

Oak Processionary Moth



Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)

Caterpillars are a pest and a hazard to the health of oak trees, people and animals.

Oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) is a native of southern Europe. Due to the trade in live plants, oak processionary moth has become established as far north as the Netherlands and northern Germany and it was first introduced to Britain accidentally in 2005.



Presence of OPM caterpillars has already been confirmed in West and Southwest London with the pest spreading steadily to new areas. They have been sighted in Bexley but at the writing of this article not yet on the Meadows. Careful monitoring of OPM spread is ongoing, but unfortunately all evidence indicates that this pest is slowly spreading beyond the London area.

Regular monitoring of oak trees is recommended so that caterpillars can be identified early to prevent a full-blown infestation. If you have, or suspect you may have, oak processionary moth in your garden, please do not touch or approach the nests or caterpillars. Given the health risks, the Forestry Commission advises contacting a pest management expert to ensure safe removal. A professional arborist will know what to look for, including the hairy caterpillars along with the tell-tale signs of plaques on a tree's branches. Beyond the dam

age to trees, infestations are particularly concerning as these caterpillars pose a risk to human health. Each caterpillar has thousands of tiny hairs containing a toxic compound. Contact with these hairs can result in rashes, conjunctivitis, and breathing difficulties for people and animals.

Both the English and scientific names refer to the behaviour of the larvae, whose habit of forming a long nose-to-tail procession is quite peculiar. It is a pest species, in Europe feeding in large numbers on oak (*Quercus*), causing severe defoliation of oak and creating a health hazard. Minute, se-



verely urticating's hairs on the dorsum of the larger larvae, can cause persistent or severe (occasionally life-threatening) symptoms, and are readily dispersed on local air currents. The adults appear from late July to mid September and can be distinguished from related species by the pale basal area of the forewing.

Chairs Chat

We have had many successes during our twelve years in existence but last year's disappointing AGM attendance required reflection. However our AGM on Tuesday 19th June 2018 was well attended. That said the current committee have pressed ahead with another year of operation cumulating later the same week with our fifth biennial Fun Dog Show (Saturday 23rd June 2018). *Editor See Article page 4*

From the outset we wanted to: be an activity based group, work in partnership with the London Borough of Bexley and be independent on the conservation and protection of the Meadows. We have remained a vibrant and successful group with a steady 50 household membership.

Each May we have held a 'Paws for Tea' event – a tea party for dogs and their owners held here and raised £85 and £100 respectively for the Blue Cross Pet Charity.

We have the capacity to deliver children's river dipping events, with the group last year delighting and educating a local Beaver Scout Colony. We make this equipment available to other groups including London Borough of Bexley.

In September we organise an ever popular Bat Walk with a particularly successful sighting of Bats at the Five Arches last year. This February with the new tree officer Philip Louis we returned to an old activity and committee members and supporters spent a Saturday morning planting over 100 whips (young meter high trees) on one of the pond spoil banks. We need to arrange an activity to mulch these very soon.

Through our Newsletter Editor we have published a newsletter twice a year. A Committee Member has produced and had printed a Meadows History and Information Leaflet. Copies of these are available from the information centre (located behind Stable House), which is opened on the first Saturday of each month (Except Dec- Feb) from 10am – 1pm by members of the committee. My thanks to all on the committee and those regulars who turn out at our events. They give their time to make up the mainstay of our events, attend committee meetings and keep the Friends going.

We are also represented on the River Cray Catchment Improvement Group and the local Police Ward Panel. With the Police and Council we are able to promote our concerns for any anti social behaviour on the Meadows.

We collaborate with the Grounds Maintenance Team on works and developments I mentioned last year the returning interest of the Local Authority in the Borough's Friends of Groups through their formal 'Open Spaces Scrutiny Sub Group' and we report our activities and volunteer hours to LBB in support of this. We have worked with Bexley Parkrun with their proposals to introduce a 'Parkrun' on the

Meadows. We will update on this as more information becomes available.

We have, in light of the recent **General Data Protection Regulations** which came into force on 25 May, updated our policies, as practiced by other organisations and these are detailed below.

Michael Heath
Chair FFCM

The Friends of Footh Cray Meadows Personal Information Privacy Policy Statement.

As a very small volunteer organisation with membership subscriptions we need to know who our members are and to value their membership.

- *We keep records of the information you give in your application/membership form. These are Name, Address, e mail and Telephone number.*
- *We do not share this information and will not disclose without your permission.*
- *This is stored privately on a personal computer by our Newsletter Editor who is our Data Controller.*
- *As you are subscription members we will keep in touch with you, by way of newsletters, group notifications and membership renewal requests.*
- *You are able to contact us to unsubscribe at any time.*

New Safer Neighbourhood Team

Following the recent local council boundary changes Footh Cray Meadows is now part of St Mary's and St James Ward represented by Councillors Alan Downing and Alex Sawyer. We also have new Police team responsible for North Cray and Footh Cray Meadows.

Details of the Officers and their contact number are displayed in all of the noticeboards around the Meadows.

What you can do if you come across anti social behaviour on the Meadows is to note the date, time and what is happening and report it to Bexley Council on

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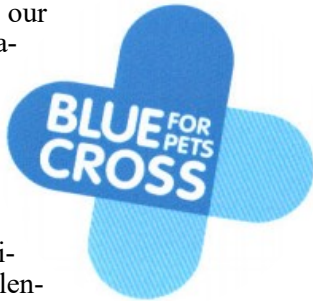
As the owner of the Meadows Bexley Council are responsible for the Management of the site. Editor

Tree surgeons will be tidying up and pruning back overhanging branches on the section of the river above the lake from Five Arches Bridge. This is necessary work as a number of branches are obstructing the flow of the river.

The Forestry Commission have carried out a survey of the Oak Trees on the meadows to check on whether the Processionary Moth (OPM) Caterpillars as a number of other sites have been infected. To date none have been found but the Forestry Commission will continue to monitor the situation.

“Paws for Tea”

In May the Blue Cross advertised again that it was time for “Paws for Tea” where Friends can get together for Tea/coffee with biscuits and cake to raise some money for them. Well our committee settled on Saturday 12th May to do our “Paws for Tea” and our donations raised £96.81 so we sent a £100 cheque to the Blue Cross. They think it is Fantastic.



So Thank You for all your support as you enjoyed delicious homemade cake and plenty of tea and coffee, plenty of dog treats donated by Albany Park Pet Shop, and lovely weather.

Margaret Dodd
FFCM

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020 8303 7777 and the Police on 101 in the case of a serious situation ring 999. You can also let FFCM know on fcm06@gmail.com as we have 2 committee members of FFCM on the St Mary’s and St James Ward Panel.

The panel meets regularly with the designated ward Police Officers who work closely with local authorities, community leaders and residents to decide policing priorities for the area. This helps to find useful, long-term solutions to local problems, while maintaining a wider focus on reducing crime across London.

Editorial

These meadows have been classed as a local nature reserve and provides a wealth of diverse habitats for flora, fauna and wildlife hence the restrictions particularly around the lake.

The owners of the Meadows, Bexley Council, have put up notices telling people that certain activities are not allowed on the Meadows. Despite these notices there are a small minority of individuals who don’t believe that they apply to them and act in an Anti –Social Way. If you see this happening please contact the council giving times and dates.

Editor



Committee Members

- **Chairman - Michael Heath**
- **Secretary -**
- **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, Jan Harmer, Raj Gajebasia, Steve Brown**

www.footscraymeadows.org

email : fcm06@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.

FFCM Fun Dog Show

The Friends of Footh Cray Meadows held a very successful Fun Dog Show on Saturday 23rd of June.

Well over 250 people turned up on a glorious summer's day to enjoy the excitement of our 5th dog show (which is held every two years).

There were 9 categories for dogs to enter ranging from Prettiest Young Lady, Best Junior Handler to Fancy Dress and Odd Couple. In each category rosettes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd were awarded along with prizes donated by Albany Pet Shop.

This year we were able to add a Best in Show category with a prize of £100 as the result of a donation. The winners of each category went into this and "Rockabilly" a rescue Greyhound who with his handler came first in the Best Junior Handler (under 16s that train their dog) category

was the winner. At the time Rob was choosing the best in show he didn't realise that "Rockabilly" was a rescue dog who had not had a good start in life. He chose him on the basis of his rapport with his young handler. It is understood "Rockabilly" will be having all the prize money spent on him.

The first, second and third places in each of the nine categories had their photos* taken with Rob Alleyne of BBC3 TV's 'Dog Borstal' on this our 5th Fun Dog Show. All the photos taken will be put on the FFCM website so that those that wish can download. Rob Alleyne has been our judge for all 5 of our Fun Dog Shows and does them for free. The Friends in return make a donation to "Fool Farm Animal Rescue Centre" of which he is a patron. In addition there were a number of stalls including a very welcome Ice Cream Van given the very hot day.

Thanks, must go to Margaret, Judge Rob Alleyne & the FFCM Committee.

(*It is understood that a problem has occurred with the camera memory card and this is being investigated as no photos are appearing Editor).



AJ's bit



On my daily walk around the meadows with my owners I've heard them talking about the pair of Egyptian Geese who have this year made their home on 5 Arches Lake and are raising 3 goslings. This is, according to my owners, the first time anyone can remember them setting up home here.

Our resident swans are not overly pleased and have tried to chase them off but the male goose is more than happy to stand up to them. Sadly the cygnets born in May haven't survived and all sorts of stories have been floating around the truth is a combination of reasons have played a part this time.

A Heron which we see quite often seems to be spending quite a bit more time on the Lake recently, which probably means that the river and lake have plenty of fish in it. Our Little Egret, which has been a regular visitor over the past few years, has also spent more time here this year mainly in

the river below the 5 Arches bridge.

A number of large carp have also been spotted in the lake which might indicate that the River Cray is at the present time very clean.

Kestrels have also been seen and a pheasant has been heard but not seen.



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

- ◆ August - Litter Picking Days (tba)
- ◆ 8th September 2018 - Bat Walk (tbc)

The Information Centre which is located behind Stable House
is open 1st Saturday each month (March to November)
between 10.00am - 1.00pm

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 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 Footh 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 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 Footh 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.