



FRIENDS OF THE MEADOWS

Newsletter 188

Winter 2013

Magical Mistletoe

Mistletoe was first recorded by Pliny the Elder in his 'Natural History' in A.D. 77. Pliny wrote that in Gaul the Druids believed mistletoe was sacred if it grew on oak (which it rarely does) and that it afforded protection against injury by fire or water, made women and animals fertile, was an antidote to poison and cured epilepsy. The Druids may have been on to something.



In recent times scientists have found an extract of mistletoe could help fight bowel cancer, a condition that affects about 40,000 people in the UK. Researchers led by Professor Kurt Zanker from the German Institute of Immunology and Experimental Oncology concluded, 'The results suggest convincing evidence that there is a significant benefit from treatment with mistletoe extract. Patients who had the mistletoe treatment regularly injected into their blood had fewer side-effects from chemotherapy and radiotherapy and survived longer than those who did not. The extract is thought to help the body's immune system fight tumours and speed up the disposal of toxic debris left by chemotherapy.

Mistletoe is a semi-parasite of trees such as crab apple, hawthorn, poplar, lime and willow. The plant lives partly off the host tree into which it sinks its roots and partly from food produced by its own chlorophyll. Mistletoe is spread by birds including the mistle thrush (hence the plant's name) which feed on the white berries then wipe the sticky seeds from their beaks onto the branches of neighbouring trees where they germinate and take root. Each green stem of mistletoe ends in a stalkless flower-head and two side buds and so repeatedly forks in two. The plant makes a slow start but its method of branching results in a doubling in size each year. The first year's two leaves become four the next year, then eight, 16, 32 64.....and so on up to several thousand; the resulting mistletoe bush may grow to four feet in diameter. At this time of year, when the host trees have shed all their leaves, balls of evergreen mistletoe become conspicuous high up in the boughs of trees.

Ron Iremonger

Notes from the Chair



Well, another year on the Meadows has come and gone... and what a year! After we planted the new trees last Winter, we thought we would be in danger of a drought and had visions of bucket gangs watering the new trees with river water. How wrong we were! By April, the rains started and have hardly stopped since. At the time of writing, the Meadows have taken on a very traditional look and many areas are under water, leaving some trees marooned in their little mini-lakes.

However, we were fortunate to enjoy some lovely sunny days, especially for our Wildflower Walk in early June and the Meadows barbecue in September. In the year to come, we hope to be as equally fortunate and will be planning other events. We are always looking to do something a little different, so any suggestions will be welcome.

For those of you who missed our AGM in November, everyone had an excellent evening at St Mary's Centre, enjoying food and drink from Cheshire and Tim's wonderful "Cheshire Quizzes".

Looking ahead to 2013, a major objective for us will be to have in place a Management Plan for the Meadows. We are working closely with the Cheshire West and Chester GreenSpace Team in this respect. Unfortunately, their resources are stretched, but we are hopeful that with help from the local councillors we will be able to have something in place which can be delivered by the Rangers.

Finally, at the AGM, I made a plea for members to come forward and offer a little bit of their time to get involved with the work of the committee, whether dealing with memberships, helping with events or just contributing opinions! We meet about once every couple of months, so if anyone is interested, please get in touch

Happy New Year to you all.

Rachel Cross

01244 679141 or email rachelm.cross@btinternet.com

Horses on the Meadows

Over the last few months a few telephone calls have been taken about the welfare of the horses on the meadows. Strictly, they are grazed on land belonging to Dee Valley Water (Chatterton's Meadow") and not "The Meadows" (ie The Earl's Eye) under our remit. However, we do have contact details for the owners and the concerns have been passed on, so we hope that they will be looked after (especially the foal!)





November, December 2012

04/11 The Viking invasion continued with 120 Fieldfare feeding on Haws at the lower end of Bottoms Lane track. Joining them in the feeding frenzy were 20 Redwing, 6 Blackbirds and 2 Mistle Thrush.

07/11 A Yellowhammer is a bird not seen on or near the Meadow for many a year. So a single bird calling over the Meadow was the first recorded sighting since 2005. The agitated calls of smaller birds disturbed the day time roosting Tawny Owl in the ivy covered Ash tree on the Meadow. D

11/11 Most of the 30 Cattle were removed. 7 stragglers were left to graze the very soggy Meadow.

13/11/2012 A Mediterranean Gull was found loafing around on the Dee. The 2nd one to be found this year! D

15/11 4 healthy, but very timid Foxes were came to feed on scraps put out by the Handbridge Allotments. Their trust was placed only in the hand that was feeding them. A sniff of any other by passer and they would bolt for the cover of darkness.

20/11 A Stonechat was found on Dee Valley Water land possibly benefiting from the feeding activities of the horses .D



Tawny Owl on Garden Wall
picture by Richard Haworth

25/11 Waxwing have been sighted at a number of locations around the city this winter. So it was a pleasure to see a flock of 30 trilling their way over the far end of the Handbridge Marsh.

07/12 A Great Crested Grebe was observed from the Meadows river bank on more than one occasion. It seemed at ease with both the boats on the river and pedestrians along the foot path.TD.

09/12 3 Large clouds of Starlings filled the air above the Meadow before descending into a roost on Gorsty Bank. The flocks constantly morphed into different shapes and made counting them very difficult indeed. However, up to 3000 birds may well have been involved in this murmeration. A terrific spectacle repeated over a number of nights. RS

Bordering on a mini invasion of the bird table were 2 males & 1 female Blackcap in an Anne's Way garden. Blackcaps are usually lone visitors to the garden feeder so these 3 may well be a record for these parts.TD

10/12/ A drop in temperatures brought with it the arrival of a brace of Woodcock. They were flushed by a dog on Dee Valley Water land. They circled around before dropping on to gorsty bank.

15/12 En route to another trudge round the shops a single Brambling flew up from a front garden in Queens Crescent .Even when Brambling do over winter in Britain they are very rarely seen on or around the Meadow. So this one was a complete surprise and brought with it an impressive list of sightings seen on the Meadow and its neighbouring gardens in the last 2 months of the year.

Andy Ingham

Meadows Log Recorder 01244 677135

Chester Water Sports Centre



Along with other interested parties, the Friends of the Meadows were invited to a presentation at Royal Chester Rowing Club about their proposal to build a new Water Sports Centre on land off Sandy Lane beyond the Red House. The proposal is at a very early stage but they have agreed an option to lease the land from Dee Valley Water. The Club is hoping to attract other river users to participate in the development and also to provide facilities for use by the community. Next steps are to investigate funding sources and business planning, whilst at the same time they will develop the scheme to the stage where a planning application can be submitted. We will update you on how the scheme is progressing as more information becomes available.



Aerial view of the proposed site



Sketch looking from the river