NEWSLETTER No. 1

Friends of Meadow Park

SUMMER 2002

THE FIRST SIX MONTHS are the worst, somebody once said. In the case of the Friends (FMP), the first six months have certainly been hectic, but a lot of progress has been made and there are visible signs of it in the Park. We have spent time establishing our identity, collecting volunteers' names and all-important skills, getting to know the Park, raising funds and finally beginning to accomplish the sort of task which Rushcliffe Borough Council, as owner and manager, could never prioritise.

Membership is now 64, about a third of whom are prepared to take an active part in caring for the Park. There is a committee of ten; Ian Weekley is chairman and Kevin Shaw is secretary/ treasurer. In accordance with our constitution, the Parish Council nominated two committee members, and the Borough Council one; he is Hem Hedworth, head ranger at Rushcliffe Country Park in Ruddington, and a most important link for FMP. The committee is divided into three groups with particular areas of responsibility – funding, planning/ management and publicity/membership.

A frosty Meadow Park in January

These days, funding and getting the legalities right have to take precedence for any voluntary organisation. We received a start-up grant from BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) plus an allowance from their "Chestnut fund" to buy some basic tools. Insurance was also arranged through BTCV. Agenda 21 made a grant of £500 for seating (page 3) and the East Leake Town Lands Trust funded the big tree planting exercise in March (page 2). The Parish Council gives moral support and grants in kind, like storage for tools and coffee for the workers!

As part of the identification process, the committee have chosen names for the fields, bridges and pathways, to replace the numbered system on the Borough officers' plan. Roy Vincent supplied us with the field-names used when the Kirk family were farming the land, and most of these have been retained. (A new map is enclosed with this newsletter).

The management/planning group conducted a detailed survey of the park, and made a number of recommendations. Some of these require action by Rushcliffe Borough Council as owners – matters such as the state of the Bateman Road and Stonebridge Drive entrances to the park. A variable mowing schedule was agreed with the Borough Council, to take account, for instance, of the need for frequent cutting of the kickabout area – now the Playfield. Vigilance, please, from all Friends, to monitor that this happens as it should. The more southerly fields have been mowed for hay by a local farmer; the removal of cuttings should help to reduce the fertility of these areas, thereby encouraging natural regeneration by older species of vegetation.

Several of the Friends are keen ornithologists, who keep regular watch of Meadow Park's birds. A timed count in April revealed many established residents – including our exotic trio of kingfisher, kestrel and heron, after which the three bridges across Kingston Brook have been named.

Good liaison with Rushcliffe Borough Council will be needed for us to progress. But other relationships will develop also, and as a first step, FMP is to affiliate to the Notts Wildlife Trust. We are looking forward to a future as busy as the first six months have been.

A VERY BIG DIG!

Sunday 3rd March saw the **Friends**' first practical exercise, when about thirty people turned out, aged from five to eighty-four, wearing some wonderful gear and armed with forks, to help give a new home to forty young and semi-mature trees.

These were planted and tended by Neil Hunter over many years, on the land on West Leake Road where the new burial ground is now under construction, and it had become necessary to remove them. Neil is a **Friend**, as well as a tree expert and, along with Dennis Fox, he organised a mass transfer, with military precision.

We are indebted to farmers Richard Jenks and Roy Vincent, who gave up their Sunday mornings and came with their heavy machinery to transport the trees, dig huge holes and then manoeuvre the biggest trees into the ground.

A tractor-load of trees in March --

— now looking healthy in June

The Parish Council supported us by opening up the office and laying on coffee for the workers, and the Town Lands Trust gave us a grant towards the cost of the stakes and ties.

It is good to be able to report that, in spite of very dry weather immediately after planting, all but a couple of the trees are thriving. They will add to the rich cover we want to provide for our resident wildlife.

SPRING CLEAN DAY

As usual, the Parish Council promoted the national Spring Clean Week initiative, with a hard morning's work on Saturday 13th April. FMP made their own contribution by having a good go at the Sheepwash and Kingston Brooks and their surrounds.

The amount and nature of the rubbish collected was amazing. There were bottles galore, fizzy drinks cans, and plastic dishes still reeking of curry, of course, but quite a lot of timber (various) was pulled out, too, together with the odd hub cap and other bits of motor car. The most dangerous items for wildlife were the plastic bags, and there were plenty of those.

Very many thanks to those Friends who spent upwards of two hours in the muddy water.

The brooks ran much more freely afterwards. IF ONLY the litter-louts would let them stay that way.

ENJOYING THE PLEASURES of Meadow Park can be a tiring business, so we hope to provide a number of seats.

The first three were installed in May, by a few stalwarts who declared themselves fit enough; they benefited from the professional guidance and muscle-power of Sid Gough, to whom we are very grateful.

The seat pictured, near Kingfisher Bridge, was donated by a resident in memory of his wife. FMP acknowledge his gesture with many thanks. One of the village organisations has offered to fund another – again our thanks.

The award from Agenda 21, already mentioned, will pay for us to make and install a more rustic type of seat, and we hope to erect at least three of these in the quieter western part of the park. We shall need willing hands for this task, too – be ready for the call!

GOODBYE,

YELLOW BRICK ROAD

The pathway which crosses Meadow Park and connects the northern and southern parts of the village glories in the title of Definitive Footpath No 9, but for years we have all known and hated it, at its southern end at least, as the Yellow Brick Road.

The County Council were willing to replace this disastrously sticky surface earlier this year, just when, by happy co-incidence, a "Safe Travel Plan" initiative was being developed in connection with the new schools provision on Lantern Lane. Rushcliffe Borough Council agreed to co-operate with the County, so the whole length of the path has now been tarmac-ed and provides a safe and easy surface for both leisure users of the park and for the students and others who enjoy a quiet route through the village.

It is the principal path through Meadow Park, and so far is the only one with a name – Kingfisher Walk

A LASTING LEGACY

When Rushcliffe Borough Council offered support to parishes for whatever local Jubilee celebrations they might be planning, a permanent commemoration of some sort was an option.

East Leake Parish Council invited FMP to consider whether Meadow Park would be a suitable site for such a scheme. The committee felt that the Manor Farm Meadow entrance to the park, which is untidy and insignificant at present, would be the ideal spot to erect a formal gateway. A sturdy metal archway design, bearing the words 'Meadow Park – Golden Jubilee 2002', has been chosen; Malcolm Lane of Cropwell Bishop, who is experienced in providing this sort of work for councils and other public bodies, would construct and erect it. It would cost £3000, towards which the Parish Council has allocated £500 from the village Jubilee budget, which should be matched by the Borough Council. Application for the rest has been made to 'Awards for All', whose decision should be known quite soon – under the terms of Jubilee grant funding work has to be completed by the end of the year, so fingers are crossed.

The archway and associated fencing to complete a proper entrance would be along the northern edge of the triangle currently submerged under a mass of vegetation. For our plans for that – see over the page!

MEMBERS!

PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD!
THE FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK HAVE A TARGET - WE WANT TO HAVE 100 MEMBERS BY THE END OF OUR FIRST YEAR.

Anyone interested in seeing Meadow Park develop as a valued community amenity, whether they can offer skills (of specialist knowledge or muscle!) or just want to demonstrate support for FMPs' efforts, is most welcome to join us.

Contact Secretary Kevin Shaw, c/o the Parish Office, 45 Main Street, tel 01509 852217

'WISH-LIST'

& SOME MORE DEFINITE PLANS

- The management group is looking at the prospect of introducing a wild flower meadow. (Got to reduce the fertility first)
- We hope to plant a withy bed, which would link into East Leake's past as a basket-making area.
- On the same theme – perhaps a display of willow sculptures?
- We should like to create and maintain a data-base recording both flora and fauna in the park.
- We need to install some more waste bins, also more dog-waste bins.
- We shall press the Borough Council to improve the surface of the path network. The path between Kingfisher Walk and the Stonebridge entrance to the park would ideally be tarmac-ed to link into the schools' Safe Travel Plan.
- We plan to install information boards at the park entrances. In time we hope to design more detailed information boards, describing points of interest, especially wildlife visitors might look out for within the park.

A TRIANGULAR PROBLEM

(WITH A CIR CULAR SOLUTION)

The patch of land near the Manor Farm Meadow entrance to the park is unkempt and unsightly, and will look even worse if we get our Jubilee archway framing it.

The committee have consulted Sharon Scaniglia, Rushcliffe Borough Council's community arts officer, with a view to making a feature here. She, you may recall, was responsible for recruiting participants from various East Leake organisations to work with a professional artist in carrying out the Roundels project, which provides such an interesting footnote to the village centre.

Ever since Borough Council workmen rescued this old millstone from the brook, we have been hoping to use it in some decorative way, and happily, Sharon has agreed to incorporate it into a community arts scheme appropriate to Meadow Park.

Watch out for further news on this one.

Don't forget the RAGWORT PULL

Sunday 30th June 9am

Wednesday 3rd July 7pm

Sunday 7th July 9.30am

Bring gloves and a fork,

and dress against thistles!