

FRIENDS OF THE MEADOWS

Newsletter 201

Autumn 2015.

Hedge Woundwort and Marsh Woundwort

Stachys sylvatica and *Stachys palustris*

Both Hedge and Marsh Woundworts are hairy, square stemmed perennial labiates with racemes of purple hooded flowers. The calyx is five-pointed but not as bristly as the hemp-nettles.



Hedge Woundwort

Hedge woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*) has stinking long stemmed leaves and dark purple flowers.

Marsh woundwort (*Stachys palustris*) is far pleasanter smelling, the leaves have no stalks and the flowers are pinky-purple. The hybrid is seen frequently *S.x ambigua* which is variably intermediate

between the parents. The hybrid can be found without the parents in the North and West of the UK; it is sterile and reproduces by its underground rhizome.

Although these plants do set seed they reproduce and survive the winter by underground rhizomes which are thick enough to harvest to eat.

Marsh woundwort has edible tubers which were widely eaten in Northern Europe.

In Scotland Marsh woundwort is known as swine earth nut. It can be an agricultural weed in damp fields and it is suggested that instead of trying to eradicate it, it should be cultivated for the tubers as a foodstuff in its own right.

They flower between July and September and are an excellent nectar source especially for long tongued insects. They support the midge gall *Wachtliella stachydis*, many insects and their larvae feed on it. Several small fungi such as *Ramularia stachydis* live on it.

John Gerard, the Sixteenth Century botanist called Marsh woundwort "Clown's woundwort" after a patient, who had cut his leg badly while scything, refused his offer of help in favour of their own woundwort poultice. But Gerard was very impressed by its

healing properties and afterwards, according to his own account, "cured many grievous wounds, and some mortale with the same herbe." It is used by modern herbalists as an antispasmodic and to stop bleeding.

It was apparently also used against venereal disease by certain Indian tribes in North America. Modern plant research to find new drugs has found the precursor of prostaglandins PG1 and PG2, which are part of the inflammatory response in animals. In plants they appear to regulate growth. The significance of these findings is unknown in healing. The plants probably do have useful micronutrients.



Marsh Woundwort (David Gould)

Julie Rose

Notes from the Chair



Hello everyone and welcome to the Autumn 2015 Newsletter!

At the time of writing we are enjoying a few warm days, although the cool nights remind us that we are now definitely in Autumn.

I have now taken over the task of editing and preparing the Newsletter from Peter Hadfield, who will be formally stepping down from the Committee at our AGM. I should like to take the opportunity here to thank Peter for all the work he has done for Friends of the Meadows on the Committee and as Chairman and Newsletter Editor.

On the Meadows this year, we have not had any cattle grazing because of difficulties setting up arrangements with suitable graziers. As a result, the meadows have been left in a natural state. However, a plan for rotational cutting is in place and sub-contractors have been engaged to carry out the task and find their way around the ditches to get to the compartments. The ground is too rough for a very low cut and there will still be plenty of space left uncut. Some of you may have seen the unfamiliar

sight of bales lying on the Meadows, which have now been taken away.

We also enjoyed some lovely weather for our Botany Walks, organised and led by Julie Rose, although unfortunately she couldn't make the last one as she fractured her ankle. She's still recuperating and we all wish her well and hope to see her out and about again soon. Julie is organising some Winter Events which are described below. I hope you will be able to attend!

The Watersports Community Hub has been very quiet over the summer and we are still waiting to see how these proposals unfold. Friends of the Meadows members keep in contact with Queens Park residents on this matter, but at the moment, there is nothing new to report.

Our Annual General Meeting takes place next month and we are pleased to have Graham Royle give a talk on The Social Evolution of the Honeybee. Graham is a highly regarded public speaker and we look forward to his talk. See the details in this Newsletter – I hope as many of you can come as possible!

Rachel Cross

Tel 01244 679141

Email: rachelm.cross@btinternet.com

New Year Botany Challenge

Saturday 2nd January 2016 10am-Midday

Can we find 30 plants in flower and join in the BSBI New Year Plant hunt?

Come and help, examine the pavements, garden walls, sunny banks.

Please bring a hand lens if you have one!

Meet road end Bottoms lane.

Wear wellies, there are still dog owners who do not think clearing up after their dog is necessary!

Winter Tree Identification

Saturday 6th February 2016 10-Midday

Trees can be identified from clues such as their buds, bark, and shape.

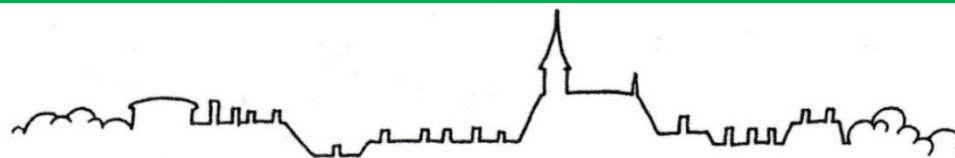
Come out and see what trees we can ID and enjoy some winter sunshine!

Please bring a hand lens if you have one!

Meet road end Bottoms Lane.

Ditto re wellies!





FRIENDS OF THE MEADOWS

Annual General Meeting

Friday 13th November, 2015 at 7pm

The Church Hall, St Mary's Without-the-Walls,
Overleigh Road, Handbridge, Chester CH4 7HL

Graham Royle, celebrated National Speaker from Cheshire will give a talk on:

The Social Evolution of Honeybees



Honeybees have been evolving as a social species far longer than humans.

What can we learn from the bees?

Is the human race evolving in the same way as the bees?

What lessons can we learn?

About Graham

Graham started beekeeping in 1988 and started to study for the BBKA examinations in 1995 when he decided he wanted to know a lot more about the bees he was keeping. His studies resulted in achieving the BBKA Master Beekeeper certificate in 2002 and the National Diploma in Beekeeping in 2004. He was also awarded the Wax Chandler's prize in 2002. Graham currently manages 20 colonies in four apiaries.



Friends of the Meadows members and non-members welcome!

The Annual General Meeting will commence at 7pm, to be followed by the talk and complimentary drinks and cake.

Botany Walks on the Meadows

Over the summer, a number of Botany Walks were held on the Meadows. Friends of the Meadows member Val Gregson gives her account.

Over the summer a good number of us both young and old(er!) enjoyed botany walks on the Meadows. Some of us were complete novices and others pretty knowledgeable, but we all helped each other out and learned a lot in the process.

Julie Rose led three of the four walks and Martyn Stead the last one. I would like to thank both of them for giving up their time for us and for imparting their knowledge and enthusiasm on all things botanical. We were “botanising” in evenings from 7pm until the light failed. The weather was kind to us on all of the outings and the insects generally behaved themselves too! We visited different habitats on

each occasion to include dry, marshy and wet areas. It is only when one really looks and takes one’s time that the variety of plantlife that there is on the Meadows becomes apparent. Hand lenses were handed round for very close inspection and ID books too – we had to work a little bit!

I’m sure that we all saw plants and flowers that we had not seen before and personally I was pleased to find my first skullcap!

Thank you again to Julie and Martyn.

Val Gregson

The Earl’s Eye by Cliff Davies



This oil painting is by local artist and Friends of the Meadows member Cliff Davies. The painting was exhibited in the Grosvenor Museum and voted favourite by members of the public. You can see this and his other work on his website at <http://cliffdaviesart.co.uk/>

Meadow Delights – for Dogs!

She has stopped to look and mutter in that way they do, these humans... 'Greater chickweed, mm?' Then she stamps on some pineapple mayweed and bends down to inhale the smell. What's the point of that? It doesn't smell of fox or rabbit, not even of other dogs – there's no message left there as far as I can smell. But it doesn't matter – I'm off the lead, no horses in the fields and I can ignore her and get on with my own business.



First business is sniffing, slowly along the thin water course, but no, I'm not in luck. Nibble a bit of tasty grass; good for my insides though she always tries to stop me doing this. Why? Other dogs do the same – we're Dogs for Goodness' sake! Then a pee or two, scent-leaving, very important that, got to tell the other dogs I've been along here.

Main tasks accomplished, now the serious business: running! And here's a fellow lurcher to run with. Such a happy thing on these Meadows, I meet a number of fellow lurchers, and sometimes greyhounds. And we all love a jolly good chase! This one is certainly up for it; he's black, with a white chest, alert ears, and *young*, just the thing. We're off!

Round and round this field until we're half dizzy with the joy of it. The humans are discussing how sad it is that so many of us lurchers are in rescue centres waiting for homes, nobody wants us and yet –they're saying – we make such good companions. Well of course we do, we are superior dogs. Then they call us in because they're moving off.

Two more delights, and these are 'Biggies' – first is a thoroughly good scamper in the edge of the river. I

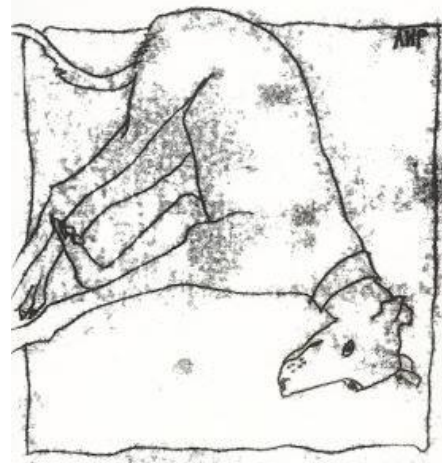
choose the muddiest bays; she gets cross, would rather I went in via the sandy bits. But she's forgotten how wonderful it is when soft mud slides up between your spread toes, and how soothing a mudpack is on sensitive legs. When you have stylishly long legs like mine (they won me a rosette recently but I don't like to brag!) you need a little cosmetic care, so in I go, barking and whooping up and down, having the greatest fun. Then I race out and start digging furiously in the soft sand of the bank. It's hysterical (as the humans say). You have to pardon us — we have no grasp of ecology. We can't help our natures.

And the last and final delight is the Earl's Eye meadow – all that long grass and soft reed, and with luck a few juicy patches of mud too. I'm only allowed here when there's no risk of ground-nesting birds breeding, so spring and summer go without any visit from me. But now's my chance — I charge in and go thundering round in crazy circles, leaping and soaring, tongue hanging out, heart hammering, the reeds tickling my belly and making me laugh. Don't get in my way because I can't stop, I'm going too fast! It's almost insanely ecstatic doing this. Love it, love it, love it!

She's taken the lead out of her pocket – uh oh, home time. Oh no.

I race to the river one last time, dash into the shallows, gallop along, raising waves and getting completely wet. Then as a thank-you for my morning's run I go and share my pleasure with her, shaking myself so she gets wet too. Off we go. Both of us — me happily — soaked.

Gill McEvoy



Pictures: Anna Wilson-Patterson
www.annawilsonpatterson.com



Meadows Log - June, July, August and September 2015

02/06/2015

The first Cuckoo to be seen on the Meadow for 10 years called from the tree tops as it made its way down Bottom lane track. It then flew into the oak trees on Water Company land before continuing its journey further up the river. *Rob*

09/06/2015

On the excellent Botany walk, eyes were momentarily diverted to an Angle Shades moth on the river bank. Philip captured the moment (see photo).



Photo Philip Macey

Angle Shades - Philip Macey

22/06/2015

A walk through the Meadow produced 8 spikes of Common Spotted Orchid in their usual spot. With no cattle to nibble them this year, it will be interesting to see how many come up next year. Other notable flowers not encountered on the wildflower walks were Valerian & White Campion at the back of the picnic area. *Julie*

23/06/2015

The first report of a Painted Lady butterfly in the area came from a garden in Elizabeth Crescent. *Richard*

04/07/2015

A few Small Skippers started to appear on the Meadow.

19/07/2015

A Grasshopper Warbler was heard reeling on land bordering the Meadow. Although any attempt to nest probably failed due to the grass being cut and baled at the beginning of August. Nearby a Painted Lady butterfly nectared on thistle.

19/07/2015

Moths can be found anywhere and Denys using his mobile phone captured this colourful Magpie moth basking on his Elizabeth Crescent front drive. (See photo).



Magpie

7/08/2015

A peak count of 10 Small Coppers on the Meadow. The high count possibly helped by two factors:

- i) the lack of grazing on both Water Co land and Meadow this year;
- ii) the early grass cut on Water Co land. The Small Coppers like all the other butterflies were forced into a bit of hedge hopping.

23/08/2015

A peak count of 13 Common Blue butterflies on the Meadow. That's 13 more than the whole of last summer! (See photo)

31/08/2015

Kestrels were a familiar site over the Meadow during the summer months. It was good to see a juvenile calling from the top of an Ash tree on Bottoms lane track. Both Kestrels and Buzzards have been observed preying on Voles during the summer months.

Meadows Log continued

17/09/2015

Taking advantage of the high Vole population, a Barn Owl hunted at dusk and again at first light the following day. *Rob*

26/09/2015

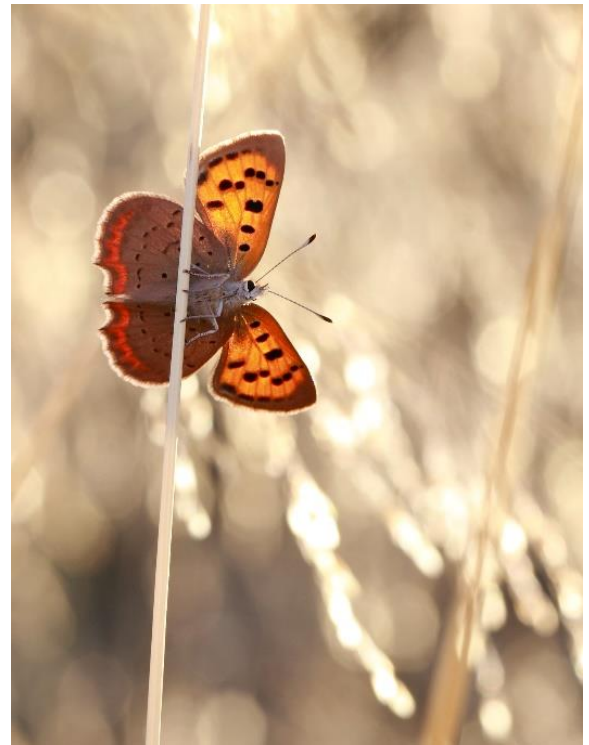
Three Skylarks playfully chased each other above the Meadow then flew off in the direction of Boughton.

The first Snipe of the autumn departed in characteristic zig zag fashion after being flushed from the centre of the Meadow.

Butterflies took advantage of the extended autumnal sunshine. Good numbers of Speckled Wood along with 1 or 2 Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell.

Andy Ingham Meadows Log Recorder

01244 677135



Small Copper



Common Blue

Working Party Days

We are thinking of organizing Working Part Days on the first Saturday of the month starting in November and continuing over the winter.

The plans are to do hedge laying scrub removal on Gorsty Bank and down by the river with the Sailing Club.

If anyone is interested in volunteering and lending a hand, please get in touch with Andy Ingham on 01244 677135 Ingham on 01244 677135



Reporting Anti-social Behaviour on the Meadows

Should you see any issues of anti-social behaviour, and/or any breach of bylaw and law please call **101** and report it to the police.

If it's an emergency call 999

The Rangers work closely with the police to target antisocial behaviour on the site and your assistance in reporting such incidents directly to the police is greatly appreciated.

For other issues relating to the Meadows, please contact the Council's Customer Contact Centre by either telephoning **0300 123 7026** or by email at enquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

New Members

Anyone wishing to join Friends of the Meadows please contact the Membership Secretary

Richard Cain,
56 Elizabeth Crescent, Queens Park,
Chester CH4 7AZ
Telephone 01244 671841.

Please let us know who introduced you if appropriate

Newsletter articles and contributions

We are always pleased to receive articles, letters and photographs from members for inclusion in the Newsletter.

If you have anything of interest, or wish to publicise a local event which would be of interest to our members, please do get in touch. You can contact any of the Committee or get in touch with Rachel, whose contact details are on page 2.

Friends of the Meadows Committee

Chair: Rachel Cross
Treasurer: Bill Richardson
Membership Secretary: Richard Cain
Minutes Secretary: James Holden
Newsletter Distribution: Ruth Davidson
Meadows Log Recorder
and Facebook Admin: Andy Ingham
Committee: Clive Gregory
Julie Rose
Paul Dawson

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