NEWSLETTER

No. 10

Friends of Meadow Park

SPRING & SUMMER 2006

What RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL undertook to do, and what they have done

You perhaps recall an item in the March issue of the Parish Council newsletter, which described a meeting between two of our Borough Councillors and Brian Knowles, who is Rushcliffe Leisure Services Manager - and the undertakings Mr Knowles made.

The biggest task was to repair Kestrel and Heron Bridges, where serious erosion was causing the banks to fall away at the approach to each end of both bridges. The footway had become dangerous and was impassable to wheelchairs or buggies. The picture (right) shows how the approach has been built up, reinforced and tarmac-ed; the work cost upwards of £8,000, but the result should last for many years, and is much appreciated.

Repair work to Kestrel Bridge

Bateman Field after mowing,

We hear from time to time about travellers settling in our open spaces and leaving mess and damage behind them. Meadow Park is all too accessible to such unwanted visitors, so the prospect of protecting at least one of our weak points by installing drop-down bollards at the Manor Farm Meadow entrance was most welcome. **To date, however, we have no news about when they may appear.**

Mr Knowles agreed that some of our muddiest paths would benefit from the addition of a few loads of suitable quarry stone - RBC would provide the stone and the Friends of Meadow Park would provide the muscle power to spread and tamp it. **To date, no stone**. Two stretches on the southern edge of Oak Meadow and Bateman Field have been repaired, but with stone purchased as well as spread by Friends.

After years of botched mowing schedules, it looked as if there would be a proper contract with a local farmer to give the northern fields, plus Little Meadow, two cuts in the season, the hay being removed to reduce fertility and encourage the growth of wild flowers. There was some controversy about when the first cut should be - April or July. The Friends' preferred option was July, to protect ground-nesting birds and to allow most of our wild flowers to set seed, and we were pleased when this was accepted. The first week of July was promised, but it was the third week, after a few phone calls, that it actually happened. Our understanding at that time was that **the farmer had not yet been contracted to do the second cut** (in September).

When RBC first took over the park, they planted a number of non-native trees, against their own (more recently adopted) environmental policy. Some of the Friends had already started ripping out a large clump of highly invasive American dogwood, and Mr Knowles agreed to carry on the job and plant native species as replacements. **Not so far, he hasn't!**

There are always budgetary constraints in local government, but the land which became Meadow Park came with a large sum of money to be used for the benefit of East Leake residents, and £25,835 remained early in the year (Parish Council Amenities Committee, January 2006). If you think that Mr Knowles is dragging his feet, please tell him so (bknowles@rushcliffe.gov.uk), or ask your Borough Councillors to pursue the matter.

FRANK KIRK WAY

Definitive Footpath No 25 has been slightly diverted inside Meadow Park, and extended through the southern railway arch to form a link between Footpaths No 8 and 9, making a continuous route from east to west. Dennis Fox worked hard with Jane Baines, the County Council Rights of Way Officer, to achieve this. Named after the farmer who gave the land to the village, it is already in use, but will have an official opening on 6 September.

What the FRIENDS of MEADOW PARK have done

We had six **ACTIVITY DAYS** from February to July, with an average attendance of about a dozen Friends. Between them, they performed a variety of tasks, which would/could not have been done by the Borough Council.

In February, a five metre stretch of Kingston Brook was coppiced, to let in more light and air. Another large overhanging willow tree was pollarded; this will encourage new growth at a lower level; the effect is well demonstrated in the photo below which shows a tree pollarded in November 2004.

Pollarded November 2004

Pollarded February 2006

In March, we intended to make a start on improving the paths but, in the absence of the hoped-for stone, the small group who turned up could only do a bit of scraping and clearing in readiness. Our shrubbery also received a spot of attention.

We had another small turn-out in April, and these spent their morning working on the shrubbery (more donated plants in, a load of weeds out), except for Kevin who tackled some of the rubbish in the Sheepwash Brook; this included the remains of a semi- grown ash tree which somebody had sawn off a couple of metres from the ground.

Our May date co-incided with the Parish Council's Spring Clean Day, so we did just that. A dozen or more Friends filled 30 black bags with all manner of rubbish from all over the park, including several large willow logs left by contractors who had felled a tree for the Kingston Brook Drainage Board (riparian owners), which had rapidly, but not surprisingly, been dumped in the water. Also, Debbie took away a stack of rotten fencing which had been cluttering up the Bateman Road entrance.

A familiar sight around the new shrubbery
The poppies that have appeared are not
Kevin's and he is not a drug baron!

By June, we'd given up on waiting for Rushcliffe's promised stone delivery, so we bought a load of quarry waste and filled in the worst two lengths of the path to the south of Oak Meadow and Bateman Field, but purchases on this small scale are relatively so costly that we shan't attempt any more just yet. Neil went off on one of his solo safaris, checking on the health of the hazel and willow copses planted in 2004 and 2005.

Finally, in July, an excellent squad took advantage of a beautiful day to wage war on several fronts. Two chaps spent a morning in the Sheepwash Brook, nearly losing their wellies in the process - but it looked a lot better afterwards. Ann & Ian Weekley plus shears disappeared into the "secret" path which runs parallel to the railway in Hall's Field but in high summer gets choked with vegetation, mostly brambles; two hot hours later, the way was once more open. A few more went on a ragwort pull in the northern fields, especially Lagoon Field. There was encouraging but patchy evidence of cinnabar moth activity, thanks to their surreptitious introduction a couple of years ago; we only pulled where we saw no caterpillars.

Cinnabar moth caterpillars

What else the FRIENDS of MEADOW PARK have done

You will have noticed that we are determined to get a decent population of wild flowers in Meadow Park!

In 2004, we sowed direct and this met with some success, in Oak Meadow especially, where there has been a recurring good show of ox-eyed daisies and red campion, among others.

Next year a riot of colour??

2005's experiment was with several varieties of seed, sowed at home by willing Friends who gave up their window-ledges in a good cause - sadly, the rabbits benefited most from the resulting young plug-plants, cowslips and buttercups being their favourites.

For 2006 we have tried a different technique. Through a friendly contact, we were able to acquire a bale of flower-rich hay from a well-established hay meadow "somewhere" in Leicestershire. A group of Friends scythed and scarified a patch in Oak Meadow, and carefully spread the hay, scattering the seed as they went. We have since had rain, which will have washed the seed further into the ground. Fingers crossed!

East Leake Carnival organisers did a splendid job again this year - congratulations to them! The FMP stall did a roaring trade with a hidden treasure game, clearing over £150 profit - thankyou for everyone's support. We also sold a load of our speciality Meadow Park notelets, and recruited a couple of new members.

Remember you can always get notelets or A4 glossy prints from the Parish Office.

Still to do……

- The long-awaited orientation/information board should have been in place by now, somewhere near the Manor Farm Meadow entrance. Funds were secured a year ago, ideas put together, quotations obtained …….. We asked the design staff at Harry Carlton School if they had students who might be interested in creating the artwork, and thought we had met with an enthusiastic response. Unfortunately, by the end of the school year in July, we had received nothing, and so conclude that we must either find someone else skilled at this type of design work, or try to do it ourselves. Any volunteer with suitable expertise would be welcomed with open arms; you know the number - 852217 or 853445.
- Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust has a scheme to plant black poplars in selected areas, and we think Meadow Park should qualify. We await confirmation, and hope we may get some trees in time to plant during the autumn.
- We still have materials available to make another bench or two - there's already a very interesting collection to be seen on your way round the park!

ACTIVITY DAYS

will start again in OCTOBER - please make a note:

SATURDAY - 14 OCTOBER

SATURDAY - 11 NOVEMBER

SATURDAY - 9 DECEMBER

10am till about noon - meet at the Manor Farm Meadow entrance

PLEASE COME ALONG IF YOU POSSIBLY CAN

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NEW MEMBERS

Would be very welcome - please tell your friends and neighbours about THE FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK It only costs £2 per annum

Phone 852217 or 853445, or e-mail c/o parishclerk@east-leake.gov.uk

And finally… SNAKES ALIVE!!

Grass snake

Something long and wriggly has been spotted in the park. The likelihood is that it was a slow worm, much commoner than the grass snake in the picture. It almost certainly was not a smooth snake (UK's rarest snake) or an adder (quite the wrong habitat). If **you** come across anything interesting or a bit special, do let us know, and if you have your camera handy at the time, so much the better.
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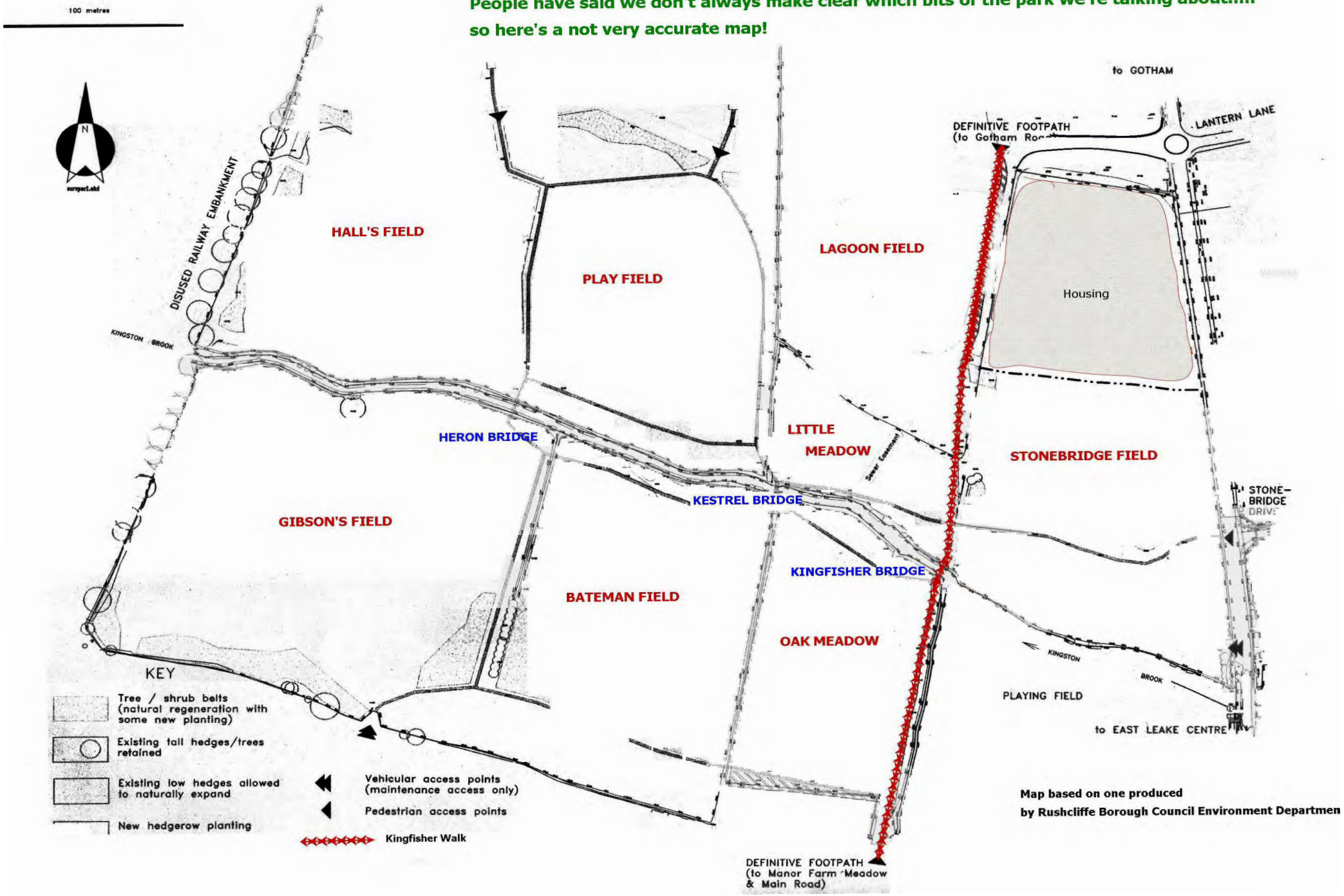
People have said we don't always make clear which bits of the park we're talking about.....
so here's a not very accurate map!



Map based on one produced
by Rushcliffe Borough Council Environment Departmen