

# **Friends of the Meadows**



**Newsletter 222**

**Spring 2021**

## Welcome *to our Newsletter for Spring 2021*

For many of you, this Spring Newsletter will arrive hot on the heels of the Winter Newsletter, the hand delivery of which was delayed because of the lockdown restrictions.

As we are now coming out of those restrictions I hope you're able to enjoy walking the Meadows (and even beyond!) in the lovely sunny weather we're currently enjoying as I write this in mid-April.

Our Summer newsletter will be due out by the end of July and I trust that I'm not tempting fate by hoping that by then we'll all be enjoying a greater relaxation of all the restrictions.

### Membership Renewals!

This year we're a bit late reminding you to renew your membership subscriptions renewals, although many of you have already done so without a reminder or have Standing Orders in place. Thank you!

Standing Orders are our preferred method of membership subscription, but you can still send us a cheque and enclosed with this issue is a Membership Renewal Form to send back to us. You can also use this form to set up a new Standing Order.

Your subscription not only helps to pay the printing costs of this newsletter but also fund the many activities undertaken on your behalf by the Committee.


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This edition's cover photo is of a Chiffchaff on the Meadows, taken by Andy Ingham (see Meadows Log in this issue)


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## Spring



There is no time like Spring,  
When life's alive in everything,  
Before new nestlings sing,  
Before cleft swallows speed their  
journey back  
Along the trackless track –  
God guides their wing,  
He spreads their table that they  
nothing lack, –  
Before the daisy grows a common  
flower  
Before the sun has power  
To scorch the world up in his  
noontide hour...



**Christina Rossetti** (*excerpt*)

# Meadows Site Management

*An update from Greenspace Officer Stephanie Hefferan*

## Storm Water Drain leaks

In the last Newsletter, detail was given of all the emergency works undertaken by Welsh water following a sewage leak.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> February, Andy Ingham spotted another possible leak when he saw water bubbling up to the surface inland from the landing stage. I attended site the next morning and contacted the WW team who responded very swiftly.

They described two areas as small blowholes from possible small leaks in the storm water drain - this is a separate drain to the sewer drain that had issues last time. When water is high it pumps through the drain and that is why it was bubbling water from the areas noticed.

Over that weekend, the pipe was dug out and assessed for the work needed. The leak points were minor but required new fittings. During the works they also took time to investigate the overall integrity of the pipe so they have a better idea of the reasons behind these issues and help them prevent further problems going into the future.

The works were completed by 12<sup>th</sup> February and re-instatement commenced although delayed by the freezing ground. The fencing on site is there for H&S reasons (same as the previous works), and it has been agreed that they will remove this at a later date - usually around twelve months once the ground has fully settled.

Welsh Water had to do a temporary fix to the paths until the ground conditions improved. The contractors are now planning to come back to complete the re-instatement over the final weekend of April, although this may alter depending on the weather, and the dates are liable to be changed at short notice.

There has been some comment about what may happen to the fenced off area over the

next 12 months. I suspect scrub trees will grow up - probably willow and we might have to remove/coppice these (in time) as the roots may interfere with the pipes. I will raise this with Welsh Water when we next meet.

It should be noted that Welsh Water are responsible for the pipe under the Dee; water quality is the responsibility of the Environment Agency. Any queries should be directed to those organisations for response.

## Path work/flooding

An application has been made for a capital bid for the pathwork repairs. A further application was made for monies available for flood repairs; this has since been rejected in favour of the capital bid.

## Riverside gate

This now has our standard lock on the gate.

## Horses

The issues regarding aggressive horses on neighbouring land were sent to the land agent for action. Contacts for the land agent were passed on. Well done to all in their rescue during the floods! (*See article on page x*)

***Steph Hefferan, Greenspace Officer***



*The Meadows from the air, February 2021 Photo:  
@DronePicsWales*



# To the Rescue!

Storm Christoph swept across the country from 19th to 21st January, bringing heavy rain and flooding to many parts of Northern England and the Midlands.

At 7am on the morning of Friday, 22nd January, Richard Lydon looked out of his window and saw the River Dee rising in the fields below. Down there were four horses, cut off from any escape and in danger. Richard had the owner's phone number so got in to ask if he could help.

But where were they? Hidden somewhere behind the hedgerows in the fast rising water, it was difficult to know exactly where to look. Roger started a search with his neighbours Rod Sidwell and Jo Green, going first to the highest points along the river towards Eccleston for a couple of hours to try and locate them, but there was no sign at all.



*The flooded Meadows on the morning of 21st January Photo: @DronePicsWales)*

It was decided that a better view might be found from the other side of the river and Rob and Jo drove over to Sandy Lane, while Richard, knowing that horses will gather at entry and exit points, suggested concentrating the search efforts at around the gate area. Then, Rob phoned to say that he had spotted two of the horses! But he could only see their heads and couldn't make out any more.

At that point, Paul came down to Bottoms Lane with his drone and it was fired up. Finally, all four horses were located, but two of them were not moving.

At the same time, Jeff Polton had decided to go down to the flooded Meadows with his family taking his paddle board, thinking he might take it out across the water. Little did he realise that he was about to become a local hero!

With the help of Richard, Rob, Jo and the drone, they guided Jeff on his paddle board towards the horses. When he arrived at the locked gate,





the other two horses moved for the first time since they'd been spotted.

With hope for their rescue rising, Jeff encountered a problem - the gate could not be opened, being secured by a chain and lock. Richard dashed back home to get his bolt cutters and Jeff paddled back up Bottoms Lane. Then with the bolt cutters in his hands, he paddled back down to the gate and managed to cut the chain and open the gate.

The horses moved away as Jeff paddled through the gate but he was able to manoeuvre behind them and guide them back to the gate as they waded through the flooded field.

As they trotted up onto the drier path of Bottoms Lane, they were finally ushered



onto the higher field as 3pm struck. Finally, the horses were safe and happily grazing on drier ground. Exhausted but exhilarated, the guys congratulated themselves on a real team effort!

*Thanks to Richard Lydon and Jeff Polton (on his paddle board) for the pictures*



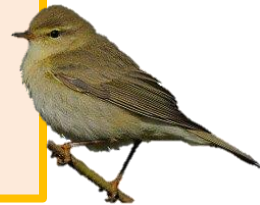
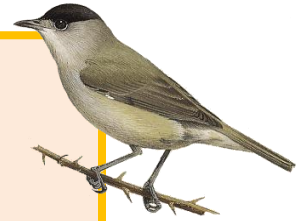
## The Dawn Chorus

May and June are the peak months to enjoy the dawn chorus, when resident birds such as the blackbird and robin are joined by migrants like the chiffchaff and blackcaps.

The first birds begin to sing about an hour before sunrise, which at the beginning of May will be at about 5:40am and at 4:50am by the end of the month.

Among the earliest birds to rise are skylarks, song thrushes, robins and blackbirds. Those that appear later are smaller birds such as wrens and warblers, who feed on insects that also appear later in the morning.

If you want to listen to a dawn chorus, then the best days to choose are those with fine, clear weather and little wind. But remember that it can still be quite chilly that early in the day!



## That Deva Terrace Folly

In our last issue, Stephen Savory wrote about the “strange folly” at Deva Terrace to accompany his drawing. We’ve since had an email from Rod Heather, who lives in Dee Hills Park, giving more of an explanation.

Rod writes: “Reference the article in your Newsletter 221, you are both right and wrong. The tower was indeed built as a folly but has nothing to do with Deva Terrace. If you look carefully, you can see it is separated from Deva Terrace by a brick wall (also Grade II listed) that was once much higher.

The tower was built around 1830 - 1840 as a summer house for what used to be Old Government House. All the land between this building and Deva Terrace was laid out as formal gardens with pathways down to the river and a fountain. The tower would have been used as a day-time summer retreat for the family living in Old Government House - a pleasant spot to enjoy a cup of tea or a picnic alongside the river.

The tower has a small fireplace so it was possibly also used during cooler weather. The fireplace originally had a fine curved stone surround (to fit around the circular wall) which was sadly stolen during restoration of the tower some ten years ago. The lower part of the tower was built as an ice-house - ice would have been recovered from the Dee and stored there during the winter. The battlements referred to were actually added by a previous owner in the late 1970s and are not part of the original design.”





## February 2021 to April 2021

### 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

37 Pied Wagtails found the partially flooded Meadow to their liking.

### 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021

A Stonechat was feeding in the top field vacated by the Horses that had returned to lower pastures. (see pic below)



*Stonechat (see 3<sup>rd</sup> February)*

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

The first Treecreeper of the year was working its way along Bottoms Lane track

### 13<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Sightings of Kingfisher were regular over the winter months with one perched on a fallen branch by the Weir. (see pic)

### 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021

The first Chiffchaff was observed feeding in Alder trees below Andrews Crescent.

### 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021

The first butterfly of the year was a Small Tortoiseshell soaking up the warm rays of the sun.



*Kingfisher at the Weir (see 13<sup>th</sup> February)*

### 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Frog spawn was recorded in pools of water on the path in the centre of the Meadow.

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

A pair of Green Woodpeckers were observed visiting a garden in Elizabeth Crescent by Pearl.

Sadly, sightings became less with the pair gradually heading further up river, although one was heard to yaffle (call) on the 21<sup>st</sup> April.

### 6<sup>th</sup> March 2021

A Red Legged Partridge running along the riverside path by the picnic area is probably the strangest sighting of the year so far. It ran about 10 metres before disappearing underneath the Willow.

A glimpse of another Partridge species on land off Bottom lane track 4<sup>th</sup> April was possibly the same bird.



*Peacock butterfly (see 30<sup>th</sup> March)*

### **26<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

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.

### **17<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

A sizable flock of 25 Linnet were observed going to roost in the bramble below the Handbridge allotments

### **21<sup>st</sup> March 2021**

A Woodcock was flushed from the terrace below Elizabeth Crescent, 7 Teal were still on the Handbridge marsh.

### **30<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

A few Peacock butterflies (see pic) started to appear out of hibernation alongside the numerous Tortoiseshell.



*Small tortoiseshell (30<sup>th</sup> March)*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> April 2021**

Three Mandarin ducks flew off a pool on the Handbridge marsh. There were further sightings of male Mandarin up river on the 15<sup>th</sup> April and two on 19<sup>th</sup> April.

Nearby, the sweet sound of the first Willow Warbler of the spring.

### **5<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

A couple of Sand Martin were observed flying down river into a cold northerly wind.

### **6<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

Four Swallows, the first of the spring appeared between hailstorms.

### **10<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

A Common Sandpiper found the Ferry landing stage a good place to pause on its migration.

The first Common Whitethroat returned to land off Bottoms Lane track and immediately started collecting nesting material.

### **11<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

A Cetti's Warbler was observed displaying on the Handbridge marsh. A second was heard calling nearby.

Eight Lesser Redpoll were in trees below the Handbridge allotments.

The presence of Mink continued with one on the riverbank below Belgrave Park.

### **14<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

The first Orange Tip butterflies patrolled the embankment below Andrews Crescent.

### **19<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

A brief burst of reeling announced the arrival of the first returning Grasshopper Warbler. It stayed hidden from view.

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