

Friends of the Meadows



Newsletter 239

Summer 2025

Welcome to our Newsletter for Summer 2025

As I write this, we're having another heatwave, which I'm sure some will love and others will just wish for something more comfortable! Rob Bale, our own weather expert for Handbridge tells us that we might expect thunderstorms in the following week; then another build-up of the hot weather. We will see! You can follow him on Facebook; search for "Handbridge Weather"

We have a number of news updates in this edition and in the next newsletter, we hope to let you know about Chester Zoo's Networks for Nature launch on 30th July, at which Julie Savory and myself will attend on behalf of Friends of the Meadows. This is a collaborative partnership project that spans around 60 square miles from the River Dee to the River Mersey, with the aim to drive nature recovery in a mixed-use landscape, creating diverse habitats for species to thrive. The Zoo has secured over £4M from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support this ambitious project. Communities will be empowered to have an active role in conservation action and stewardship and will focus on making nature more accessible to and inclusive for everyone to enable connection and improve wellbeing.

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This edition's cover photo is of a Lesser Whitethroat seen on Bottoms Lane track on 19th June (see Meadows Log).
Photo by Andy Ingham

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Moonlight, Summer Moonlight **by Emily Jane Brontë**

'Tis moonlight, summer moonlight,
All soft and still and fair;
The solemn hour of midnight
Breathes sweet thoughts
everywhere,

But most where trees are sending
Their breezy boughs on high,
Or stooping low are lending
A shelter from the sky.

And there in those wild bowers
A lovely form is laid;
Green grass and dew-steeped
flowers
Wave gently round her head..

Best known for her haunting classic novel Wuthering Heights, Emily Jane Brontë also published poetry under the pseudonym Ellis Bell.

Meadows Management

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

Severn Trent Works

The contractors have finally left and following a few snags, the site has been cleared to a good standard. The grass is still a little patchy due to the hot weather making establishment slower than usual but what has developed is binding the surface well. It is not anticipated they will return other than their regular maintenance visits.

Riverside tree felling

These were outstanding works and finally the contractors have been. They revisited in May to remove some smaller logs which keep getting placed in the middle of the events arena.

I keep having to remove these so I will check to make sure they have finally finished.

Mowing

The new contractors are proving reliable, with the event mowing being started on schedule

Riverside events gate

I have let the Assets team know this needs to be replaced and the fencing repaired. I don't have dates but have asked that it is out of the way in time for the Regatta. *(This took place on 7th and 8th June – Ed.)*

Steph Hefferan



A Greylag goose and her goslings – see Meadows Log 7th May (Photo Andy Ingham)



Annual Ceremonial Inspection of the River Dee

*The annual Ceremonial Inspection of the Dee took place on Thursday 3rd July 2025
and Ruth Davidson was there representing Friends of the Meadows*



.(Photo courtesy of Chester Boat)

We met at the Groves ready to embark at 11 o'clock. The weather was perfect for a river cruise.

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Sherin Akhtar, had invited a truly eclectic group of people to join her and the mood was festive and joyous.

The crew of the Lady Diana welcomed us on board and after two brief and interesting talks we set off.

We had the ceremonial silver oar with us on its Chester blue velvet cushion.

There is so much to see on the river and along the banks. To everyone's delight we spotted a kingfisher-a flash of iridescence. I was particularly interested in the work by the Friends of Sandy Lane - what a transformation!

We were back at the Groves two hours later for a group photograph and then dispersed. I'd met some really interesting people and some old friends.

Count me in for 2026! *Ruth*

Tree planting on the Meadows

We have continued to monitor the saplings we planted last year including watering during some of the more prolonged dry spells we have had this year.

In addition, in mid-May we planted a rowan tree on the edge of The Meadows, just as you enter from Bottoms Lane and in June we planted two hawthorn saplings to start to fill in a gap in the hedge on the lefthand side of Bottoms Lane.

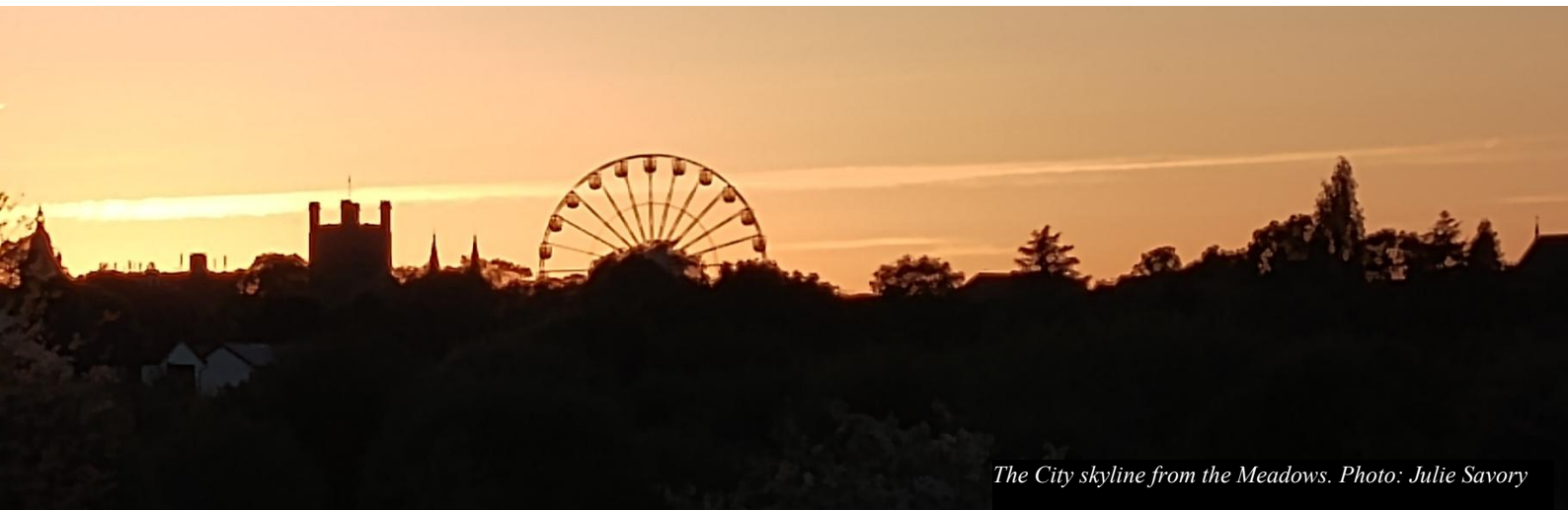


City Nature Challenge

This year, on the 25th April, as part of the City Nature Challenge, RECORD organised a nature spotting event on The Meadows.

[RECORD](#) is the Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC) for Cheshire, Halton, Warrington and Wirral. Their mission is to “further the appreciation, understanding and protection of the Cheshire region’s wildlife and habitats.

The City Nature Challenge is an annual four day event which takes place across the world with residents on all seven continents on a mission to record as much wildlife as possible. Participants share their observations of nature using the free iNaturalist app. Findings contribute towards conservation efforts both locally and globally.



Botany Walks

Another season of botany walks on The Meadows, led by Martyn Stead an experienced local botanist, has started with the first taking place on the 21st May on which a wide variety of plant life was spotted.

Species recorded included:

Woody nightshade, pignut, birds foot trefoil, hemlock water droplet, great burnett, purple loosestrife, tufted vetch, hedge mustard, meadow sweet and creeping cinquefoil.

Further walks are taking place on **20th August and 17th September** meeting at the entrance to Bottoms Lane to start walking and plant life spotting at 6.30pm. All welcome.



Participants on the botany walk in May



Banded demoiselle (see Meadows Log 19th June)



April 2025 to July 2025



Spotted flycatcher (see 13th May)

13th April 2025

The first Reed Warbler of the spring were chunnering away from reeds on the Handbridge marsh.

14th April 2025

Two Sedge Warbler the first of the spring were singing from the Dukes marsh.
Denzil

17th April 2025

The first House Martins of the spring were observed circling high over the Meadow. They were joined by three Swallow also the first of the spring. Denzil

27th April 2025

16 Swift the first of the spring were observed circling high over the Meadow.
Denzil

7th May 2025

Mid-morning a rare White Stork drifted over the Meadow and was mobbed by every, Crow, Jackdaw, Magpie & Gull in the neighbourhood. Denzil

A flock of over 200 Greylag Goose including a few goslings were loafing around on the river Meadow (see pic on page 3)

8th May 2025

A Lesser Whitethroat and Garden Warbler both first of the spring and singing from deep cover.

A Red Kite gave stunning views as it drifted quite low down over the Meadow.
Denzil



Female Mandarin (see 16th June)

13th May 2025

A Spotted flycatcher was observed catching flies in the uppermost branches on Bottoms Lane track (see cover pic)

18th May 2025

A concerted effort to attract Swifts to boxes using a Swift call box may be starting to pay dividends with birds prospecting on Victoria Pathway, Fingers crossed for next year! Tim

22nd May 2025

Unusual night-time footage from a door cam of a Badger sneaking around a front garden in Elizabeth Crescent. Lisa

16th June 2025

A female Mandarin and chick swam past the bench at the end of the Horses field. (see pic)

19th June 2025

The Dog-rose plant is usually the host for Smooth Pea Galls (Cynipid wasp). However, a dozen of these bright pink Galls were found on Oak leaves below Andrew Crescent. (see pic).



Smooth Pea Gall (see 19th June)

In the grasses were a dozen Ringlet (see pic) and two Large Skipper butterflies basking in the evening sunshine.

In the riverside vegetation there were good numbers of Banded Demoiselle



Ringlet (see 19th June)

Damselflies (see pic on page 6), Blue tailed Damselfly and a couple Red-eyed Damselfly resting on Lily pads.

It was good to see so many birds feeding in the vegetation at the Lower end of Bottoms Lane track. Families of Chiffchaff, Whitethroat (see cover pic), Blackcap, Blue & Great Tits were flitting between the stems of Hogweed.

3rd July 2025

A Little Egret was again seen feeding in the shallows beneath the Old Dee Bridge. Tim

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