



# FRIENDS OF THE MEADOWS

Newsletter 195

Summer 2014

## Moths and Mankind

Throughout recorded history, thanks to a few species such as the common clothes moth whose larvae feed on all keratin-based materials, hair, wool, silk, feathers and so on, moths have had a bad press. 'The moth shall eat them up like a garment and the worm shall eat them like wool', wrote Isaiah over two thousand six hundred years ago. Job, more than three thousand years ago wrote, 'And he as a rotten thing consumeth, as a garment that is moth eaten.'

The word moth is Anglo-Saxon in origin, being derived from 'motha', the creature we now call a maggot. Shakespeare, in Coriolanus, declares that, 'All the yarn that Penelope spun in the absence of Ulysses did but fill Ithaca full of moths'. Dryden in his translation of Juvenal declares:



Let moths through pages eat their way,  
Your wars, your loves, your praises be forgot,  
And make of all a universal blot.

Doctor Johnson defines moths in the earlier editions of his great dictionary as, 'A small insect or worm which eats cloths or hangings and afterwards becomes winged'. The natural haunts of the common clothes moth and other members of the Family, Tineidae, include the nests of birds and small mammals which is but a small step to human households. I remember, as a small boy when woollen garments were more common, the smell of naphthalene moth balls in the wardrobes at home.



Mullein Moth



Codlin Moth



Green Oak Tortrix Moth

Members of the Family Pyralidae feed on a wide variety of stored food materials such as cereals/flour, nuts and dried fruit and can be serious pests. Moths may also be troublesome garden pests. My verbascums will be reduced to skeletons by the strikingly coloured caterpillars of the mullein moth. My apple trees will be come under attack from the codlin moth, whose larvae burrow into the apples. Caterpillars of the green oak tortrix moth will munch away at the leaves of my oak tree, if disturbed by wind or predators they hang from the tree on a silken thread.

**Ron Iremonger**

## Notes from the Chair



As we prepare the Summer Newsletter for you, we have some interesting and challenging times ahead. The Ranger service for Cheshire West and Chester is undergoing cuts and by the time this newsletter goes out we hope to know who and what will be provided. While we have been assured that the Meadows will remain a priority site, it is likely that there will be some reduction in maintenance. However, we are committed to working with the Rangers to ensure that the Meadows remains an area to be enjoyed by all – as declared by Harry and Louise Brown when they purchased the meadows in 1929 and gifted it to the citizens of Chester “to be forever maintained and preserved as a recreation ground for the use of citizens.”

We also hear of plans by the Council to sell off Shepperton Meadow (the piece of land as you enter from Lower Park Road) to the Rowing Club to build a two-storey water sports centre and car park. Needless to say, we are monitoring developments closely!

On the main meadow, the Ranger has been monitoring the state of the remaining willows. Sadly they appear to be in a worse condition than previously thought and after another inspection the decision was taken to fell them for safety reasons. We will talk again with the Ranger service about the possibility of a re-planting project. Some of the fencing around the river has been repaired by volunteers and this will be continuing for the next few months.

You will also see in Andy's Meadows Log that three Hairy dragonflies were observed hawking along the ditches. This is a great find – the hairy dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*) is Britain's smallest hawker and quite uncommon. It is hoped these sightings represent a potential breeding site.

We have been looking at events to take place this year and will be trying something different – a pond (or ditch)-dipping day! This will be on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July. See below for more details. We are also planning a walk in the Summer along the meadows and if the weather is good, a picnic stop. And despite last year's disappointing weather for the Barbeque, we'll have another go, probably early September.

I know that you all enjoy our front page articles, written by Ron Iremonger, for which we are very grateful. This newsletter contains Ron's last as he has announced his “retirement”. I'm sure that you will all join me in thanking Ron for all the interesting and informative articles he has provided over many years. Thank you, Ron, and enjoy your retirement!

Finally, please support our fellow Friends of the Meadows Dr and Mrs Browne who are opening their garden on Barrel Well Hill as part of the National Gardens Scheme which raises money for nursing and caring charities. We have included details in this newsletter.

**Rachel Cross**

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**Go ditch-dipping on the Meadows!**

**Look for pond and ditch life with expert Ecologist Andy Harmer.**

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July at 10:30am – meet at Bottom's Lane Gate (sorry, no unaccompanied children)**





## April and May 2014



03/04/2014 A singing Blackcap, the first of the spring, joined the Chiffchaff along Bottoms Lane track.

06/04/2014 A pair of Goosander fished the river bordering the Meadow.VG. The following day a 3rd bird joined them below the Old Dee Bridge. (see photograph)

07/04/2014 The first Swallows of the summer were busy catching flies at high speed between the horses on Chaddertons Meadow.

11/04/2014 Foxes appear to be getting bolder. Steve Thomas and his wife were in their garden in Edinburgh Way around lunchtime when a Fox sauntered past them, lay down on their lawn and enjoyed a 20 minute snooze. Steve was able to capture the moment (see left hand photo) before the Fox strolled off into St Georges Crescent. The second photo taken by Sarah Downes shows a fox relaxing in their garden on a sun lounger!



12/04/2014 Two Snipe were flushed from a ditch on the Meadow, the final sighting of the winter.

15/04/2014 The first singing Willow Warbler of the spring came from trees by the West end river entrance. It probably nests each year in the quiet Barnfield Meadow which borders the Queens Park High School rowing club.

Taking advantage of the sunshine a good selection of butterflies emerged on and around the Meadow. These included Orange Tip, Green Veined White, Speckled Wood, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Holly Blue.VG

16/04/2014 A Lesser Whitethroat, the first of the spring, rattled away from deep within the Blackthorn hedgerow.

26/04/2014 A Grasshopper Warbler reeled continuously from deep within the Juncus, but remained hidden from view.

26/04/2014 A day earlier than last year, a Common Sandpiper paused briefly by the Meadow before continuing with its migration. TD.

03/05/2014 A pair of Long Tailed Tits were found nesting in Gorse close to the water company track. They were observed carrying a beak full of insects back to their young every 15 minutes.(see photo).



07/05/2014 A good 12 days later than last year half a dozen Swifts assembled over the Meadow to feed for the first time this spring. TD

11/05/2014 The escaped Eagle Owl was finally caught after 4 months of freedom. It was rescued by a rower who found the Owl tangled in Ivy at the edge of the river. The Owl known as Tufty was returned to its owner.

17/05/2014 Large numbers of damselflies were on the move along the ditches. Most of them Azure Damselflies (see photo), but singles of Large Red and Blue Tailed Damselfly were also found. Most exciting of all was the discovery of a Hairy Dragonfly ovipositing in one of the ditches. This is the first recorded sighting for the Meadow.



20/05/2014 Although Green Woodpeckers are found on land off Overleigh Drive they rarely venture on to the Meadow so a single bird flying over the hedgerow on to Chadderton Meadow was a highlight of an evening walk.

29/05/2014 We don't have many Common Spotted Orchids on the Meadow and when they do appear they are nibbled by the cattle, 3 spikes were found in their usual place. TD

**Andy Ingham**

Meadows Log Recorder 01244 677135

# National Gardens Scheme – Riverside Garden Open Day

## 150 Barrel Well Hill, Boughton, Chester, CH3 5BR



### Description

A spectacular terraced garden with views over the River Dee to the Meadows and Clwyd Hills. Informal cottage style garden on historic site by the Martyrs Memorial. Lawns running down to the river, prolific shrub and flower beds, productive vegetable patch and soft and hard fruit areas, springs, stream and lily pond.

Uniquely, preferred method of arrival is by leisurely river cruiser from Chester.  
Not suitable for wheelchairs or children under eight due to unprotected drop into river

### Location

On riverside ¾m E of Chester off A5115. No parking adjacent to garden. Preferred access via Bithells Boats, on the hour from 11 - 4, from The Groves central Chester. Cost one way £3.50, child £2. Alternative access on foot from Boughton or bus to St Paul's Church. Limited parking available locally, including adjacent to Bill Smith Motors.

### Facilities and Refreshments



Home-made teas

<b>Opening dates and times</b> Sat 21st and Sunday 22nd June (11am – 5pm)	<b>Admission</b> Adults £4, children £2
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The National Gardens Scheme opens thousands of outstanding gardens throughout England and Wales to raise money for nursing and caring charities. Most of the gardens are private and not normally open to visitors.