

FRIENDS OF FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS



ISSUE 21

NEWSLETTER

July 2020

www.footscraymeadows.org

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Daily exercise only was permitted during a warm and sunny spring, then in groups we could picnic and wow did people flock to the Meadows, The fine weather continued and so to be beside the River Cray became understandably an essential outdoor amenity for people in 'lockdown' I have never seen the space so busy with people, yes there was more rubbish, but surely most people took their stuff away with them. So many visitors brought some challenges to social distancing and anti-social behaviour but Foots Cray Meadows, like all Parks became a sanctuary for families especially those without gardens.

Well done to the local people for putting up with these exceptional visitor numbers, including extra cars parked in the surrounding streets. Well done to Bexley Parks Team, having taken the decision to maintain services and have additional rubbish collections, their resources needed to be deployed across all the Boroughs busy parks. A thank you to those independent volunteers who helped with their own litter picking excursions on the Meadows.

Writing this at the end of June when we should have held our AGM (hopefully will reschedule at a later date) I reflect upon the irony that during all of this, the Friends had to suspend our activities. We were unable to: open the centre, organise volunteering activities or host school Educational Field Trips.



Egyptian Geese Family

Also I was fearful for nature with the increased footfall but with cloudy skies a temperature drop the wildlife on lake emerged seemingly relatively unscathed from their shelter and we can see that nature goes on.

We too as a Friends Group must also emerge to again work towards achieving our aims. We will be working with Bexley to restart and looking to open the centre in August and into the autumn. It will be dependent upon the support of our members as to what we do next, that is; from you an idea as to what people want to do and with your help we can set up some activities.

Happily: we have people interested in joining us, schools will next year want

to return to use the Meadows as an outdoor classroom, and we are committed to the Children's University. Will the Meadows retain their 'Lockdown' popularity? then we must be available to the visiting public to enhance their experience.

The Friends of Foots Cray Meadows, need your continued support and help in organising events and running the Group. New committee members are welcome.

A final thank you to Foots Cray Meadows as a precious community open space they have proved their value.

Michael Heath - Chair FFCM June 2020 (comment ffcm06@gmail.com)

Five Arches Bridge *It's a sad reflection of our society that some irresponsible people don't believe the by-laws on the Meadows apply to them. An example of this is the jumping off Five Arches Bridge into the Lake. Notices telling people that they are not allowed in the Lake, which is a Nature Reserve, are prominently displayed. Apart from the disturbance to the wild life the areas in the Lake below the bridge are very shallow. Unfortunately, one young lady found this out to her cost when she jumped in during the recent fine weather and suffered a broken leg. The incident was attended by Ambulance, Fire Service and Police and whilst they dealt with the incident other young people continued to jump off the bridge and when advised how dangerous it was were abusive to the emergency services. What is more disturbing, we understand, is that some of the parents who were there didn't think their children were doing any harm. Fencing was subsequently put up to dissuade people from doing it only to be pulled down the following day (see picture).*

Nick Grant



Meadows Management Update

Tim Barnes -Trees & Woodlands Officer

I have taken over from Philip Louis as The Parks and Open Spaces Tree Officer for the London Borough of Bexley. Currently I have been conducting surveys across the entirety of Foots Cray Meadows with a focus on completing our newly implemented scheme as follows:

- Category 1 - Trees within or in falling distance of playground's – Every Year
- Category 2 - Trees adjacent to highways or train lines – Every 2 Years
- Category 3 - Trees adjacent to pathways and water courses – Every 3 Years
- Category 4 - Trees adjacent to residential properties – Every 4 years
- Category 5 - Trees within woodland areas – Every 5 years

As you can imagine this will be a steep hill to climb with the number of parks we have in the borough and with the current pandemic slowing our progress at the beginning of the year. However, I hope to hit the ground running now that a return to normality is beginning and I hope to address a number of glaring issues within Foots Cray Meadows.

Firstly, before any aesthetic work is addressed, my primary goal is the removal of any unsafe material within categories 1,2 and 3. Most of the work I have already planned is the removal of deadwood over major paths, play equipment, or car parking areas. Unfortunately, there are an awful lot of paths with dangerous trees that need addressing and this will take some to get through. The removal of trees is a final resort and, where possible, we will be leaving stumps as a monolith to maintain habitat for wildlife.

My second objective is the retention of any of our mature tree stock. Some of our historic avenues of trees are suffering from die back and/or a lack of vitality. Trees of note include half a dozen Mature Oak trees which run adjacent to "The Burning Path" which are not as healthy as I would like them to be and I feel could benefit from some remedial action. In partnership with my colleague Patrick English on the Grounds Maintenance team I hope to initiate a plan to remove/cut back the long-overgrown weed vegetation along this path and make room for wood bark mulch to be placed around the base of each tree that needs it. It is my hope that our contractors will be able to provide all the bark mulch we need from within the site itself and then place it in the desired areas. If possible, I would like to ask if you and your team of volunteers for their assistance of spreading the bark mulch to create a 3inch layer around the selected trees. This will be deep enough to allow a good amount of nutrients to be absorbed by the trees, whilst still allowing for the natural growth of blue bells underneath the Oaks and allow

them to continue their natural symbiotic relationship. With any luck the trees will find a new lease of life and we will be able to retain them for decades (if not centuries) to come.

Our only hurdle with this operation is the current Pest and Disease issues we have on the site and I am currently in talks with the Forestry Commission to ask them if this is a viable plan. If they are able to sign off this work, we can expect this to commence in the coming months.

Apologies for the shortened version of this Newsletter but we have not been able to undertake any activities for the past few months. Hopefully this will soon change.

If you feel community minded why not sign up for Bexley's new Parks Volunteer Service, click on link below for more information www.bexley.gov.uk/news/parks-volunteer-service-invites-litter-picker-volunteers

Editor

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, 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 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.

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

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

Posters advertising FFCM Events 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

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

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 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

Post Code

Email

Phone

Enclosed a cheque Please supply FFCM Payment Details
(tick appropriate box)

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***
- *By bank transfer*
- *By setting up an annual direct debit*

In each case please send 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.