

# **Friends of the Meadows**



**Newsletter 216**

**Summer 2019**

## Welcome *to our* Newsletter for Summer 2019

Summer is underway, although June this year proved to be rather cool and wet. Now we are into July and hoping for warmer, sunnier days!

It's now four years since we saw cattle on The Meadows and it has been interesting to see the effect this has had on the meadows. Without some grazing, The Meadows Grassland can become encroached by rank vegetation and scrub which if not kept controlled by grazing or mowing, outcompetes the less competitive finer grasses and herbs. Gradual removal of plant material by grazing animals also provides invertebrates with a better chance of survival. We are still hopeful for a return this year, even if for a short time and our Ranger, Stephanie is working towards that aim (see her report on page 3).

We have no more news about the proposed Watersports Hub development on Barnfield and activity seems to have stalled while further environmental surveys are being carried out.

Following the last newsletter's article about anti-social dog poo problems, we have liaised with Stephanie who has now placed Public Space Protection Order notices in the Notice Boards. These orders require dog walkers to clear up after their dogs. As ever, we want the Meadows to be a safe space for everyone to enjoy!

**Rachel Cross, Newsletter Editor**  
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This edition's cover photo of the **Dee at Sunset** is cropped from a photo taken by "Ade", @Soothy24x on Twitter.

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## SUMER is i-cumen in –

Lhude sing, cuccu!  
Groweth sed and bloweth med  
And springth the wude nu.  
Sing, cuccu!

Awe bleteth after lomb,  
Lhouth after calve cu,  
Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth –  
Murie sing, cuccu!  
Cuccu, cuccu.  
Wel singes thu, cuccu.  
Ne swik thu naver nu!

# Meadows Site Management

*An update from Coutryside Ranger Stephanie Hefferan*

## Riverside Fencing

The riverside fencing has been quoted for and is arranged; this is with our Asset team who will arrange a schedule with the contractor. This should be in place by mid-June.

This fencing will help to address the erosion issues of the bankside – we are legally obliged to do this as the bankside is a SSSI and SAC so requires protection.

We will also allow willows to grow up but these will be maintained at coppice level to maintain wind for the Sailing Club whilst the roots will stabilise the sandy bankside. The fencing will also help with our application for grazing (still waiting for assent) as one of Natural England's concerns was increased diffuse pollution and further erosion to the protected area.

I have been mindful that people like their dogs going in the water so the contractors will put in small squeeze gaps in so dogs can still get in and out

– plus this will allow access for management – these will be narrow enough to prevent cattle getting through to the water's edge. I believe that the amount of dogs accessing the water's edge will not discourage the vegetation from establishing but we can also supplementary-plant willow whips taken from the existing tree stock if needed. Explanatory notices can also be put up on the new fenceline if required.

## Ferry Landing Stage

You may already have seen the landing stage fenced off. Regulatory Services who manage the river and the landing stages will be doing some work here. They may have already started but if you see them about that's what they are up to!

## Mowing

This year's additional mowing has been confirmed for the 'Events' area.

**Steph Hefferan**  
**Greenspace Officer**

## Dog Warden Service

Cheshire West and Chester Council have recently started a 6 week public consultation on proposals relating to changes to the Dog Warden Service across the Borough. The consultation is open until 11 August 2019

The Council is proposing to make the following changes:

- To change the days and times that the dog warden is on duty, including extending the service to include Saturdays and Sundays, and change the times so that they better reflect demand.
- To introduce free training courses on responsible dog ownership, legal requirements, dog welfare and basic dog training
- In order to ensure a fairer and more consistent approach to charging, and to keep other charges (e.g. kennel charges) as low as possible, it is proposed to introduce a charge to the owner of £40, if the dog warden is called out to deal with a stray dog, even if it is possible to reunite the dog with its owner without taking the dog to kennels. In these circumstances, it is also proposed to offer a part-refund (for example, of 50%) if the owner attends one of the training courses offered

Further information and the online survey can be found on the Council's website:

[http://inside.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/get\\_involved/consultations/dog\\_warden\\_and\\_kennelling\\_service\\_consultation](http://inside.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/get_involved/consultations/dog_warden_and_kennelling_service_consultation)





## THE DEE AT CHESTER

BRITISH RAILWAYS

This poster of The Dee at Chester, showing the Meadows, was painted by Norman Wilkinson CBE RI. He was a British artist who usually worked in oils, watercolors and drypoint. He was primarily a marine painter, but also an illustrator, poster artist, and wartime camouflleur. Wilkinson invented dazzle painting to protect merchant shipping during the First World War.



Born in 1878, his early career as an illustrator for the Illustrated London News enabled him to develop his talents as both artist and entrepreneur. During WW2 he painted a record of the major sea battles and presented the series of 54 paintings to the Nation. They are kept at the National Maritime Museum.

He initiated a revival in poster painting for LMS Railways. This poster was printed for BR(LMR) by Jordison & Co in 1948.

*Photo: Norman Wilkinson in front of his painting with a model demonstrating one of his dazzle camouflage designs (Wikipedia)*



# Julie's Heritage Walk



On a perfect late June evening, a group of 16 people, including 4 trainee teachers from South Korea joined a walk around the Meadows led by Julie Savory from Friends of the Meadows. The walk was one of the events taking place as part of the Chester Heritage Festival which is organised annually by Chester Civic Trust.

The walk coincided with the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the purchase of the Meadows by Alderman Harry Brown and his wife Phyllis Brown on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 1929. This special place, which can be referred to as Chester's Green Lung was gifted to the Council by the Browns with a legal covenant that *'the land is held in all perpetuity for all the people of Chester to enjoy for recreation'*.

In the early evening sunshine The Meadows looked their best with buttercups, sorrel and a range of grasses billowing in the gentle breeze set against a large expanse of blue sky.

During the walk participants were introduced to the role of Friends of the Meadows in helping to

look after and protect The Meadows for both humans and wildlife as well as to the local historical events which have taken place on or overlooking the Meadows including links with the Siege of Chester between 1645 and 1646 and the sad events which took place at Barrellwell Hill where women deemed to be witches were placed in barrels and rolled into the river.

Participants in the walk enjoyed exploring the paths running through the wetter grasslands with a guide as well as strolling around the riverside path.

Both local people on the walk and people less familiar with the Meadows stressed how lucky we are to have such a haven of unspoilt meadow land so close to the city centre and appreciated the role of Friends of the Meadows in helping to preserve this.

**Julie Savory**

# Bee Recording Day on the Meadows

In the UK we have over 250 species of bees. These consist of 25 bumblebee species, one honeybee species and the rest are made up of solitary bees. Solitary bees live alone, although they often nest close to one another; they do not produce honey, do not have a queen and do not live in hives.

On 17<sup>th</sup> April, a group of volunteers, led by staff from RECORD, the Local Biological Records Centre for the Cheshire Region, conducted a survey of bee species on the Meadows. The survey centered on Bottom's Lane and the banks of the Dee. Below is the list of bee species that were recorded.



Bumblebees are social insects, living in colonies of up to 200 workers. Queens hibernate underground during the winter, emerging in spring to find suitable nest sites. The photo is a Buff-tailed bumblebee, one of the 'Big 7' of widespread and abundant species and possibly the earliest bee to be seen.

Buff-Tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*)  
Red Tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*)  
Early Bumble Bee (*Bombus pratorum*)  
Hairy-footed Flower Bee (*Anthophora plumipes*)

White-Tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lucorum*)  
Common Carder Bumblebee (*Bombus pascuorum*)  
Western Honeybee (*Apis mellifera*)  
Red Mason Bee (*Osmia bicornis*)



A number of Mining bees were recorded. These are one of the largest groups of solitary bees. In general, they seem to prefer to build nests in sandy soil. The photo on the left is a Tawny Mining bee - a pretty, furry, ginger-coloured bee which is very common in gardens and city centres. Many people will have several of them nesting in their lawns each year!

Tawny Mining Bee (*Andrena fulva*)  
Orange-tailed Mining Bee (*Andrena haemorrhoa*)  
Buffish Mining Bee (*Andrena nigroaenea*)  
Grey-patched Mining Bee (*Andrena nitida*)

Ashy Mining Bee (*Andrena cineraria*)  
Chocolate Mining Bee (*Andrena scotica*)  
Sandpit Mining Bee (*Andrena barbilabris*)  
Clarke's Mining Bee (*Andrena clarkella*)



Nomad bees are "cuckoo species", meaning that they lay their eggs in the nests of other bees. There are about 30 species of Nomad bee in the UK, and all have a wasp-like appearance. This photo is a Gooden's Nomad bee, one of the largest and most common Nomad bees in the UK.

Early Nomad Bee (*Nomada leucophthalma*)  
Flavous Nomad Bee (*Nomada flava*)

Fork-jawed Nomad Bee (*Nomada ruficornis*)  
Gooden's Nomad Bee (*Nomada goodeniana*)

If you have any wildlife records, RECORD would love to hear from you! You can input your records directly into

their RODIS database online, or just get in touch with them.

Go to: [www.record-lrc.co.uk/](http://www.record-lrc.co.uk/)





## April to June 2019

### 11<sup>th</sup> April

The first Grasshopper Warbler of the spring was seen and heard reeling on bramble by the water mound. Mark.

### 29<sup>th</sup> April

An excellent spring for Common Whitethroat, with at least seven singing males around the Meadow.

A Lesser Whitethroat was also heard in the hedgerow at the lower end of Bottoms Lane track.



*Small Copper (see 9th June)*

### 2<sup>nd</sup> May

Two Shelduck flying above the Meadow is a rare sight. Although they occasionally nest inland it is more likely they were on a day trip from the inner Dee Estuary.

### 7<sup>th</sup> May

Hampered by the poor weather, Swifts were late in returning to Handbridge. The first four birds were noted above houses in Cross Hey. Unfortunately, not many have arrived since. Let us hope we don't lose them completely.

### 25<sup>th</sup> May

The Bottoms Lane track pond held three Large Red and numerous Azure Damselfly.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> June

Treecreepers generally do exactly what it says on the tin they creep up trees like little mice. It was surprising to see one climbing up a sandstone wall by the Queens Park Rowing Club. For recording purposes maybe this should go down as the Meadows first ever Wallcreeper!

### 4<sup>th</sup> June

A Water Rail called from neighbouring Dukes land. Its highly likely they have bred this year. Although a Fox observed nearby might have something to say about that.

Were the Mute Swan cygnets predated? After being first observed by Iwan out rowing it was sad to see the resident pair without their offspring in tow.



*Lesser Stitchwort (see 16th June)*

### 9<sup>th</sup> June

Three Yellow-barred Longhorn moths were observed in the hedgerow along Bottoms Lane track and 2 Small Copper (see photo) butterflies were on the neighbouring Dukes land.

A Great Tit remarkably managed to raise a brood in Willow tree by the landing stage. The Great Tit would have been sitting on eggs when contractors pollarded the tree. The branches were hanging dangerously over the landing stage so were chopped back on safety grounds.

### 16<sup>th</sup> June

Lovely to see Ragged Robin again flowering on the neighbouring Dukes Land and also carpets of Stitchwort on the Meadow (see photo)



*Common Blue (see 29<sup>th</sup> June)*

### 29<sup>th</sup> June

The Bottoms Lane track pond again proved a fruitful source for Odonata with the Meadows first record of Emerald Damselfly (see photo). Plenty of Meadow Brown and Large Skipper, four male Common Blue (see photo), three Painted Lady butterflies all enjoying the sunshine.



*Emerald Damselfly (see 29<sup>th</sup> June)*

#### **Andy Ingham, Meadows Log Recorder**

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You can get in touch via our Facebook page:  
**/friends of the meadows-chester**

Or via the Contact page on our website:  
**www.friendsofthemeadows.org**

Or email us directly at:  
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### Chester Raft Race

A number of events take place on The Meadows every year. One very popular event is the Raft Race. This is an annual charity event organised by the Chester Rotary Club. This year, a representative of Friends of the Meadows was invited to help judge which raft best met the theme of 'Transport through the Ages'. There were some very good entrants from Roman and Viking boat crews, to a double decker bus and a stagecoach. The Meadows and the Groves were full of families enjoying the spectacle.

Some arrived on and departed from The Meadows using the **Sandy Lane Ferry**. This way of getting to The Meadows has been operating on the River Dee for more than 50 years. The ferry operates every weekend in summer from May Spring Bank Holiday to the end of September. It is just a nominal £1.00 to cross and opens up easy access to Chester's green lung from the other side of the river.