

Friends of the Meadows



Newsletter 215

Spring 2019

Welcome *to our* Newsletter for Spring 2019

First of all, a gentle reminder that if you have not yet paid your membership of £5 for 2019 it should now be paid. You can send payment directly to Richard Cain, 56 Elizabeth Crescent, Chester CH4 7AZ. But also see the panel bottom right for a better way!

You can also contact Richard on richard.cain1@btinternet.com.

Meadows Photographs wanted!

We would like to produce a Christmas Card for 2019 featuring a photograph of the Meadows.

If any member has a photograph that they think might be suitable could you please send it to Richard Cain at the above email address.

The committee will review all photographs and hopefully select a suitable one for the card. Whilst there would be no payment or prize for any photograph used, an acknowledgement of the donor would appear on the card.

In other news, the proposed Watersports Hub development on Barnfield is still dragging on slowly. There is a requirement for further ecological surveys to be undertaken including a bat survey after their hibernation period ends. As a result, we now understand that the planning application will be re-submitted in June. However, the Royals are making alternative plans of their own which will significantly affect the funding. As ever, we wait and see.

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

This edition's cover photo shows Stephen Savory and Richard Cain putting the finishing touches to the new Notice Board cover at Bottoms Lane

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Paying your subscriptions

Would you consider paying your annual subscription by standing order?

A form was sent out with our last Newsletter with that as an option, so please don't forget to return it!

Paying by Standing Order is easy to arrange and ensure you don't forget to renew every year!

You'll also be helping us as well.

If you've mislaid your Subscription Form, you can download a copy from our website's Home page:

www.friendsofthemeadows.org

Meadows Site Management

An update from Couttryside Ranger Stephanie Hefferan

Holes - Repairs generally completed although this is liable to be a job that requires regular maintenance with the sandy soils.

Steps at Bottoms Lane – these have now been replaced

Gates - Have now been welded in place. I have some Hammerite paint available left over from another project. I want to use this for the Cheshire railings at the entrances so will plan this for the warmer weather. Any help will be gratefully received – see below!

Volunteering - Cheshire Wildlife Trust no longer have an officer to carry out work the way they have done in the past. I will keep liaising with them to see what we can do.

Sailing club - They are carrying out coppicing opposite their base (Sunday 20th). The club seem very supportive, so I have hopes we can engage them in occasional work.
The University's "Welly Wednesdays" group is now being run by the students and are only available for the afternoon

rather than a full day. I will carry on working with them but will try to balance it fairly across the suite of Chester sites and the other organisations they are involved with.

Management plans - The existing plan started by Amanda Pritchard is still in place, however I am currently editing and updating where necessary.

A re-application needs to be made for the SSSI riverside management plan from Natural England. I hope to have the approved plan in place asap – it will remain the same as the previous 5-year plan arranged by Amanda with only some minor updates to organisational information/structure

Cattle on the Meadows - Finally, I am hoping that we may yet get to have some cattle grazing on the Meadows this year after a few years' absence. Various discussions are ongoing, but I hope we'll have some news soon.

Steph
Greenspace Officer

Your Meadows needs you!

Volunteers needed

We're always looking for extra help to do jobs around the Meadows. If you can give some time it would really be appreciated – from painting railings to willow removal. Get in touch with **Andy Ingham** on andrewingham@aol.com

Newsletter delivery

The delivery of our newsletters, shared among only a few people, is time-consuming. We badly need more helpers with delivery, as older members 'retire' and the task falls on fewer and fewer shoulders (and feet).

If you are able to help us in any of the above ways, please contact

James Holroyd at jandwholroyd@btinternet.com

Problems with Poo

More problems with some inconsiderate dog walkers

While photographing a Comma butterfly on Blackthorn flowers I became aware of a black bag hanging above the butterfly. My heart sank realising it was a poo bag carelessly flung into the hedgerow. If this was done by a regular dog walker this behaviour was possibly repeated elsewhere. A search of Bottoms Lane track hedgerow unearthed a further **five** poo bags. A couple of days later I returned with Julie and Stephen to remove the bags. With an extra two pairs of eyes we found and **removed 23 bags** from the track.

This sort of behaviour gives all responsible dog owners a bad name. The culprit is not only committing a dog fouling offence but is guilty of littering too.

If you see this sort of behaviour while walking around the meadows please pass on the information to the community police.



Stephen Savory tackles the poo bags with extended loppers

Chester Heritage Festival Walk on the Meadows

Friday 21st June – meet at 5:30pm at Lower Park Road Entrance

As part of the Chester Heritage Festival, Julie Savory from the Friends of the Meadows Committee will be leading a short walk of approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile around the Chester Meadows.

The walk will provide an introduction to the history of the Meadows which were purchased by the Brown family in 1929 and donated to council ownership on condition that they are preserved for recreational use by the citizens of Chester. During the walk the work of the Friends of the Meadows in protecting and enhancing the Meadows for future generations of humans, fauna and flora will also be explored.

The walk will start at the entrance to the Meadows at the bottom of Lower Park Road at the junction with Elizabeth Crescent and will last approximately 1 hour.

Places on the walk are limited to 25. To find out more and to book a place, please visit visitcheshire.com/chesterheritagefestival

Public Events on the Meadows in 2019

Details of the public events taking place on the Meadows this year

Sunday 30th June – The Chester Raft Race

The 2019 Chester Rotary Charity Raft Race will be held on Sunday 30th June from 10.15am



Chester Raft Race 2018 Photo chesterrafttrace.org.uk

The rafts race over a 400 metre course starting from the Meadows to a finish just above the weir.

Last year the event also featured UK Fly-board Champion Jay St John with a spectacular display of fly-boarding. He is scheduled to take part again with his exciting display around 10.15am.

Sunday 14 July 2019 - Deva Divas Triathlon

The Deva Divas Triathlon is a short distance ladies only race and will again be held on the Chester Meadows, starting off around 8:30am

Swim

A 750m *open water swim* swimming downstream from opposite Sandy Lane. Exit will be via a pontoon ramp by the Meadows Riverside Entrance.

Bike

Once out of the River Dee, Divas will take their *bikes* from transition and make their way out onto Elizabeth Crescent and cycle 25K to Marford and back via Eccleston

Run

Then, a 5K flat off road *run* with two laps of a course on the Meadows.



Photo: Chester Triathlon Club

The Divas Quadrathlon also takes place along the same routes as above but with a 4k Kayak in between the Swim and Bike.

Sunday 10 August 2019 – Dee Mile

This is one of the oldest river races in the UK and will be 97 years old this year. It starts upriver at the Red House pub and the distance is actually a mile and a quarter, finishing at the suspension bridge. The race starts at 5:30pm

Both men and women are eligible to race: a "concession" which was only made for the full distance in 1993!



Dee Mile on the Meadows Photo Chester Triathlon Club

Meadows Notice Boards

For too long the information in the noticeboards at the entrances to the Meadows had been hard to read, obscured by condensation and accumulated dust and dirt. The Friends of the Meadows committee approved funding for replacement polycarbonate glazing and in early February a small working group of volunteers embarked on the task of replacing the glazing at the Bottoms Lane entrance and the riverside entrance. It was a fiddly job but hopefully we can all now read the notices!

Stephanie Hefferan, our CWaC Greenspace officer arranged for the glazing on the council-owned noticeboard at Lower Park Road to be replaced at the same time.



Left: It's a fiddly job!

Keith, Stephen and Richard begin replacing one of the polycarbonate covers



Left: Getting to grips

The guys tackle with the casement



Right: Job done

Stephen and Richard pose and admire their handiwork



January to April 2019

23rd January

Two Jack Snipe and 12 Snipe were on the Meadow. Six Lesser Redpoll were eating seed from the Plane tree at the west end entrance of the meadow.

27th January

A Kingfisher perched on branches above the ditch on Bottoms Lane track. A flock of 50 Lapwing headed west over the meadow.

19th February

The unusual sight of a Mink swimming in the river at the Groves attracted local media attention. Not a welcome sighting as they are voracious predators and a big threat to our local wildlife.

26th February

The first singing Chiffchaff arrived on the back of an unseasonal warm spell along with a very early Painted Lady butterfly. *John Wainwright*

26th March

A quartet of Ravens used the windy conditions to playfully tumble over the meadow for at least an hour. Are they nesting again in the city?

31st March

An extraordinary find of Snakeshead Fritillary growing on the neighbouring HLS land. With only nine records of this flower growing wild in Cheshire since 1993 an escapee or deliberate planting cannot be ruled out. (See photo opposite)



Snakeshead Fritillary

1st April

More signs of spring with Mining Bees on the river bank and a Beefly at the entrance to Bottoms Lane track. *Leanna Dixon.*

07th April

A Stoat scuttled along the river bank at the back of the Swan pool. A treecreeper was again at the west end entrance of the meadow. Bullfinches were in the hedgerow on Bottoms Lane track and a Kingfisher was diving into the off river off Chattertons meadow.



Comma butterfly, Bottoms Lane track

8th April

It was good to hear a Water Rail squealing like a Pig from the marsh on the Dukes side of Bottoms Lane track. Let us hope they breed here.

Andy Ingham, Meadows Log Recorder

T: 01244 677135

You can get in touch via our Facebook page:

[/friends of the meadows-chester](#)

Or via the Contact page on our new website:

www.friendsofthemeadows.org

Or email us directly at:

fomchester@gmail.com

A nice little find

I had a nice little find while walking along the riverbank in January.

I picked up an unusually shaped bottle caked in mud. A clean up and little internet research confirmed it to be a Laycocks of Chester, Lion embossed Codd bottle (with marble), dating back to 1890. As you can see it's in excellent condition.

Makes a change from picking up rubbish!

Andy

A Codd-neck bottle is a type of bottle used for carbonated drinks. It has a closing design based on a glass marble which is held against a rubber seal, which sits within a recess in the lip. It was named after its designer British soft drink maker Hiram Codd of London and became extremely popular.

Since children smashed the bottles to retrieve the marbles, vintage bottles are relatively scarce and have become collector items.

Laycocks Mineral Water works was on Station Road, Chester. Later known as Dee Cestrian and Laycocks it was wound up in 1968.

