

Friends of the Meadows



Newsletter 238

Spring 2025

Welcome to our Newsletter for Spring 2025

Thank you to everyone who has renewed their subscription to Friends of the Meadows (or joined for the first time)! If you haven't yet done so, or haven't set up a standing order, you can still do that – just go to our website's Home page and download the Membership Form, which has all the instructions.

This Spring Newsletter has lots of details of various events taking place on the Meadows in the coming year. But of course, anyone can enjoy the Meadows at any time, which I hope you all do!

Looking back over old newsletters, sixteen years ago, in 2019, we heralded in the new Cheshire West and Chester council, wondering how that reorganisation might affect us and there was a report of plans to build a replacement two-storey new boathouse for Queen's Park High School. That plan resurfaced six years later in the form of the proposed Watersports Hub. All of that finally came to nothing in 2020 and the old boathouse continues to serve activities on this side of the river.

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This edition's cover photo is of a Treecreeper seen on the Meadows and taken by Andy Ingham on 13th April

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To Spring by William Blake

O THOU with dewy locks, who lookest
 down
 Through the clear windows of the morning,
 turn
 Thine angel eyes upon our western isle,
 Which in full choir hails thy approach, O
 Spring!

The hills tell one another, and the listening
 Valleys hear; all our longing eyes are turn'd
 Up to thy bright pavilions: issue forth
 And let thy holy feet visit our clime!

Come o'er the eastern hills, and let our
 winds
 Kiss thy perfumed garments; let us taste
 Thy morn and evening breath; scatter thy
 pearls
 Upon our lovesick land that mourns for
 thee.

O deck her forth with thy fair fingers; pour
 Thy soft kisses on her bosom; and put
 Thy golden crown upon her languish'd
 head,
 Whose modest tresses are bound up for
 thee.

Meadows Management

Steph Hefferan, Greenspace Officer, gives a round up of works on the Meadows

Severn Trent – Tree Planting

A project has been taking place on the ST land adjacent to the Meadows, which started in March for a 3 week period for tree planting a variety of climate adapted native tree species in clusters to improve the biodiversity of this area. This work is being done in conjunction with Natural England..

Eel Screen works

Severn Trent will be finishing the works on site by April which has required ad hoc path closures of the riverside path for public safety, whilst they brought in equipment.

Towards the end of the period pathwork repairs have been done. The reinstatement works to the mound are underway and all the cabins etc have now gone.

They will be leaving the Heras security fencing up after they leave to allow time for the grass to reinstate and bind the surface. They will remove these at our request once we feel that the surface has bound sufficiently to allow open access again.

Sailing Club Willow Works

In February, the sailing club undertook work on the small willow opposite the club. The brash was either placed on

site waiting collection from the zoo (if suitable) or chipped and removed. This was the final weeks outwith the nesting season – no permissions have been granted beyond the end of February.

Mowing

Mowing is due to start in April and will follow the usual mowing regime

Events and Activities on the Meadows

Large scale public events on the Meadows are limited (*see page 4 of this newsletter for Public Events this year – Ed.*) However, some small scale activities have been allowed:

In February, a team from Chester University was on site as part of their ongoing surveying of dragonfly larva.

Also, on 13th February, a small film crew from the University of Chester was on site (3 film crew, 3 actors) for work on a film in the horror genre!

RECORD has organised a wildlife recording event on 25th April as part of the City Nature Challenge, involving a nature recording walk with a small group of booked participants. (*See page 4 of this newsletter – Ed.*)

Steph Hefferan



Wildlife recording afternoon on Chester Meadows



Friday 25th April 2:00pm - 4:00pm

The City Nature Challenge is a global wildlife recording event which unites people in over 500 City Regions all over the world for 4 days of nature observation. Across the world people are working together to document as much wildlife as possible.

On the first afternoon of this year's challenge, join for a relaxed stroll through Chester Meadows searching for and recording wildlife as part of our effort to boost the 'Chester Region' City Nature Challenge total. In this beautiful grassland and wetland habitat we hope to see hunting dragonflies and swooping swallows and maybe even hear the reel of Grasshopper warblers!

We'll be using the iNaturalist app to record wildlife as we go along - it's easy for anyone to use and join in. Meet at the Bottom's Lane entrance at 2pm. The event is free to attend, but places are limited, so please book a place here: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/recordlrc/1658905>

The session is hosted by RECORD. Please email any questions to info@record-lrc.co.uk.

Public Events in 2025

The Deva Triathlon - Sunday 1st June 2025

Transition is in Grosvenor Park; the run route will incorporate running over the Old Dee Bridge, the Suspension bridge, along the Groves and in the Meadows with the finish being at the Bandstand

The Deva Divas Triathlon - Sunday 6th July 2025

This is a short distance ladies only race and again includes an Aquabike. It has its transitions on the Meadows.



The Chester Raft Race - Sunday 20th July 2025

Events start at 10:00am and the race begins at 10:30am from the Meadows

The Dee Mile – Saturday 2nd August

One of the oldest races on the river, this takes place at 5:00pm. There will be a Registration marquee on the Meadows.

Come and find out about the plants and flowers on Chester Meadows

A series of gentle ambles with frequent stops has been organised with botanist Martyn Stead to find and examine plants and flowers on the Meadows.

They are suitable for beginners and more experienced botanists and will take place on the following days (all Wednesdays).

Meeting at the Bottoms Lane entrance, CH4 7AP ready to start at 6.30pm.

21st May

18th June

16th July

20th August

17th September



Caltha palustris (Marsh Marigold)
by Zsuzsanna Bird



Silene dioica (Red campion)

Wild flower planting on The Meadows

During March and April, we have been busy planting a range of native wild flowers.

Along Bottoms Lane we have planted red campion and marsh marigolds.

On the Meadows we have planted ragged robin, cuckoo flower, autumn hawkbit, musk mallow, wild carrot, meadow cranesbill and some more marsh marigolds in a damp area near the river.



At the river entrance to the Meadows and the Lower Park Road entrance we have planted cowslips and primroses

Thanks to all the volunteers who gave their time to help with this.

We are keeping fingers crossed that the small tender plants that we planted have survived the recent prolonged period of dry weather and will take root and enhance the diversity of plants on The Meadows.





February 2025 to April 2025

21st February 2025

A Great White Egret was noted at dawn in trees upriver of the Meadow and again on the 13th March. *Keith*

28th February 2025

A single Oystercatcher at dusk flew upriver at dusk past the landing stage.

1st March 2025

A displaying female and two male Sparrowhawks sparring above the Meadow.

A pair of Buzzards perched in a tree on Bottom Lane track and a Kestrel near the water mound. (*see pic*)



Kestrel near the Water Mound on 1st March

5th March 2025

A singing Chiffchaff and Blackcap near the west end river entrance to the Meadow.

21st March 2025

The first Sand Martin of the spring flew through and a lingering winter Stonechat in the centre of the Meadow. *Denzil*

22nd March 2025

18 Snipe and one Jack Snipe were flushed from the Handbridge marsh.

A Treecreeper worked its way through trees lining the riverbank.

30th March 2025

A Curlew could be heard calling from fields on the Huntington side of the river, but the dense riverside vegetation prevented any view.

31st March 2025

Numbers of wintering Pink-footed Geese making their daily flights decreased to just five birds heading upriver.

4th April 2025

The first spring Common Sandpiper was bobbing along by the Weir.

On the Meadow, Orange Tip and Small Tortoiseshell Butterflies were noted for the first time this spring. *Denzil*

5th April 2025

The first Willow Warbler of the spring was singing in trees by the suspension bridge.

7th April 2025

A peak count of 14 Goosander by the Weir is a site record (see pic of male taken on the 6th April).



Male Goosander by the Weir on 6th April

Comma, Peacock and Specked Wood were all on the wing with the continued warm weather. *Denzil*

8th April 2025

A Green Woodpecker was noted for the first time this year on land upriver of the Meadow. *Denzil*

9th April 2025

The first Common Whitethroat of the year was singing on the neighbouring Dukes land. *Denzil*

10th April 2025

The first Grasshopper Warbler of the spring was heard reeling from cover on the Handbridge marsh. *Denzil*

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Another photo of the volunteers planting wildflowers along Bottoms Lane