

# Friends of the Meadows



**Newsletter 240**

**Autumn 2025**

## **Welcome** to our Newsletter for **Autumn 2025**

We are now into the Autumn and looking forward to holding our Annual General meeting which this year will feature a talk by Handbridge resident Mike Graham on the renowned architect Thomas Harrison. All are welcome, so please do come along and support us - all the details are on the opposite page.

Ten years ago I took over the role of Newsletter Editor – where does the time go? In the Autumn Newsletter of 2015 I bemoaned the fact that cattle had not grazed the meadow for the first time in many years. As a result, the meadow had to be managed by rotational cutting, bringing the then unusual sight of hay bales lying on the meadow to be taken away. Of course, rotational cutting can only do so much and over the years we have seen a spread of willow scrub.

At the same time we were keeping an eye on proposals for the development of a Watersports Hub on Barnfield. It took another five years for the planning applications to be officially withdrawn in October 2020.

What will the next ten years bring?

**Rachel Cross, Newsletter Editor**  
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This edition's cover photo is of a displaying Cormorant on the Weir at Chester (see Meadows Log).  
Photo by Andy Ingham

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## ***Nothing Gold Can Stay***

*Nature's first green is gold,  
Her hardest hue to hold.  
Her early leaf's a flower;  
But only so an hour.  
Then leaf subsides to leaf,  
So Eden sank to grief,  
So dawn goes down to day  
Nothing gold can stay.*

Robert Frost's short poem from 1923 writes about the effects of time and the inevitability of change and loss.

He writes of the ever-changing colour of leaves through the seasons to make this point.

He sees the loss of Eden, and the grief of that loss, in the turning of the year.

# Thomas Harrison: Architect and Engineer

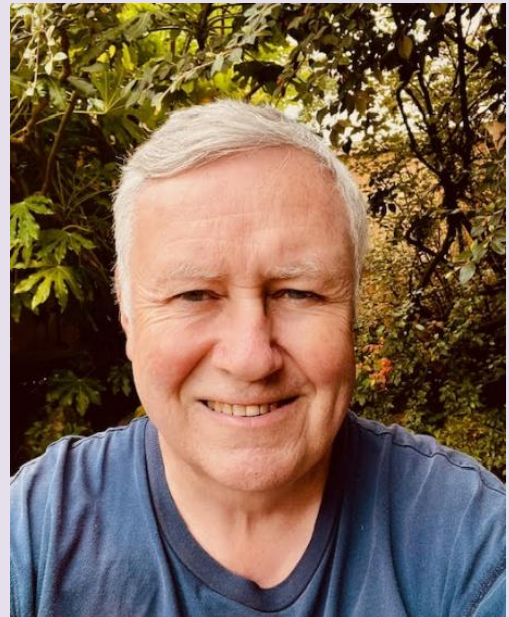
## A talk at our AGM on 20<sup>th</sup> November



Thomas Harrison was born in Richmond, Yorkshire about 1744. After studying in Rome, he returned to England in 1776 and spent the whole of his career in the northwest of England, moving with his family to Chester in 1795. He became a major influence in the emergence of the Greek Revival in British architecture. His association with Chester includes work on Chester Castle, the Old Dee Bridge and his last major work, the Grosvenor Bridge built between 1827-1833. He retired before the work was completed, and died before it was opened by Princess Victoria.

Mike Graham is a Handbridge resident and history enthusiast. He can be spotted around Chester in various guises, from volunteering at the Grosvenor museum, to reenacting medieval medicine whilst dressed as a 13th Century surgeon!

Mike's interest in Thomas Harrison stems from his time as a volunteer at Chester Castle, where he discovered that Harrison was tasked with refurbishing the medieval Agricola Tower. Since then he has followed Harrison's various work in the North West, and is delighted to be able to share with you the work and enigma that is Thomas Harrison.



Come along to this talk which will follow our Annual General Meeting on **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025** at St Mary's Handbridge Community Centre, starting at 7pm.

After the short business of presenting our report of the year, the state of the accounts and formally electing the committee, Mike will give this talk on Thomas Harrison. All are welcome!

# Meadows Management

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

## Random planting of a tree

In August, members of a Friends of the Meadows Working Party notified me that someone has planted a sapling in front of the black poplar boards. It was obviously not in the right place as it was in front of the poplar information board. I have removed it as I was unsure of its genetic provenance and as we have native black poplars on site, we don't want it to hybridise with the others. Additionally, we don't want to encourage random planting, however well intentioned.

## Safety Life ring

The group also noticed that the life ring by the mound had been left on the ground. This has been reported to the Regulatory Services and our Asset Team – although this has been like it for a while. I've progressed it

## Camping on the Meadows

There was also evidence of someone camping out. I did have a look but found nothing (other than a random solar light). Perhaps I missed it, or they've left and it's been cleared away. If you do find that people are camping out you can report it to the Community Safety Warden team by

email: [enquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk) to investigate.

## Cut and Collect update

By the end of August, the 'cut and collect' had been completed....they had done a good job.

## Disabled access gates

I had a follow up meeting with contractors and our asset officer. They are costing it up and then funding will need to be sought. It doesn't appear an easy fit for the Lower park Road entrance and will require quite a bit of extra groundwork, moving fences etc but it does appear that RADAR gates are the best option rather than altering the existing gates. It may be some time before the money is found, but I will feedback when I hear.

## Riverside Gate Damage

The riverside gate damage has also been reported to the Asset Officer for action. Additionally there is some damage to the pathway adjacent where people access for their dog. This has also been reported and is with the Asset Officer for action.

***Steph Hefferan***



# Working parties on the Meadows

A small group of us met on 16<sup>th</sup> August, 13<sup>th</sup> September and 11<sup>th</sup> October.

As well as litter picking, when we picked up five bags of litter (!) we prepared the ground for planting wildflower plugs and seeds in September.

We also scattered yellow rattle seeds and field scabious seeds on the water board mound where there are several bare earth patches following the recent work to install a new eel intake by Severn Trent.



We have another working party planned for Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November 10.00am-midday.

The plan is to start removing no longer needed tree guards and install bird boxes.

If anyone is interested in volunteering to help look after The Meadows please get in touch via our website

*Right: Field scabious (Knautia arvensis) is the largest scabious in the British Isles, with bumper-sized flowers in the palest, softest mauve, flowering from June to September*





## July 2025 to October 2025

### 7<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Although numbers of Hummingbird Hawkmoths have increased in recent years it is still a rare sight locally. Sheila was privileged to find one visiting her garden in Watling Crescent (see library pic below).



### 27<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Just the one Wild Carrot plug survived the dry spring spell but the one that did was a fine specimen. Nearby a Small Copper butterfly was basking in the sunshine.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2025

Up to three Little Egret were feeding on the Weir over the summer months including a juvenile with colour rings and a BTO metal ring (GE01873). BTO confirmed this was indeed a juvenile ringed as a nestling at Hale on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. (see pic)



### 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2025

A bat detector picked up the ultrasonic calls of a Noctule bat above Bottoms Lane track. Roger

### 16<sup>th</sup> September 2025

Nice to see the continued increase of Musk Mallow including a carpet of flowers at the foot of the water mound. (see pic)



### 19th September 2025

A migratory Bordered Straw (see pic) came to light in Cross Hey. The first for our recording area, the larvae are known to feed on several herbaceous plants including garden Marigolds.



### 22nd September 2025

The first signs of winter came with the arrival of a pair of Stonechat and four Pink-footed geese flying above the Meadow.

### 2nd October 2025

The Scarce Silver-lines is one of the few all green species of moth in GB. The caterpillars feed on oak leaves so it is perhaps surprising that this moth is the first for our recording area. (see pic)

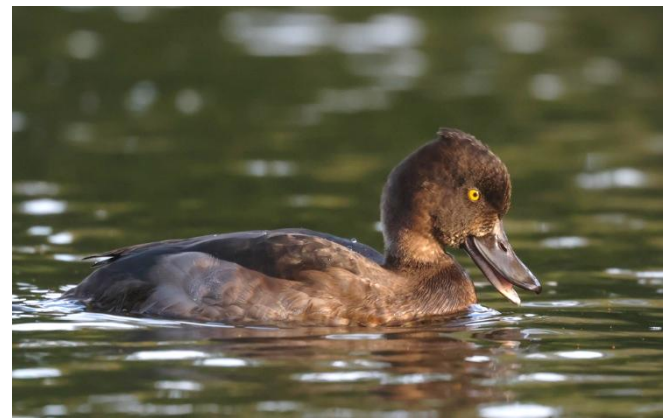


### 3rd October 2025

A rare Yellow-browed Warbler was found feeding in trees and bushes bordering the Handbridge Allotments. It is slightly larger than a Goldcrest and breeds just west of the Ural Mountains and Siberia. *Denzil*

### 8th October 2025

Tufted Ducks are now quite a rare sighting along our stretch of the river. This female/juvenile was waiting with the Mallards for the daily drop of thick sliced white to descend from the Suspension Bridge *John*. (see pic)



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Keep up to date with all the Meadows Events and News, browse back issues of the newsletter or read about the history of the Meadows - visit our website:

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



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*Above: This striking rainbow was captured by Julie Savory when out on The Meadows early evening on Monday 8th September*

*Below: At the end of July, Andy Ingham spotted these Musk mallow which had been planted in Spring*

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