NEWSLETTER
No. 13

Friends of Meadow Park

AUTUMN & WINTER
2007

AUTUMN ACTIVITY DAYS

We skipped September (too many people still on holiday, a point which was proved when we thought about having a presence at the Harry Carlton 50th celebratory "do", but couldn't get volunteers), and started the Autumn season with a session in October.

The intention was to thin out some of the coppices which were originally set by Rushcliffe Borough Council over 10 years ago. These are important in providing dense cover for wildlife, but in some places, for instance in the southwest corner of Gibson Field, had grown so thick that even the dogroses were being choked. Sadly, only seven Friends turned up, so they contented themselves with clearing the Bateman Field perimeter path and weeding the shrub border.

Come November, it was back to school for a lesson none of the eleven who took part would ever have dreamed they'd find themselves doing! Under the skilled tutelage of Conrad Oatey, Neil Hunter and Dennis Fox, they laid 25 metres of hedge in Bateman Field, and not only does it look great, but our low-nesting birds should find some ideal sites there in the Spring. The day was so successful that it is planned to complete that particular hedge by laying the remaining 15 metres in January (see below). While that was going on, two more Friends were busy removing a load of straggly growth from the shrub border, and another was having a trimming time on the perimeter path (see p.4).

"Do not hit yourself with this"

We finished 25 metres like this!

Trainee Santa's little helpers

And so to December and an indoor session (just as well, since the weather was horrible). Fourteen folk crowded into the Parish Council depot with hammers and screwdrivers to assemble and paint 20 bird-boxes from kits which Conrad had "prepared earlier". Of various shapes and sizes (for tits, thrushes, wrens and robins), they are all numbered, so that a record can be kept of where they are sited, and also what occupancy they attract. The next morning was fortunately fine, so nine people returned and got them all installed; miraculously, given that the tree-climbing days of most of the volunteers were many moons ago, to put it fairly politely, nobody fell off and no bones were broken.

Thanks, as ever, to the faithful attendees. More would be nice, and would be very welcome to join in the fun (which it usually is!)

SPECIAL ACTIVITY DAY TO COMPLETE LAYING THE HEDGE IN BATEMAN FIELD

SATURDAY 26 JANUARY - FOR 3-4 HOURS STARTING AT 10AM

IF YOU WERE ONE OF THE ORIGINAL "LAYERS", PLEASE TRY TO COME AGAIN.

NEW VOLUNTEERS WELCOME, TRAINING GIVEN

REGULAR ACTIVITY DAYS start again in February

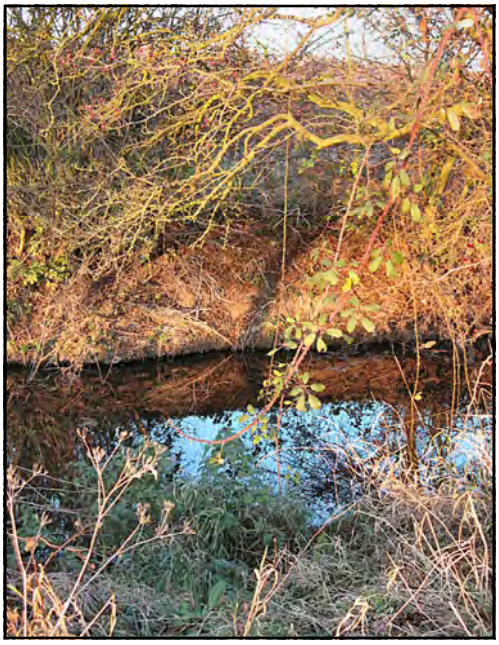
Saturday 9 February - (provisional) pollarding along the Kingston Brook
Saturday 8 March - (provisional) having another go at the dogwood
Saturday 5 April - Parish Council "Spring Clean Day"
Meet as usual, 10am at the Sculpture

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 29 NOVEMBER, 2007

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Here we are again, another year under our belt and once again I have to try and find something interesting to say - but different from last year!

I am sure that Debs will report on Committee meetings and Activity days, so I will not go into them other than to say that surprisingly the more demanding the task undertaken seems to be, the more volunteers we get. An example of this has been the laying of stone on the paths, and at the last one we also made a very valuable new contact – a resident of Northfield Way saw us struggling to transport 5 tons of road stone by wheelbarrow and within half an hour we had the loan of a dumper truck. Some fun and games followed as I tried to get to grips with the gears and rear wheel steering, but it more than halved the time the task took.



Tranquil winter sunlight on the Kingston Brook

A number of us also tackled hedge laying in November, which was great fun and we got done a lot more than any of us expected. I for one look forward to going back to finish the job.

At last we were also able to finally get the information panels made and installed, and my thanks must go to Susan Lewis of the Parish Office who was responsible for the art work. So far they have survived with only minor damage to the one at the sculpture entrance.

A major development this year has been that RBC have approached the Parish Council to see if the latter would be willing to take over the management of the park, although RBC are insisting that the existing Management Plan must remain in place. The PC has indicated agreement in principal but is still awaiting the fine detail to be produced – only taken 5 months so far, so may be completed by April - ?!2009.

Finally, my thanks to all the members who selflessly pick litter etc. in the park when walking their dogs etc., to all members of the committee for their continued support, to Conrad for his excellent control of the purse strings, but most importantly to Debs for her tireless work behind the scenes in addition to keeping the committee in line.

Kevin Shaw

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Since the AGM last November we have had 6 meetings as a full committee. These meetings have had, as a rule, a good attendance. The sub groups have hardly met but this was mainly due to no projects being planned until the transfer of managing the park to the Parish Council is completed

With regard to membership, as always some members did not renew last January. But I'm pleased to report that the membership has slowly continued to grow to 92. But as always I would like to ask you all to suggest to any of your friends, especially those who are frequent park users, to consider joining us. Hopefully, they might be interested & able to attend an activity morning such as another hedge-laying session. I'm sure you will agree the members did a wonderful job on that - but the last time I looked there were several more miles to go! For those of us with smaller biceps the shrub border needs regular attention, but well worth it for the continued admiration.

The committee was informed in August that the Parish council representative had changed from Brian Dale to Marie Males. We thank Brian for his efforts & support.

When you all renew in January will you please give me your email addresses (& I'll try to ensure we have the right one on our records!).

Once again on behalf of the committee I would like to thank Kevin for another good year of leading us - even though we know he's only chairman so he can ride any diggers or dumpers that may be lent to us.

Thank you Kevin

Debbie Slade

ACCOUNTS FOR THE PERIOD 01/11/06 TO 31/10/07

2006		2007		
	Receipts			
346.00	Member donations	344.00		
5.00	Other donations	0.00		
50.00	Grants	155.63		Note 1
77.00	Sale of notelets/photos	21.00		
0.28	Bank interest	0.00		
164.90	Fund raising	84.40		Note 2
0.00	Other	170.50		Note 3
£643.18			£775.53	
	Payments			
35.00	Subscription BTCV	35.00		
155.63	Insurance	155.63		Note 4
13.50	Cost of sale materials	14.00		
10.00	Publicity/Education	15.00		
170.50	Projects	302.22		Note 5
0.00	Other	70.50		
£384.63			£592.35	
£258.55	**Excess of receipts over payments**		£183.18	
	Bank reconciliation			
323.42	Opening balances	581.97		
643.18	Add total receipts	775.53		
966.60		1,357.50		
384.63	Less total payments	592.35		
£581.97	Balance carried forward	£765.15		

Notes

1. RBC grant for 2006 insurance
2. Profit from stall at East Leake Carnival
3. RBC reimbursement for cost of roller hire (x2) for paths (2005/6 & 2006/7).
4. RBC grant
5. Bulb planting & information board
6. Hire of path roller (2006/7)

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

It is now over a year since Rushcliffe Borough Council offered to hand over management of the park to the Parish Council, and nearly a year since the Parish Council made its considered, positive response. Frustratingly, it **still** remains to be seen whether the Borough Council will come back with a financial plan the parish can live with.

The Friends of Meadow Park would welcome the opportunity for the more constructive co-operation which parish council management would bring, but meanwhile have felt unable to develop any major scheme.

We know that our plans for an educational arboretum will probably never materialise, because of the Borough Council's restricted species planting policy, but we have a few other more modest ideas.

Sometime soon we hope to have a bat survey completed, enabling us to decide what type of boxes to construct and where to site them.

The osier bed we planted three years ago in Gibson Field is now substantial enough for us think about creating the willow sculpture which was part of the original objective. It would tie in with our wish to provide more of specific interest to young people in the park.

As ever, the committee would welcome ideas from all park-users.

Please get in touch: tel 852217 or e-mail meadowpark@eastleake.net

WILDLIFE REVIEW

Wildflowers in Meadow Park

During the summer of 2006 Anne Weekley recorded, month by month, all the wildflowers in Meadow Park. She found a total of eighty-three species. This survey not only shows us that Meadow Park is very interesting botanically but it also gives us any excellent base from which to evaluate the changes to the flora in the future. Is there anybody else with the time and enthusiasm to repeat this survey in future years?

We hope, in future, to increase both the number of wildflowers and the diversity of species in the Park. Regular mowing, year by year, is one way to achieve this. Unfortunately the Borough Council has not always placed the order for the mowing, and this year the wetness of the summer prevented the mowing taking place in July – which is the ideal time.

Another way we can increase numbers is to introduce wildflowers. In the spring of 2004 we cleared the turf from 22 one metre square areas and planted them with a wildflower seed mix. In some places the sowing was unsuccessful, but eleven of the squares are still recognisable – so you can now see Knapweed, Ox-eye daisy, Yarrow and Red Campion growing along the eastern hedgerow of Bateman field. Even more successful are five squares planted in the SW corner of Oak field where these species appear to be spreading.

Red Campion & daisies
Cowslip
Meadow cranesbill

In the following Spring lots of volunteers grew and planted over 665 wildflower plugs in Little Meadow. At first we were disappointed with the results of all this hard work but this year you could find three small clumps of Red Campion, two clumps of Meadow Cranesbill, two of Ox-eye daisy and a number of Cowslips. So our efforts were not entirely in vain.

These plantings will not survive for long if the meadows are not mown regularly at the right time. Once we can be fairly sure that this will occur we shall carry out some more planting. Then Anne, or her successor, will be able to record an even more impressive list! And even if the number of species doesn't increase we hope the meadows will become more colourful.

John Adcock, September 2007

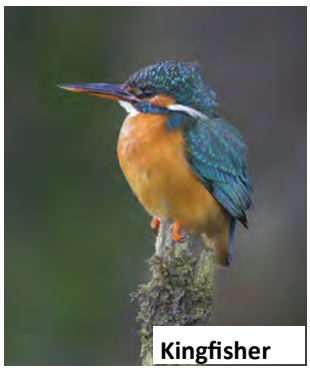
Meadow Park birdlife continues to thrive, and the bare trees of winter make for easier spotting.

One member of a recent working party – armed, therefore, with secateurs rather than binoculars – logged 19 species in his 2-hour stint, including such notables as jay and green woodpecker, and all three of those after whom our bridges are named – KINGFISHER, KESTREL and HERON.

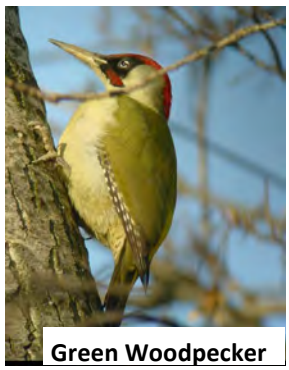
Ian Weekley, November 2007

Grey Heron

Kestrel



Kingfisher



Green Woodpecker

FOUR-LEGGED RESIDENTS?

We know we have a lot more rabbits than we'd like. At the other end of significance, and highly prized, water voles have occasionally been seen. A little shrew corpse was picked up one day near the Kingston Brook. But there must be many more little animals around, if only we could spot them. PLEASE let us know of any interesting sightings, and if you're lucky enough to catch something on camera, share it with us (e-mail meadow-park@eastleake.net).