

MINUTES OF THE FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK COMMITTEE MEETING
13th May 2015 7.30-9.15 P.M.

Apologies for absence: Ian, Paul, Mollie, Marie

Present: Alan, Andy, Neil, Ann, John, Kevin, Eric, Andrew, Trevor (minutes).

Minutes of the FMPC Meeting of 11th March 2015 were ratified.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES PLUS DEVELOPMENTS:

Ameniteis committee Meeting 21st April 2015.

The Secretary and Chairman of FMPC attended. Alan: There was a confused discourse relating to the adherence to management plans that had previously been agreed by all interested parties. The conclusion was that the contract would run for this year with 2 grass cuts and a new submission would be adopted for 2016 and onwards. This latter submission must be brief, clear and unequivocal. Alan hoped that he might have an opportunity to speak with the contractor prior to mowing in late July 2015.

Trevor: The "autumn cut" of grass and all headlands in February 2015 sparked off exhausting correspondence. FMPC had originally requested a management plan in 2003/04. FMPC had devoted a whole year's effort (2010/11) to updating the 2008 draft Management Plan. ELPC and RBC had agreed on and adopted a version in October 2011, to run for five years. The grass cutting contract was created in the following summer, but relevant Management Plan Prescriptions were ignored. We were informed on 21/4/15 that there was nothing in the contract relating to headlands. No simple 3 year rota of headland cutting had been followed, nor recording of bales harvested. This had caused FMPC/contractor misunderstanding.

Amenities remained adamant that even the basic wording of the grass cutting contract remained secret. The Chairman explained that public tender was unnecessary.

FMPC had provided ELPC with a wide range of alternatives, including "no change" and we were asked what we would like. ELPC made a good counter-argument to suggested discontinuation of the autumn cut. The Chairman ruled against recording bales harvested (a simple, approximate very long term measure of soil fertility), for summer and autumn cuts to continue and for a headland cutting rota based on whole fields.

Recording hay bale count (Trevor)

Amenities Committee Chairman observed that the amount of hay in a small square bale was influenced by the pressure applied in its production; thus a bale count was not an accurate measure of yield. We were aware of this deficiency, and the contractor had contemplated weighing a load of a sample number of bales. Weight is also influenced by moisture content. (Agricultural nutrition chemists analyse hay on a benchmark dry matter basis). When the Prescription was first worded, there may not have been such variation in yield between different fields as there is now. Yield appears to have decreased in some fields, presumably reflecting reduced soil fertility but also the effect of yellow rattle, a further complication of yield as a measure of soil fertility.

Balers are fitted with bale counters and agricultural contractors charge on number of bales made.

Routine recording is cost free and involves minimal effort. (No figures have been received for 2014 harvest, though). There is a case for records for each field made to the Parish Clerk. Long term records (e.g.25 years) could yield interesting insights. A contractor committed to accurately recording yield is essential. Monitoring counting is almost out of the question.

There are pros and cons. Paul Phillips supports continuation of recording.

Relationship of FMPC to ELPC and RBC.

Neither Marie nor Paul were present. Trevor said that RBC and ELPC appeared to have drafted the Constitution of 14th November 2001. Parts were in "legalese". Section D, Powers, in particular: (e.g. 6 "Power to do all such lawful things as are necessary for achievement of the objects") required explanation.

CARRIED FORWARD: Paul, Marie

Grass cutting plan Summer 2015.

Neil undertook to prepare this

ACTION: Neil

Plan for next 12 months.

See APPENDIX 1 for Neil's plan. John suggested inclusion of the osiery. Eric thought some impenetrable thickets needed attention. A tree surgeon might be needed on some trees.

Liaison with schools (Mollie). Nothing to report.

Arboretum (QR codes) (Andrew)

See APPENDIX 2. Alan asked if the webpages brought up by the QR codes might cost users too much to view due to data charges. Andrew said the Wikipages used were designed for mobile phones and only incurred a small amount of data transfer, i.e. minimal cost. . Eric asked if the codes could be read by all mobile phones. Andrew thought that an APP may be need to be installed on some.

Bee World had been damaged by a vehicle driven over it.

Kingston Brook Habitats. (Ian)

CARRIED FORWARD: Ian

Willow structure

Alan reported that the structure had withstood children climbing on it. Some activity was boys showing off to girls. It was illegal to photograph children and difficult for police to charge them. Photos of the structure posted on Face book seemed to have disappeared.

ACTION: Ian, Mollie

Breeding bird survey. (Ian)

Completed 07.00-08.30 on 2nd May by Ann, Eric, Ian and Matt Coward. 24 species were recorded along the 4 transect sections. Summer migrant species, including blackcap, chiffchaff, whitethroat and willow warbler, could be heard singing throughout Meadow Park. Hall Field supported 2 of the 3 singing male willow warblers recorded. Lesser whitethroat was the highlight of the day, heard just downstream of Kingfisher Bridge and seen during the later guided bird walk.

Sign to Meadow Park. (Alan)

No news from Paul. Ann wondered if one was necessary.

ACTION: Paul

DOGS ON LEAD sign for Hall Field

It was queried if dog owners would comply. It would be best worded as a request for the protection of the several species of ground nesting birds in Hall Field.

ACTION: Alan

Facebook site (Mollie)

Set up by Ian in March. 139 "likes" to date, probably all from East Leake (but one from Majorca). 1500 "reaches" for the post re building the willow dome. Other post "reaches" between 56 and 805. Quite a number of post "likes", especially ones which include photos. There has been no related sudden upsurge in FMP membership.

There was a request that Ian supply Members with a User's Guide or just explain the rudiments.

ACTION: Ian

Green flag (Alan)

The assessor, Tim Brooks, had visited for a whole morning. Mollie was present for much of that time. Impressed by what had been achieved by a small number of volunteers. He thought aims and objectives in the Management Plan should be clearer. He was impressed by developments re bees and wild flowers. He advised that we should consider applying for MP to be declared a Nature Reserve. It would attract funding. Neil (and others) thought that this was very unlikely to be approved. Andrew wondered if small parts could be. Tim suggested a wet scrape (FMPC had considered and rejected this some years ago). Eric thought that, in accordance with Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy, MP should receive more support.

Monthly Amenities Committee Meetings: (Alan)

No need to attend the next meeting.

SECRETARY'S REPORT (Trevor)

Communications.

There had been problems when attempting to obtain a composite Committee resolution prior to the Amenities Committee Meeting on 21st April. Even a request for acknowledgment had not been replied to by most Members. It was agreed that, if a message did not bounce back, it could be assumed to have been received by all. John pointed out the importance of restricting messages to Committee Members. Trevor said that it was also important to include all. There had been problems with contacting Richard and Marie in the past, but Richard was no longer on the Committee and Marie had an email address.

Subscriptions.

Andrew said that direct debits were out. Standing Orders were possible but not justified. We should have to accept the present long drawn out system of Members subscribing. Insisting on a firm cut off date might result in loss of Members.

TREASURERS REPORT (Andy)

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT 11/5/15

The balance in the account as at the 1st of November was £821.09

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNT

CREDIT

Initial Balance in Bank	£821.09
MAG PLC Grant £700 [split £360 gen funds, £340 Arb Spons]	£360
Membership Subscriptions [to date]	£406
Arboretum Sponsorship [to date]	£535
Membership Donations [to date]	£149
Sale of Notelets/photos/calendars	£7
TOTAL	£2278.09

DEBIT

Malcolm Lane – Arboretum Lecturn	£840
Neil Hunter [New sessile Oak Collection]	£12
Lantern Lane Primary School	£30
East Leake Carnival booking fee	£20
TOTAL	£902

Balance carried forward	TOTAL	£1376.09
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Balance as at 11/5/15 –	General Funds	£841.09
	Arboretum Sponsorship	£535

Items of interest:

A further £180 has been received into the Arboretum Sponsorship Fund with the only two debits since March – Lantern Lane and East Leake Carnival booking being paid

New seat (Andy) FMP could afford a new seat. Siting was discussed. It would not include a dedication notice. It would need mowing around. An associated litter bin could cost hundreds of pounds annually to empty.

FUNDING APPLICATIONS (Alan)

Nothing to report.

ACTIVITIES

June: Pruning W side of Play Field

July: Eric asked if a litter pick of the Brook, following the Carnival, was needed. Alan said that the Brook was tidier than in previous years but it is always a worthwhile venture.

Summer walks (Mollie)

Bird walk (Ian)

Mollie had undertaken widespread publicity – Facebook, notice boards, website, library. Brookside and Lantern Lane schools helped. Academy did not reply to her request.

16 attended. The majority of species recorded in the earlier bird survey were noted. Matt Coward quickly located species from their song and Ian indicated visual identification features. Some attendees saw a lesser whitethroat and a kingfisher. Ian proposed a walk much later in the season to demonstrate a different avifauna, including winter thrushes.

Ann and Kevin would present a plant/insect walk on Saturday 27th June.

Carnival 20th June.

Ann volunteered to help Mollie. Mollie had requested potting of cuttings. Ann observed that potted plants usually remained unsold. Trevor observed that the aim in the past had been to raise money; it was not so serious a problem now. Membership recruitment was also a feature.

ACTION: Mollie, Ann.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

Andrew reported the activities of a motor-biker in MP. Obtain number if bike has one. Report to police. Kelly Warwick 07725925330

Date of next meeting Wednesday 8th July 2015.

APPENDIX 1 (Neil)

MEADOW PARK EAST LEAKE

LIST OF PROPOSED TASKS FOR VOLUNTEERS & OTHERS (from 2015/16 onwards)

1. OAK MEADOW

- a. Pruning bushes/trees on sides of path, south side
- b. Coppice strip/thinning of plantation on west side (to help create scrubby 'headland')
- c. Maintenance of 'wildflower ribbon' via annual strimming and raking in late summer/autumn
- d. 'Strewing' cut material from here to spread seeds to adjacent parts of field
- e. Potential further sowing of hay rattle seed to aid spread of native herbs throughout the field

2. STONEBRIDGE FIELD

- a. Pruning sides of path through spinneys
- b. Cutting back other edges of spinneys + coppicing/thinning
- c. Pruning hedge, west side

3. LITTLE MEADOW

- a. Pruning (Cutting-and-laying?) hedge next to tarmac path
- b. Pruning hedge on west side (cutting-and-laying?)
- c. Pruning back entrance gap to Play Field, south west corner

4. LAGOON FIELD

- a. Scrub cutting/thinning from grassland on east side of path
- b. Cutting/removal of alien dogwood near lagoon
- c. Scrub cutting/coppicing of willows on west side of path

5. PLAY FIELD

- a. Pruning sides of hedge on west side
- b. Pruning sides of hedge on east side (part cut-and-lay?)
- c. Cutting back/coppicing of spinney edges on north side
- d. Cutting back spinney edge alongside new northern boundary path

6. HALL FIELD

- a. Clearance of route of new northern boundary path near railway bank
- b. Cutting back/coppicing of scrub patches in south-western half of field
- c. Maintenance of herb-rich open areas/path edges via annual strimming/flail-cutting
- d. Removal of alien dogwood (saplings and larger clumps)
- e. Removal of bamboo + scrub control in open 'ant-hills' area near northern boundary

7. GIBSONS FIELD

- a. Pruning sides of hedge and spinney edges on east side
- b. Pruning back of trees along field-side edge of spinney on south side
- c. Cutting back edges of footpath through spinney near southern boundary-
- d. Coppicing/thinning of plantation (including input from Forest School?)
- e. Establishment of new native 'wildlife' hedge along southern boundary

8. ARBORETUM AREA

- a. Maintenance of specimen trees (including signs, stakes, watering, replacements etc.)
- b. Maintenance of 'Bee World' patches (and possible extensions in same area)
- c. Maintenance and repairs to willow 'house' as necessary
- d. Pruning back of spinney edges near stone path

9. BATEMAN FIELD

- a. Cutting back edges (+ coppicing/thinning?) of spinneys in south-west/south-east corners
- b. Removal of alien dogwood from spinney in south-west corner
- c. Pruning/cutting back hedge on east side (part cut-and-lay?)
- d. Pruning sides of hedge on west side? (proposed headland strip)
- e. Pollarding of old willows next to Kingston Brook (possible **TREE SAFETY ISSUE**)

10. OTHER GENERAL TASKS

- a. Cutting out/digging up of docks/ragwort as necessary (in fields cut for hay)
- b. Collection of litter and monitoring of other anti-social behaviour
- c. Maintenance of bird boxes
- d. Maintenance of signs, benches and other structures

NOTES:

- i. The above tasks are not in any order of priority.
- ii. There may be other tasks to add to the list as proposed by other committee members.
- iii. Some of these might not be in the current management plan - most probably come under the 'general care and maintenance' category of Park management.
- iv. All tree and scrub cutting tasks should generally be done from September to March, i.e. outside of the bird breeding season.
- v. The Parish Council will continue to mow path edges, other grass paths and Play Field as per the management plan.
- vi. Hay should be cut and removed by contractors from Gibsons, Bateman, Oak, Little and Stonebridge Fields, either once or twice per year between July and October.
- vii. 'Headland' areas should be established in several locations as long-grass/low scrub habitats, to be managed occasionally (e.g. by strimming or flail-cutting) on a 3 - 5 year rotation.

(List compiled by N. J. Hunter, May 2015)

APPENDIX 2 (Andrew)

A brief report on the attachment of QR Code labels to the trees in the Meadow Park Arboretum
Andrew Sandford
10th May 2015

I attached the labels to the supporting posts where possible. The labels are printed on waterproof plastic labels, so can be easily and cheaply replaced if I have made any mistakes, or if the websites change or if the vandals do their worst. I am expecting the labels to last a year or so, i.e. they will need to be replaced regularly.

I have used the Wikipedia mobile website for the links as they are reasonably informative, work well on mobile phones and if anyone thinks they are wrong they have the option of correcting the websites themselves!

Whilst finding the links for the different trees I found a few problems or inconsistencies that some may be interested in:

1. I could not find reference to the "Brown Birch" anywhere (easily) on the internet. By cross referencing the Latin name on the existing label I realised we are referencing what now seems to now be called the "Downy Birch". I thought perhaps the term "Brown birch" was in error until I found it used in an old copy of Keble Martin* that I have so I guess it is an older name that may have fallen out of favour?
2. The name "Wild Plum" was hard to pin down as different (respected) websites refer to different species. Some think name refers to the Damson and others the Bullace. Others say the term refers to hybrid of many possible species including it being a hybrid of the Blackthorn and Cherry Plum. The name on our label is a bit of a giveaway, i.e. *Prunus domestica*, which is the same general name given to multiple sub-species of commercial plums. Who knows what ours is??
3. The white and grey poplars are usually quoted as being non-native whilst we say they are native. The Woodland trust classifies the white poplar as non-native but says older records might suggest it has been around longer than the generally quoted date of introduction (the 16th century). The Grey poplar is a hybrid of the white so the same applies.

I put a label on the dead Elm along site its original tree label. Maybe when the new Elm saplings grow up the labels can be transferred. I also found that the English Oak is missing from the map, but not much we can do about that now.

Currently there are three trees missing their formal labels and the Silver Birch label is broken. I could replace these with white printed labels or we could order new ones?

*Concise British Flora in Colour, W. Keble Martin, Edbury Press.