

Ramblers 2 – A Walk through Footscray Meadows – Tuesday 26 August 2025 – leader Helen Salmon

We met up in Sidcup high street on a sunny August morning. We made our way to the entrance of Footscray Meadows in Bexley Lane. The ground beneath us made you think it was autumn as there were so many dry leaves on the ground following a very warm few months. We continued down to the open area with the Information Centre on our right and continued on the path parallel with Cleeve Park School. I pointed out the location of Foots Cray Place, once owned by Samuel Waring (of Waring and Gillow fame - furniture manufacturers). Apparently, in the Second World War the estate became a naval training base. Sadly the building caught fire on 18 October 1949 and the shell was demolished. We continued along the top path and entered North Cray Woods until we came to the path that led us down to Five Arch Bridge. I was pleased to see the cob and his four cygnets in the lake (there were five but one disappeared). Unfortunately the pen had to be rescued and euthanised as she had been badly injured. We crossed over the bridge and turned left and continued along the bridle path until we came to Water Lane. We continued up the lane until the end and turned right where we saw the blue plaque outside Loring Hall. It was once owned by Lord Castlereagh, the second Marquess of Londonderry until his death in 1822. Castlereagh maintained a menagerie which included a tiger and a number of monkeys! It was later occupied by Frederick Friend, an export manager. He employed a cook, two housemaids, kitchen maid, a nursery maid and two footmen – how the other half lived! We then took ourselves to the White Cross pub for lunch and sat outside eating our meal until it decided to rain.