

Friends of the Meadows



Newsletter 214

Winter 2019

Welcome *to our* Newsletter for Winter 2019

It's that time of the year when we ask for membership renewals! Some of you may have already submitted Standing orders, so thank you already for that. This is our preferred method of membership subscription, but you can still send an "old-fashioned" cheque! Enclosed with this issue is a standing order form for you to complete and send directly to your bank.

Your subscriptions help not only to pay the printing costs of this newsletter but also fund the many activities undertaken on your behalf by the Committee. There were details at our AGM and in the last year included the purchase of black poplars for planting on the Meadows, bird and bat boxes, and new polycarbonate covers for the Notice Boards. We also now have a new website up and running and that also needs funding for the new domain name: www.friendsofthemedows.org. There's more details in this issue

Please also support our activities – the next is a Winter Tree Identification Walk led by Julie Rose on 27th January. The Committee will be looking at other activities such as walks etc for the coming year. If you have any ideas, please get in touch!

The coming year offers much uncertainty but I wish you all a very happy and prosperous New Year, whatever 2019 is going to throw at us!

Rachel Cross, Newsletter Editor
Email: rachelcross789@gmail.com

This edition's cover photo is "Early morning colours just after dawn. A frosty River Dee"
Photographer: © Ron Sutton
www.ronsuttonimages.com

In this Issue

- 3 Meadows Site Management**
Steph Hefferan gives an update
- 4 The Trees of South Shropshire**
A summary of John Tuer's talk at the AGM
- 5 Our New Website!**
Details of our new look website
- 6 Bithell Boats**
Archives from the past
- 7-8 Meadows Log**
Andy lists all the sightings in the last few months

SNOW BY LOUIS MACNEICE

The room was suddenly rich and the great
bay-window was
Spawning snow and pink roses against it
Soundlessly collateral and incompatible:
World is suddener than we fancy it.

World is crazier and more of it than we
think,
Incorrigibly plural. I peel and portion
A tangerine and spit the pips and feel
The drunkenness of things being various.

And the fire flames with a bubbling sound
for world
Is more spiteful and gay than one
supposes –
On the tongue on the eyes on the ears in
the palms of one's hands –
There is more than glass between the snow
and the huge roses.

Meadows Site Management

An update from Coutryside Ranger Stephanie Hefferan

New Year, New Challenges!

Firstly, here's hoping you had a happy and healthy Xmas and New Year and thank you for all your good wishes and positive support over the last year.

Here's just a quick update of works in the recent months...

Steps (Bottoms Lane)

We managed to find a little extra money to fully replace these steps, rather than repair – once we had looked at all the things that needed repair/replacement, it seemed wiser to do a full job. This has been on the books for some time so it is satisfying that this has now been sorted.

Gates (riverside)

These have had small repairs to prevent them from being lifted off – thanks to everyone that brought this to my attention – hopefully this issue will now be resolved.

Holes!

These have now been filled and repaired – please do everything to persuade enthusiastic dogs from

digging them back up. It is very sandy soil so it is something to keep an eye on.

Friends

Have been working hard removing some of the willow scrub off the Meadow – the aim is to keep it in balance, not to remove it all as this will offer the maximum benefits to a suite of wildlife and maintain diversity. All brash has been sent for use at Chester Zoo – forming a good partnership between the site and local business.

New challenges

These include replacement of plastics on noticeboards, which is very much in hand by the Friends group; seeking funding for path repairs and erosion control (always a work in progress); and continuing to support the hard work of the Friends and PCSO's to keep the Meadows such a great place to de-stress and enjoy.

Best wishes for a great New Year!

**Steph
Greenspace Officer**



Andy poses by al the cut willow as it awaits removal from the Meadow



The giraffes at Chester Zoo enjoy a good "browse" on willow!

The Trees of South Shropshire

James Holroyd gives a summary of the talk given by John Tuer at our AGM last November

This talk followed a seven mile walk in May on a circular route round Clunton, Shropshire, with some grand countryside views. Along the way John Tuer was able to illustrate a whole range interesting points relating to trees. For example, a hollow tree is not necessarily close to death, since the life of the tree is in the outer layers of the trunk, not in the central wood.

The saying: 'Oak before ash, we're in for a splash. Ash before oak, we're in for a soak' has no basis in fact. The same saying exists in Norwegian, but in reverse, obviously to accommodate the rhyme!

We learnt too many interesting facts to relate in this account, but here are a few:



A male yew tree can carry a female branch, and vice versa.



Dutch elm disease tends to attack trees once they have reached twenty years of age.



It is not the beetles themselves which actually kill the tree. The holes they bore allow deadly fungus to enter the bark.



The alder is one of the few native species which can survive with its roots in water. (Most other trees suffer as if they have been ring-barked).



Photo: Philip Halling (Geograph)

The cork-like cells in the trunk allow air to enter. The tree is then able to transfer some of this oxygen to air ducts in its roots.



Ivy can provide an excellent habitat for wild-life. However, if it is allowed to dominate the canopy of the tree it can strangle it and cause the tree to fall in a storm. John showed us a photo of a large tree with a wide canopy covered by ivy. We were then shown the tree stripped of its ivy in winter. It was strikingly apparent just how much the ivy had enveloped a relatively puny framework.

John very kindly offered to take Friends on this walk some time during the first two weeks of May next year, at a time to be agreed. If any members (and friends) are interested, they should contact James Holroyd at jandwholroyd@btinternet.com

Our New Website!

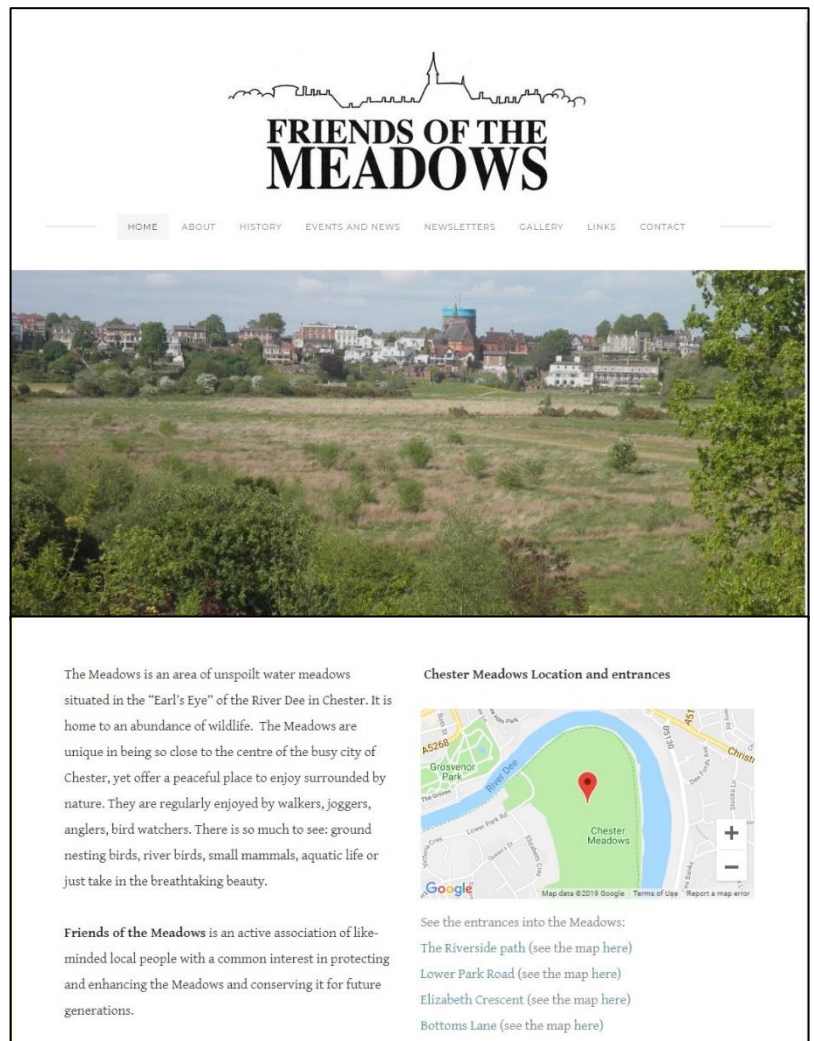
Rachel Cross describes the changes to the Friends of the Meadows website

John Murray has hosted our website for many years but last year, gave us notice that he would be closing down this side of his work, together with the handbridge.com domain. We'd like to express our very grateful thanks to John for all the work he has done in keeping our website going!

So, we had to rise to the challenge of recreating the website and transferring all the archive material over, including all the catalogue of Newsletters. We chose to use Weebly, an online web builder which also made it possible to find a new domain name very close to the old one and you can now find us on:

friendsofthemeadows.org

From the Home page you can now see a menu from which you can pick:



ABOUT – More about FOM and our Aims and Objectives

HISTORY – The History of the Meadows. Most of this material was put together by the late Tim Finch

EVENTS AND NEWS – Details of the latest events on the Meadows and current news items

NEWSLETTERS – a full archive of downloadable newsletters going back to January 2009

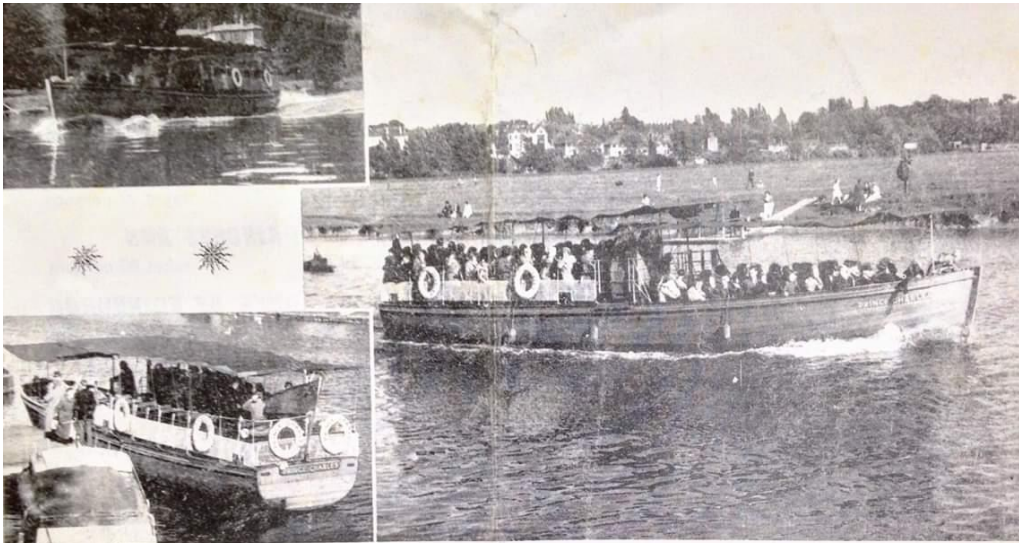
GALLERY – a gallery of photographs taken on the Meadows

LINKS – various links to more information, other local groups and interesting snippets

CONTACT – a simple Contact Form to send us any questions or messages

Bithell Boats

We recently came across this interesting archive material about Bithell Boats when they ran trips up and down the River Dee and around the Meadows in the 1960's and 70's



**No Visit to Chester is complete
without a river trip by
BITHELL BOATS**

Daily departures every 15 minutes during
the season to Eccleston and return, a sail
taking approximately 45 minutes.

ADULTS 70p CHILDREN 50p

Private parties booked in advance for a River Trip to
the Iron Bridge and return, a sail taking approximately
one and a half hours.

ADULTS 90p CHILDREN 70p

Special Party Rates on application to :
The Secretary,

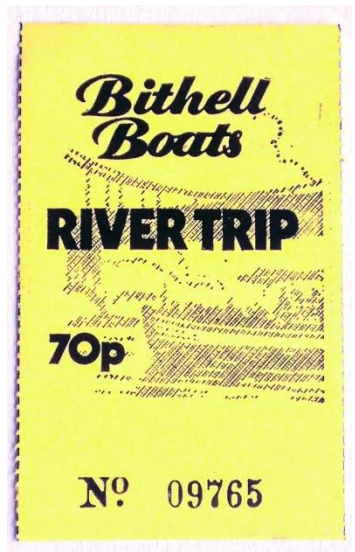


Bithell Boats

(ROBERT ADAMSON - SOLE PROPRIETOR)

The Groves, Chester.

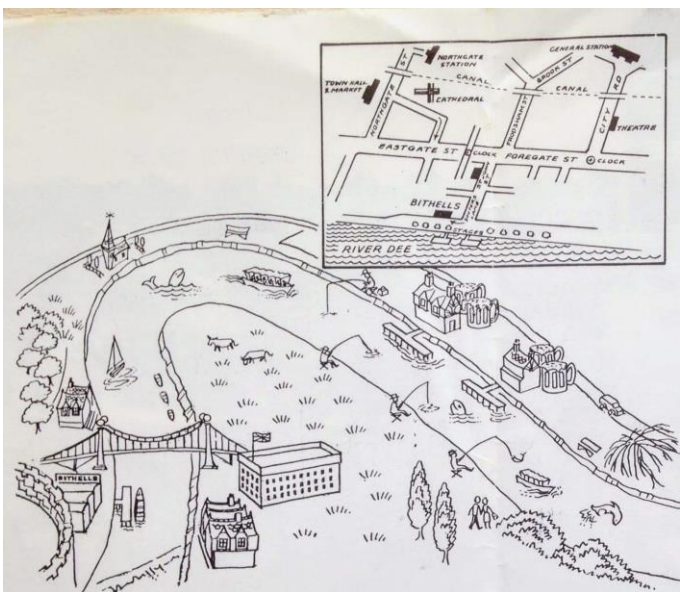
Telephone: 0244 25394 & 0606 883332



Top left: A leaflet
showing the launch
"Prince Charles" on
the river.

Other boats included
Princess Ann, Duke of
Edinburgh, May
Queen and Raglan

Top right: A River
Trip ticket from the
early 70's



Launches :

PRINCE CHARLES

takes 100 persons

MAY QUEEN

takes 92 persons

PRINCESS ANN

takes 80 persons

DUKE OF EDINBURGH

takes 72 persons

RAGLAN

takes 71 persons

Rowing boats for hire by the
hour or daily

You can hire a launch exclusively for a Special Celebration or
reunion occasion.

Evening sails extra rates after 6.30 p.m.

You may bring with you your own refreshments for an evening
Sail, or your launch can call at a Riverside Hotel where refreshments
can be arranged for you.

For more details apply to the Secretary.

NOTE— Special reductions can be
made for parties of Senior Citizens,
Handicapped Persons and Children,
provided that bookings are made
well in advance and do not occur on
Saturdays, Sundays & Bank Holidays

All our launches are under the
supervision of the Board of
Trade, and each display B.O.T.
Certificates.

Bottom left: the
reverse of the leaflet
listing the boats and a
lovely picture of the
river winding round
the Meadows



November to December 2018

This was a very quiet period with few sightings reported.

24th November 2018

Away from the Meadow a male Goosander was seen loafing around on the river at Heronbridge.



Goosander

1st December 2018

Stonechats are often encountered in pairs during the winter months. So far only a single female Stonechat has been resident. It favours the area around the gorse lined ditch in the centre of the Meadow.

9th December 2018

A walk along the river bank at dusk was brightened up with a discovery of a small communal roost of four Grey Wagtails. They were settling down for the night in Willow by the Water mound.

16th December 2018

Eyes diverted from the road briefly, as a Woodcock flew over Eaton Road into the gardens along Eaton Road.

25th December 2018

Kingfisher sightings were recorded on a number of occasions during the winter - along the riverbank by Trevor Dennis and on either side of the Bottoms Lane ditch by Judith Clarke.

30th December 2018

The haunting call of a Tawny Owl is not as common as it used to be. A male calling at dusk up river from the Meadow was a welcome sound.

31st December 2018

Goosanders were again present on the river. Joe found 3 below the weir, 2 males and a female.

Andy Ingham, Meadows Log Recorder

T: 01244 677135

Or get in touch via our Facebook page:
[/friends of the meadows-chester](https://www.facebook.com/friends-of-the-meadows-chester)

You can also get in touch via the Contact page on our new website:
www.friendsofthemeadows.org

Or email us on:
fomchester@gmail.com

EVENT - Winter Tree Identification Walk

27th January 2019 11am - 2.30pm



Identifying Trees in Winter can be difficult without some of the more obvious cues like leaves, flowers and fruits. Get outdoors with this guided walk and join Julie Rose for a winter tour looking to identify some evergreen and deciduous trees by using cones, bark, leaves and buds. We'll be looking at a variety of trees in The Dingle, Duke's Drive and Overleigh Cemetery

Meet - SJ 40204 65131 **Location** - Car park Duke's Drive, Overleigh Roundabout - CH4 7HW

Suitable for - Families, Adults, Beginners; No Dogs **Disability** - flat but may go off path.

Parking - Yes (Tiny carpark but on road parking on Overleigh road and River Lane - frequent buses from Wrexham/Chester [closest stop: CHWMPM])

Other Info - please bring suitable clothing for the weather on the day and a thermos or drink. We may go to a public house or cafe to look at samples at the end of the walk (depending on time/weather /attendees)

This is a joint event with the North Wales Wildlife Trust



The Meadows in snow - will we get any this Winter?