooden foot bridge to allow for this area to again become a

wetland feature. Further excavations at the Green Foot Bridge by the Ball Park at the North End, are a prelude to the knocking back of the surface water outfall which will allow the water to filter through a reed bed before entering the main channel of the river. This will bring about a long awaited visual improvement as well as to mitigate the effects of any (unwanted and probably unlawful) unsavoury discharges from the outfall.



There are activities and river cleanup events along the river Cray and Shuttle in Bexley and Bromley. Thames21 and the Friends are members of the River

Cray Catchment Improvement Group which brings together a coordinated River habitat enhancement for our Rivers which like Foots Cray Meadows are a vital part of our biodiversity for the environment and people who live, work in or visit Bexley.



For details of all events and how to get involved on the Cray visit the website www.thames21.org.uk or e mail michael.heath@thames21.org.uk or 07968 805751

Michael Heath, Chairman of FFCM

Michael in addition to all this has been a volunteer at the Olympics and Paralympics - Editor



Editorial

As we come to the end of 2012 it's perhaps a good time to look back over the year. In June we had a very successful Dog Show with a large number of entries and lovely weather.

A really good working relationship with Thames21 has been developed as can be seen from the Chairs Chat. This in turn has led to our involvement with The Challenge Network a fast-growing youth and community programme that exists to inspire a generation to lead social change. They do this by inspiring young people from different backgrounds to work together to transform their communities. We've also had a number of Youth Organisations Scouts, Guides etc. helping with River Cleaning and Litter Picking

Foots Cray Meadows held onto its Best Country Park in London title for the third consecutive year. Part of this is due to the volunteers who have turned up to our work days and the support given by the public to our fun events such as the Bat Walk and Tree Planting sessions.

Editor

On behalf of the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows may we wish you a very Happy Christmas and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year

Ash Dieback Disease

Caused by the fungus *Chalara fraxinea* has been very much in the news in recent months and as a Friends Group we have been monitoring the Ashes on Foots Cray Meadows for any signs that indicate it has arrived.



Fortunately it doesn't appear to have materialised yet but we will continue to be vigilant.



Repairing Fencing at Marsh Bridge



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.

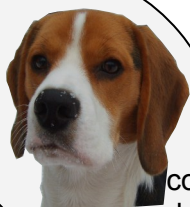
www.footscraymeadows.org

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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.

AJ's bit



I've been doing my 'bit' this year sniffing round the meadows with my owners enjoying meeting all the other dogs taking their owners for walks. Each season brings something different to investigate. I'm not too impressed with walking the sweet chestnut avenue by Rectory Lane when all the nuts are falling off the trees. It's a bit prickly on my paws.

I've been helping plant trees, weeding and mulching the wildlife garden, litter picking and river cleaning with my friends Buster, Maisie, Tazzie, Patch, Dolly and Peg. Of

course we were all involved with organising the dog show and some of us won prizes!

I was invited to a photo shoot at Danson House along with my owners who represented the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows. The photographer was very keen that I was looking in the right direction along with the Deputy Mayor.

I'm looking forward to the winter. I quite like the snow and I've already been eating puddle ice lollies.

Have a very Happy Christmas but please don't leave poultry bones out for the foxes - they tend to leave them all over the place and us dogs get quite sick if we eat them. Woof!

Foots Cray Meadows - Council Management update.

The following update covers most of the major works that have recently taken place as well and giving notice of others that are planned. It will not however cover the range of small tree planting that has been undertaken by the Friends and other volunteers over the winter. Although the Council directly supports this work this is not in the Council Programme.

North Cray Woods

- Over the winter another section of the woods have been coppiced, this means that the trees are cut to the base but will be allowed to re-grow in the spring. Non native trees are to be controlled and new native trees such as hazel and oak will be planted here. Look out for the increase in spring flowers that should occur with increased light hitting the woodland floor, such as bluebells around late April/ May time.
- Another section of the Alders wet wood down near the river towards the royal park end of the site have also been coppiced recently. Here the aim is to regenerate the alder trees and remove the invasive sycamores. The main ride from the stable block down past the site of the old house has also been managed again to open it up to make it more welcoming and to control invasive species as well as over grown brambles. This should increase the spring flowers and insects and birds associated with them.

If you have any concerns or comments about management on the Meadows or see behaviour by the public that is antisocial or damaging please contact the Council on 020 8303 7777 24hrs 7days a week. Or go to www.bexley.gov.uk In a emergency please call the police.

Over the last few months the Environment Agency (EA) has been working with the Council to develop a number of schemes along the Meadow's stretch of the River Cray, with the aim of to improving water quality. As you may know, there are several surface water drains that discharge in to the River Cray within the Meadows. Surface water drains are those that take water from our roof gutters and drains in the roads. These do not get treated, they run straight into the river. Fowl water from baths, toilets etc is sent in a different system to a treatment plant.

Pollution from miss connections in properties into the surface drains as well as oil spills and items poured down road drains all end up in the river. The EA is trying to limit the impact of this pollution. However, at time of writing it is not clear if these schemes will get the go ahead this year. If they do you will see work taking place along the river at the drain outlets in the next month or so. The work may be quite disruptive and more trees will have to be trimmed or coppiced. At one of the locations we have already coppiced and felled some sycamores -near the outlet next to the green bridge. If you need more information please contact the number that will be displayed on site by the EA at time of the works.

Bexley Parks Team

Dates for your Diary: Future Events

We hope you are interested in joining in the many events we will be hosting 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

Events for 2013 are in the process of being planned. Members will be will be notified by email or post as soon as they are agreed.

A list of events when agreed will also be in the noticeboards at the entrances to the Meadows - 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**

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. £4

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