

# Friends of the Meadows



**Newsletter 221**

**Winter 2021**

# Welcome *to our Newsletter for Winter 2021*

Another year, and what can be said about where we find ourselves that hasn't been said already?

We look ahead into 2021 with a degree of optimism which I hope is not to be misplaced. Nevertheless, plans proceed in the hope of better days ahead.

We are most grateful to all our members who have renewed their memberships so far – many by having set up Standing Orders. Of course, others of you still prefer to send in cheques and we look forward to receiving your subscriptions. A Membership Renewal Form can be downloaded from our web page, but we will also send out forms with the Spring newsletter.

We have had a couple of changes on our Committee. Clive Gregory has stepped down and Bill Richardson has handed over the duties of Treasurer to Keith Dixon. We'd like to extend our thanks to both for all their service over the years.

In the absence of an AGM last year, Keith has prepared a financial summary which you can read on page 6. The full accounts will be available on our website.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter! The next one should be out in April, and who knows what where we'll be then? Stay safe everyone!

**Rachel Cross, Newsletter Editor**  
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This edition's cover photo of a frosty Meadows was taken by Anne Ord Sykes on one of her daily exercise walks in January.

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### Offerings

Black plastic pouches festooned along hedges, lower branches of trees, fences and railings.

Religiously filled in expectation of grace.

Glowing in sunlight, gleaming in moonlight, glinting in rain, glistening in frost.

Exuding an odour of purest sanctity.

Offered up by devotees of the Dog God.

**Jonathan Mayman**





# Emergency Sewage Works on The Meadows

*An summary from Greenspace Officer Stephanie Hefferan*

In November last year, Andy Ingham brought



to attention a sewage leak on The Meadows, As a result, Welsh Water had to enact emergency works in the Welsh Water sewer that crosses under the Meadows. Contractors were on there for 24 hours a day and Stephanie Hefferan, our Greenspace Officer kept us up to date with what was happening.

Here is her summary after the major work was completed:

**Sewer pipeline** - this has now been successfully repaired. A bespoke collar was manufactured and welded into place to address the leak - work took a little longer than hoped due to the very high water table on the site making it difficult to access the leak for assessment and subsequent repairs.

**Re-instatement** - contractors remained on site for the remainder of the week to remove all equipment and repair/reinstate any ground damage caused by the works - this led into a second week as it also depended on delivery of materials for repairs etc. These works were identified at a site meeting between myself, the contractors and Welsh Water.

**Safety fencing of leak area** - for public safety the metal safety fencing will need to remain on site for up to nine months (it is hoped to be sooner). The fencing must

remain whilst the area is monitored for ground subsidence/sinking - this is due to the very wet nature of the area and the potential for possible issues if/when the site floods (following heavy rainfall etc) making it difficult to fully predict how the ground will behave. The contractors will remain responsible for the maintenance and security of the fencing throughout.

**Follow up Welsh Water works** - following completion of reinstatement, a small team from Welsh Water will attend the site to survey and inspect the other pipelines in the area to ensure there is no excessive sediment following the works. Any remedial actions required eg flushing of the sediment will be low key and will have no impact on the site - this is a routine operation.



Although the leak was not as bad as initially thought, the principal issue was access and the high water table which was hindering assessment to deal with the damage - they needed several pumps to keep up with the groundwater flowing back in. All the contaminated soil has been removed and disposed of safely.

***Steph Hefferan, Greenspace Officer***

*(Photos by Julie Savory)*

# When will cattle grazing return?



*Cows grazing the Meadows. Photo: @jonotennis on TripAdvisor*

Last year, we had hopes that we would see a return of summer-grazing cattle onto the Meadows after a six year absence. Of course, the Covid pandemic and other factors prevented that from happening. As we moved towards the end of last year, proposals were again submitted in the hope that cattle could be reintroduced in 2021. Unfortunately, these plans have again been put on hold.

A wide-ranging **Environmental Strategies Consultation** process was begun by the Council at the end of November and continued until 25<sup>th</sup> January. The closing date is too early for us to include a link in this Newsletter, but details have been posted on our website under the News section and the Committee have contacted as many as we could to take part.

That consultation asked residents to give their views on how the Council manages wildflower planting, parks and open spaces, and outdoor play and youth areas, thus contributing to the

Council plans to produce an overarching Environmental Management Strategy.

The consultation did not specifically ask respondents to comment on conservational cattle grazing, but comments on that subject could be made.

The Committee's view is that summer-grazing cattle which have been a feature of these Meadows for centuries, is a sustainable, low impact way of managing the Meadows habitat. Whilst there may be some concerns about the methane contribution to global warming, put in perspective of the low numbers of stock for conservation grazing, the carbon release from vehicles for mowing, ploughing for crops, etc., together with its benefits for addressing the national biodiversity crisis, one must be balanced against the other – and cattle grazing is cheaper!

We look forward to a future time when we can once again see cattle on the Meadows.

*You may still be able to send your comments to the Council:*

**Email:**

[EnvironmentalStrategy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:EnvironmentalStrategy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

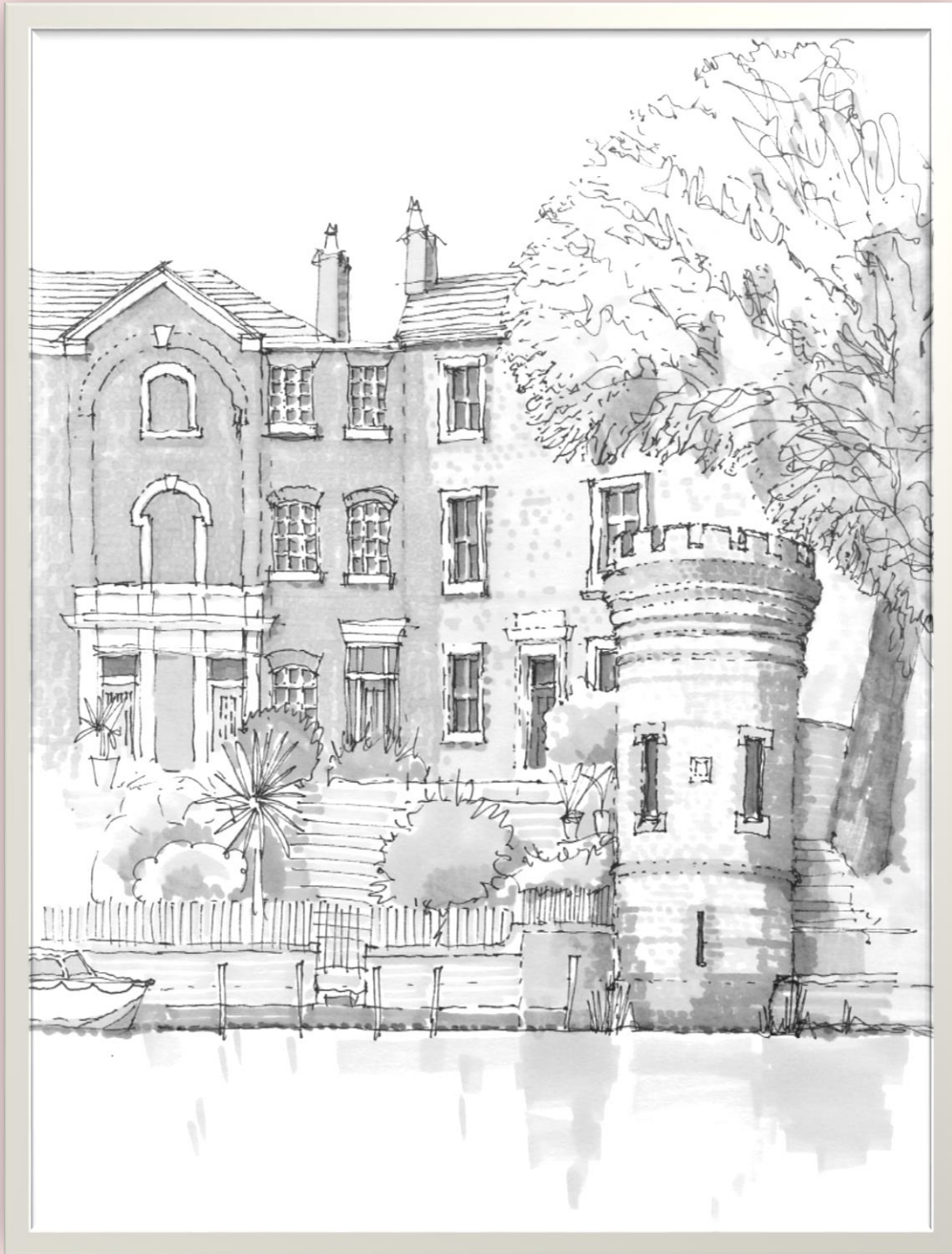
**Postal address:**

*Environmental Strategies  
Consultation, Cheshire West and  
Chester Council, Phoenix House,  
Clough Road, Winsford, Cheshire,  
CW7 4BD*



# Views from The Meadows: Deva Terrace Folly

*This edition's illustration is by Stephen Savory who ponders on a strange folly*



You may, like me, have walked past this small tower opposite The Meadows and wondered what on earth it is. Is it the remains of an old fortification? Is it the start or finishing point for a regatta? Or is perhaps a Victorian gentleman's (or woman's) retreat from the hustle and bustle of the household? An internet search revealed only the schedule of the Grade II listed building, stating that it is a mid-nineteenth century summerhouse with "machicolated crenulation": battlements to you and me. As it has only small slot windows, presumably for firing arrows at speeding boats, a summerhouse seems an unlikely use so I prefer to think of it as a folly put up by the builder of Deva Terrace, and what a delightful full stop it makes to this elegant row of Victorian houses. SS

# Successful funding bid from the Postcode Local Trust

The Postcode Local Trust is a grant-giving charity launched in 2005 which *'helps communities enhance their natural environment in a way that benefits the wider community'*. It is supported by players of the People's Postcode Lottery.



In December we were delighted to hear that our bid for an award of £2,000 for two Interpretation Boards had been successful. Planning permission has also been confirmed and so we are now ready to get started on firming up the design and content of the Boards.

The Boards will be in lectern frames and placed at the Riverside and the Lower Park Road entrances.

Although due to the on-going pandemic crisis we are unable to have working groups tackling physical tasks on the

Meadows, such as removing the ever-encroaching willow scrub, we really appreciate that this support from the Postcode Local Trust will enable us to progress our aim of increasing appreciation amongst local people and visitors of the history of The Meadows. This will include including the gifting of them to the people of Chester by Harry and Phyllis Brown, the role of The Meadows in flood management and the biodiversity of this special area of water meadows in the heart of the city.

**Julie Savory**

## Financial Report for the year ending 30 September 2020

As we said in the last Newsletter, our full accounts are on the website. Below is a summary of our present position.

This year has been very unsettling for all. We are no exception and this shows up in our finances. Payments made in the year were down totalling £757.

Although we achieved Planning Permission for the two interpretation boards which enabled us to secure the Postcode Lottery Grant, spending was otherwise reduced. Payments on the newsletter were lower this year as we produced and paid for fewer newsletters. Also, we managed to benefit from lower costs whilst maintaining the quality of production. Finally, we were unable to undertake much voluntary work as the pandemic severely limited group activity.

Despite the disruption to activities, our receipts from members' subscriptions and

donations remained high at £1,115. A big thank you to all for your continuing support.

The net effect was that receipts exceeded payments by £358, and left us with a bank balance of £4,135.

The committee plan to use the balance, working with the Council and hopefully with financial help from grants and practical help from volunteers, to enhance and maintain the Meadows.

2020/20 was Bill Richardson's last year as Treasurer, and the Committee is most grateful for his many years managing the Friends' finances, and for leaving them in such a solid state for the future.

Thank you, Bill.

**Keith Dixon**



## October 2020 to January 2021



*Muscovy Duck (see 7th November)*

### **15<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

Good numbers of Redwing in the hedgerow, a pair of Stonechat back for the first time this winter and Jays busy caching Acorns round the Meadow. *Mark Warren*

### **17<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

The first Jack Snipe of the autumn on the Meadow typically flushed from under foot and a flock of seven Teal flew past the Red House.

### **18<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

Four Lesser Redpoll were in with a flock of Goldfinch feeding on seed in the weedy fields off Bottoms Lane track.

### **26<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

A flock of 15 chattering Fieldfare dropped out of the sky to join the Blackbirds and Redwing already feeding on the berry laden Hawthorns.

### **2nd November 2020**

A Little Egret flew over the Meadows heading towards Handbridge and a late Red Admiral basking in the sunshine. *Mark Warren*

### **7<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

A pair of Muscovy Ducks were resident on the river for much of the autumn. Unfortunately, the black and white Muscovy (see pic) vanished in December leaving only the white bird coming to bread handouts on Sandy Lane.

### **15<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

Stonechat numbers increased to three and the first sighting in a long time of a Green Woodpecker feeding on the Meadow.

### **20<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

At dusk, a Woodcock flying over Bottoms Lane track on to the Meadow. Further sightings of Woodcock **5<sup>th</sup> December** by the Handbridge marsh, **10<sup>th</sup> January 2021** on the bank below Andrews Crescent, and again on the **17<sup>th</sup> January 2021** by the Handbridge marsh.



*Black-headed gull ringed in Denmark (see 30 December)*



### 21<sup>st</sup> November 2020

Two Green Woodpecker were noted feeding on Meadow. Further sightings of the pair on **5th December, 10th December** and **17th January 2021**.



*Mute Swan (see 2nd January 2021)*

### 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

Two Jack Snipe were flushed from the edge of the new “scrape” created by Welsh Water remedial activity on their underground sewer. 4 Raven flew up the river towards the Groves.

### 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020

A male Goosander was observed fishing underneath the Suspension bridge by **Bob Hinde** with a peak count on **10th January 2021** of nine (5 males) by the Old Dee Bridge.

Another Black headed Gull hanging out at the Groves with ring number 3731629. Data back from Arnhem ringing scheme reveals the Gull to be ringed as a nestling in 2013 at Eemshaven, Netherlands

### 30th December 2020

A Black headed Gull was observed at the Groves with ring number 6279671(see pic). Information from Copenhagen Ringing Centre shows it was ringed in 2014 as a chick at Sjaelland, Denmark and then recorded at the Groves in the winter of 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Another Black headed Gull hanging out at the Groves with ring number 3731629. Data back from Arnhem ringing scheme reveals the Gull to be ringed as a nestling in 2013 at Eemshaven, Netherlands.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2021

A Mute Swan flying up the river with ring number CPC8 (see pic). Information from the Cheshire Swan study group reveal it to be a female and ringed in 2019 as a Cygnet at Winterley Pool, near Sandbach.

### 9<sup>th</sup> January 2021

25 Lesser Redpoll feeding in the trees lining the path next to the Suspension Bridge, The seed cascading down on to the heads of the walker

**Andy Ingham, Meadows Log Recorder**

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Facebook: /friends of the meadows-chester

Website: [www.friendsofthemeadows.org](http://www.friendsofthemeadows.org)

## Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Plans are a part of the planning process which enables communities, should they decide to establish one, to set out how they want their community to develop.

Following public meetings Handbridge decided it would want to establish a Plan for the area bounded by the River Dee and the Wrexham Road within Chester's Handbridge and Park Ward. The Community would then be able to guide development with regard to the green space and heritage of that area, within the context of the Council's approved local plans.

The Friends of the Meadows Committee are keen to be involved in the development of the Plan given the significance of the Meadows to the surrounding area, to Chester, and to the wider natural environment.

In order to establish a Neighbourhood Plan, approval is needed by the Council to both its area and to the constitution of a Forum which must be established to prepare the plan for Community agreement.

The Committee will therefore seek to be represented on the Forum once it is set up.