NEWSLETTER
No. 12

Friends of Meadow Park

SUMMER
2007

PROPOSED NEW MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Regular readers of these newsletters will recall being frequently harangued on the subject of a Management Plan for the park. Over a four year period, Rushcliffe Borough Council's Community Environment Officer, Paul Phillips, produced various drafts, which the FMP committee debated and suggested amendments for, but no definitive document ever emerged, much less got adopted. The latest version was produced in December of last year - at which point events overtook the entire structure of the local leisure scene.

Spring and Autumn in Meadow Park—
who ever said England is drab?

During 2006, the Borough Council conducted a sweeping policy review of how all its leisure facilities should be financed and managed in the future. One of the results as far as East Leake is concerned was that the Parish Council was invited to consider taking over the routine management of Meadow Park. The Borough Council would retain ownership and principal budgetary control (i.e. the balance of the sum of money which the Kirk family gifted to the village along with the land in 1999, which would be used for any major repairs or development), and the December 2006 draft plan would be adopted as the basis for future management decisions. Two members of the Parish Council Amenities committee and two members of the FMP committee fine tooth-combed the proposal and the Parish Clerk studied the costings which would make the scheme feasible or not. A detailed response went back to Rushcliffe in April, and the final outcome should be known fairly soon.

We sincerely hope that management does pass to the Parish Council. We have reported too many times in the past how mowing schedules have been missed, or how Deb's phone has overheated chasing promised stone or bollards or a fence repair…… It would be great to have these things organised and carried out by village representatives and a Clerk who knows what's needed on a daily or weekly basis, not the "as and when" and "if we remember" regime that's been our experience so far.

Watch this space!

New members of the Friends of Meadow Park are always welcome. The subscription is £2 (minimum) per person per annum. To join or find out more, please contact the Secretary by e-mail at meadowpark@eastleake.net or via the Parish Clerk on 852217.

You can check up on our activities by visiting our pages on the village website,

www.east-leake.co.uk

WILD FLOWER RECORD, 2006

Unfortunately, this was not to hand when last Autumn's newsletter went to print, but it's still well worth a look.

Ann Weekley wrote:

Meadow Park Flowers.

In some ways, it was an abnormal year. June and July were very hot and dry. Many species, which in 'normal years' would have flowered for several months, withered and set seed early. Some species, Hogweed and Cow Parsley in particular, re-grew and had a second flowering in the autumn. Great Burnet had its flowering season (and its stems!) truncated by the 'hay-making'.

During 2006 I decided to record, month by month, the species in flower in Meadow Park. I recorded a total of 83 species. As I am an only enthusiastic amateur, I will, inevitably, have overlooked quite a few flowers. Flowers of the yellow' dandelionlike' type I find particularly hard to identify and distinguish between. Also the less common white umbellifers are a bit of a nightmare! Nevertheless, reservations aside, there are a lot of flowers out there!

.A few species of flowers seen in 2005, notably Dame's Violet, Wild Parsnip and Hound's-tongue, were either absent or not seen by me in 2006.

0ther species, Teasel, Coltsfoot and Ragwort were present in greatly reduced numbers. What will happen to the flower numbers in 2007 remains to be seen..

Cut leaved Cranesbill

Red Campion & Ox-eye daisies

Cowslip

Ragged Robin

83 SPECIES IDENTIFIED

Bindweed Field
" Great (Convolvulus)
Bittercress Hairy
" Narrow leaved
Bittersweet (Woody night shade)
Brooklime
Burnet Great
" Salad
Buttercup Bulbous
" Creeping
" Field
Campion Red
" White
Celandine Greater
" Lesser
Chickweed Common
Cleavers (Goosegrass, Sticky weed)
Clover Red
" White
Coltsfoot
Cow parsley (Gipsy Lace, Kek)
Cowslip
Cranesbill Cut leaved
" Hedgerow
" Meadow
Cuckoo flower (Lady's smock)
Daisy
Dandelion
Dead nettle Red
" White
Dock Broad leaved
" Narrowleaved
Forgetmenot Field
Ground ivy
Hawkbit Rough
Hawksbeard Marsh
" Smooth
Hemlock
Herb bennet (Wood avens)
Hogweed
Hop trefoil
Knapweed
Knotgrass
Lettuce Prickly
Lords and ladies (Cuckoo pint, Parson in the pulpit)
Mallow Common
Marigold Com
Mayweed Pineapple (Pine-apple weed)
Meadowsweet
Mint Corn
" Spear
Mouse-ear Common
Mugwort
Mustard Garlic (Jack-by-the-hedge)
Mustard Hedge
Nettle Stinging
Ox-eye daisy
Ox-tongue Bristly
Pennyroyal
Plantain Greater Ribwort
Poppy Common
Primrose
Ragged Robin
Ragwort
Redshank
Scabious Field
Shepherd's Purse
Sorrel
Sow thistle Smooth
Speedwell Commcn Field
Stitchwort Greater
Tansy
Teasel
Thistle Creeping
" Spear
" Welted
Vetch Common
Willowherb Broad-leaved
" Great
" Rosebay (Fireweed)
Wintercress Common
Yarrow

IF THAT INSPIRES YOU, GET OUT THERE WITH YOUR WILD FLOWER BOOKS (AND CAMERAS), SEND US YOUR RESULTS, AND WE CAN POOL OUR FINDINGS

ACTIVITY DAYS - SPRING 2007

The 2007 season started on 10 February, at the end of a week of snow, frost and low temperatures. Twelve Friends ventured out and attacked another five or more metres of the Kingston Brook south bank. They reduced three hefty hawthorns to a couple of feet in height, and cleared a lot of scrubby vegetation from under them. The wood stacks we ended up with will provide perfect habitat for small mammals and the loads of insects our larger resident wildlife need to thrive. Over the past three seasons, the bank has been improved considerably, with several old trees strengthened (especially the pollarded willows, which look really good now) and areas of choking undergrowth stripped out.

Case conference

Hugging a tree

In March, just over a dozen folk spent the morning hedge-trimming (near the Bateman Road entrance), giving the shrub border its first serious attention of the year, plodging in the Sheepwash Brook or filling a small mountain of black sacks with unspeakable rubbish.

As our April activity, we installed the long-awaited notice boards, at the Manor Farm Meadow, Bateman Road and Nixon Walk entrances. It took a lot of concrete to ensure that they stay where they were put, and the hope is that they will be of interest to many people for many years to come.

We set aside two days for our May task, which was to improve the path near The Burrows entrance and around Play Field. This involved shifting, spreading and rolling **15 tons** of stone which the Borough Council provided. The 16 Friends who got cracking with wheel barrows on the Saturday morning had a wonderful surprise when a friendly neighbour turned up offering the loan of a dumper truck - that made life a lot easier, so that spreading the stone was completed by lunchtime, and Sunday's crew just had the pleasure of rolling it.

Thistles have taken over where ragwort left off as our over-invasive problem plant and a good old pulling session was planned for June, but too few people turned up, so the thistles are reprieved - until July. Instead, we cleared some of the overgrown paths on the western side of the park and applied a bit of TLC to the shrubbery.

Too many thistles, Oak Meadow 2006

FEBRUARY FASHIONS - NOT QUITE ASCOT!

MULTI-PURPOSE SPACE

Meadow Park is not just a great place to walk the dog, get some exercise, spot birds, small mammals or wild flowers, have a chat with other users, or go from north to south of the village avoiding busy roads (especially helpful for Harry Carlton School students, for whom Kingfisher Walk is a designated route). It is increasingly used as a place for group activities, and gradually realising its potential as a resource for education (of the best, most painless, co-incidental kind).

In the past, FMP has organised bird-watching, wild flower and tree-spotting walks, which demonstrated the great variety of wildlife in the park, but these were sadly not well attended. Younger generations are showing the adults up, and Ann Weekley has led successful wild flower walks for PNEU and Brookside School pupils over several seasons, while PNEU pupils and some of the Brownies took part in our wild flower seed project in 2004. Several Duke of Edinburgh Award candidates have worked in the park as part of their service requirement, litter-picking and weeding, the tedious jobs which are necessary if the park is to look cared for.

One of our beautiful ash trees

But it's not all serious. Last September, teams of Guides played "wide games" (the spelling is correct, apparently, though "wild" sounded nearer the mark!), stalking and tracking and frightening the life out of one another in the dark.

More recently, the 2nd East Leake Cubs, all 30 of them, have been visiting the park to work for their Naturalist's badges, identifying and trying to date trees, sketching birds, making longer studies of small areas. Their Tracker's badges will come next, there's even talk of a project to monitor the fish in Kingston Brook (our informant did not say whether they had supper in mind). An additional point in the park's favour as a venue for Cub and Scout activities is the safe access now that Frank Kirk Way has opened up the way in from West Leake Road.

Finally—how about this? One afternoon in May, thirty 10 & 11 year-olds from Lantern Lane School, plus 25 from Kinoulton School and 40 Polish "pen-pals" who were on a brief visit to UK, took over the park and went orienteering on a course devised by Mr Simon Williams of Lantern Lane. The kids were in teams and had maps to find 25 stopping points and answer questions. Dennis Fox of FMP was responsible for those about trees. It all went so well that more of the same is planned.

Aimed at the opposite age range, Dennis has recently helped the Rushcliffe Branch of the Ramblers' Association to devise a couple of short walks through the park (about 1 mile round the perimeter, or 2 miles of zig-zags) which local doctors wanted to recommend (prescribe?!) to people as part of their "Walking for Health" initiative.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES PLANNED

Bird and bat boxes.

FMP are hoping to go into the construction business, to encourage a greater variety of species to take up residence in the park. Watch out for notices of a carpentry session some time in the autumn.

Hedge Laying

The original farm hedgerows have become very tall and overgrown, obstructing pathways and leading to a loss of density at ground level. A rolling programme of maintenance is therefore proposed in the management plan, and the most effective method is laying.

If you have ever admired the healthy appearance of a well-layed hedge, and would like to learn how it's done, come to a training session in the autumn.

AUTUMN ACTIVITY DAYS WILL START IN SEPTEMBER