NEWSLETTER No. 19

AUTUMN & WINTER 2010

FUNDING PROGRESS

The last newsletter reported our successful bid under Nottinghamshire County Council's "Local Improvement Scheme".

This is beginning to take shape, as a walk through Bateman Field will reveal—the ARBORETUM has been planted (well, 25 of the 26 trees John Adcock & Conrad Oatey selected, with only a wayfaring tree still awaited).

While the arboretum improves the park's educational value and is a long-term project, the next work the County Council will do for us is more practical and immediate—to improve the path network (no tarmac, but a firmer, wider surface on some routes). This will be specially welcome to our less able walkers and those managing pushchairs or wheelchairs. Kevin Shaw liaised with Alex Price (NCC) over which stretches of path it would be most beneficial to tackle, and we should see the results before the end of March.

The larger trees in the foreground were grown by Neil Hunter and donated in 2002

John Adcock writes:

"Most of the trees are native to the British Isles (we can now boast of having one example of virtually all the native British trees) together with just eight of the commoner introduced species.

Eventually each tree will be labelled. You will then be able to see, for instance, the difference between a Pine, a Spruce and a Fir and how a Larch differs from the other conifers. Can you tell the difference between a Yew and a Juniper? We have a group of the three different species of Lime trees – the Common Lime, the Small Leaved Lime and the Large Leaved Lime. We have a specimen of the Midland Hawthorn – to compare with the Common Hawthorn which we have in all the hedges. There are also examples of the native and naturalised Poplars.

These trees generate so many points of interest that we could write a booklet about them. We probably will in time! "

The generous County Council award will also cover a new vandal-resistant notice board to replace the (two) that Kevin made for us and which were destroyed. During their short lives, people appreciated the "What to see...." and other information we were able to display.

Finally, we hope to acquire two or three more benches, again robust models which should survive better than our own manufacture wooden ones.

BUT that is not all!

We recently submitted an application for a substantial Lottery Fund grant to build a "Trim Track" or exercise trail, probably around the Play Field. This was an ambition the Parish Council had; they developed a detailed, costed scheme, but were unable to raise funds for it. As a voluntary body, the Friends can access pots of finance not available to the Parish Council, and we had the support and guidance of Jo Phelan, a landscape expert from Groundworks Nottingham, a charity which helps groups such as ours maximise their bidding power. We are modestly hopeful!

Do you check the Friends of Meadow Park pages on ELCID (www.east-leake.co.uk)?

We have recently added an "OPEN FORUM" for the exchange of views about the development and activities in the park, but especially for members to report interesting sightings of birds, animals and plants. It's very easy to register and log on—hope to meet you there!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 24 NOVEMBER, 2010

From the Chairman's report

Alan reported that it had been an interesting & challenging year.

We applied for funding from Notts County Council's Local Improvement Scheme (formerly known as Building Better Communities). In May our bid was accepted for planting an arboretum, improving the paths, purchasing specialist tools, more benches & a notice board.

Meetings were held with Alex Price from Notts County Council & Jo Phelan from Groundworks, a charity which helps groups obtain funding.

We had a site meeting with contractors about creating a wetland scrape & even though we learnt a lot we have decided not to go ahead with this. Meanwhile, Kingston Brook Drainage Board has requested a meeting to discuss the park.

We were invited to apply for funds for the next year & decided to put in a bid for equipment for a Trim Trail in the Play Field. The Parish Council tried to obtain funding for this last year but failed. With their support we used their blueprint & are at present seeking support from village organisations.

Alan thanked everyone for attending the work parties, particularly the hedge laying which has shown the good morale of the Friends group.

He thanked Conrad for keeping the figures in good order. (We are getting quite good at obtaining any available funding!). He also thanked Debbie for her years as secretary; she was now resigning from the role which she had fulfilled ever since FMP started.

From the Secretary's report

The full committee met 6 times this year with most meetings having a good attendance. There were numerous smaller meetings to discuss the grant proposals to develop the arboretum and the other projects.

Halfway through the year the parish council representative, Jeff Jones, was replaced by Richard Jenks who is the new Chairman of the Parish Amenities Committee. We welcome him & thank Jeff Jones for his involvement.

We have tried to inform & educate the park users by using the notice board kindly made by Kevin, but sadly somebody didn't like it and vandalised it completely. We are hoping to receive a new one soon which should be a little more vandal proof, but no guarantees. We try placing notices around the park about picking up litter & dog mess but the average life of them is 2 hours, even posters made by children. But we'll keep on trying.

At this point I'd like to thank Ann & Ian Weekley for providing information regarding the wild flowers found in the park & the use of the bird boxes. The information they supply is very valuable. We also thank Max Watson who, with Richard Pickering, keeps an eye on the bird life for us & Joan Winnett who collates their sightings.

Our current membership has gone up slightly to 94. This shows considerable interest in the park but as you will be aware not many of these participate in the activity sessions. As I say every year, please try to encourage others.

Finally, on behalf of the rest of the committee I would like to thank Alan for all his hard work this year. It has been a busy one for him which he has carried through with gusto. He has led our meetings well allowing all points of view to be discussed before decisions are made. Thanks, Alan.

From theTreasurer's report

2009110 proved to be a positive year financially. Membership income rose by about £25, but donations fell by about £20. Fundraising is comparable with the previous year. All the 2010 calendars were sold. Income from the stall at the Carnival was similar to last year. Two grants were received during the year to fund projects: Cllr Lynn Sykes gave £249.80 to pay for Walks leaflets, and a Rushcliffe Conservation grant of £194.83 covered tools purchased.

Expenditure was much less than in the previous year, mostly because of the cost of calendars in 2009.

Overall, taking 2008/9 and 2009/10 together, we have increased our end of year balance by around £60 whilst having achieved a number of projects. A very healthy balance of £1,324.72 is carried forward to help fund the coming year's activities.

ELECTIONS

Alan Barlow (Chairman) and Conrad Oatey (Treasurer) were re-elected unopposed.

Trevor Jones was elected unopposed as Secretary.

Committee: John Adcock, Peter Bloxham, Andy Denker, Neil Hunter, Mollie Jacques, Marie Males, Andrew Sandford, Kevin Shaw, & Debbie Slade

Council Representatives: Paul Phillips (Borough & Richard Jenks (Parish)

How to contact the FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK

c/o The Parish Office, 45 Main Street, East Leake, LE12 6PF

tel: 852217 (weekday mornings) or email: meadowpark@eastleake.net

ACCOUNTS FOR THE PERIOD 01/11/09 TO 31/10/10

2009		2010		Notes
	Receipts			
£356.00	Member Subscriptions	£380.00		
£32.50	Other Donations	£13.78		
£120.50	Grants	£444.63		1
£274.00	Sale of Notelets / Photos / Calendars	£256.50		
£126.50	Fundraising	£135.00		2
£0.00	Other	£0.00		
£909.50			£1,229.91	
	Payments			
£35.00	Subscription - BTCV	£35.00		
£155.63	Insurance	£155.63		
£382.40	Costs of sale materials	£7.50		3
£530.19	Projects	£518.13		4
£258.92	Other	£0.00		
£1,362.14			£716.26	
-£452.64	**Excess of Receipts over Payments**		£513.65	
	BANK RECONCILIATION			
£1,263.71	Opening Balance - Bank	£811.07		
£0.00	Opening Balance - Cash	£0.00		
£909.50	add Total Receipts	£1,229.91		
£2,173.21		£2,040.98		
£1,362.14	less Total Payments	£716.26		
£811.07	Balance Carried Forward	£1,324.72		

Notes

1 Notts CC via Lynn Sykes (Walks leaflets) £249.80
RBC Conservation Grant (Tools) £194.83

2 Stall at carnival

3 Notelet production

4 Bulbs £21, Walks leaflets £249.80, Hedgelaying materials £52.50, Tools £194.83

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From Nest Box Report 2010 (Ian Weekley)

We checked the nest boxes in November, and a very similar pattern emerged to that of the previous two years.

We began 2010 with 19 boxes remaining. Two of these were vandalised or fell, leaving 17 as potential nest sites - 11 tit-type boxes (with the single small hole access) and 6 open-fronted ones designed for robins, wrens and flycatchers. Nine of the tit boxes were used but only one of the open fronts - and that a high front and used again by tits. In three years we've never had an open-fronted type used by the species for which it is designed. But we're reluctant to give up hope!

We suggest therefore leaving the two ¾ fronts and one each of the ¼ and the ½ fronts, and then converting the three remaining - either into tit boxes with holes, or ¾ fronts which could be used by tits or wrens. In addition three need repair and four to be resited.

P.S. Ann & Ian Weekley, with Eric Bryson, carried out the necessary work as part of our January Activity Day

From Wild Flower Report 2010 (Ann Weekley)

Two things were particularly noticeable this year. Firstly, after the very cold winter, the traditional early flowering species came into flower almost a month late. Secondly, however, when they did flower, they were incredibly luxuriant. Presumably this was a result of their later flowering date. Did more daylight hours have a disproportionately beneficial effect on their growth?

This year has seen a splendid flowering of "John's fritillaries" in Bateman Field and orchids have been seen in three separate locations in Hall Field. Greater burnet, lesser celandines and creeping buttercups are gradually colonising the "barren grasslands" especially in Bateman and Gibson Field. So too, unfortunately, is creeping thistle, one of DEFRA's five listed injurious weeds.

We had a successful session uprooting invading hemlock. However we will, almost inevitably, have to repeat our efforts as it is a biennial—fortunately not perennial, but it **is** very poisonous, far more so than ragwort, which has a disproportionately bad name. We also did a very good job on the American dogwood in the "open" area of Hall Field.

AUTUMN ACTIVITY DAYS

September was when we tackled a problem that had been looming for months. As a five-year experiment Hall Field had been allowed to grow without any attention; we expected it to revert to scrub as a precursor, ultimately to full woodland. It did so with a vengeance! - unfortunately brambles were so dominant that all the diversity we hoped for was getting choked out, and we had to try to let it in some light and air. Eight volunteers spent an exhausting morning hacking out a few "oases" and clearing the paths that wind through the bush. Machetes would have been helpful(!), but with the aid of a specialist brush-cutting tool, quite an improvement was made. A dense enough thicket remains to satisfy the many birds that revel in the area's copious food supply.

This is probably going to become an annual task—perhaps we should invest in a flame-thrower!

TEAZEL—GOLDFINCHES' DELIGHT

In **October** there were again 8 volunteers, and we concentrated on removing the scrub hawthorn to the north of the Play Field, the intention being for the Parish Council to include this area in their frequent mowing schedule, thus enlarging the Play Field. Everything was cut as low as possible, and it is hoped that regular mowing will cause the stumps to die.

N.B. Mowing took place the next week. and you really can't see the join!

Having a bit of time to spare, two of our number then cut down the nettles encroaching on the path around the SW corner of Gibson's Field.

By **November**, hedge laying was the name of the game. By having three sessions in a week we completed the long hedge between Bateman and Gibson's Field. On each occasion we fielded 8-10 volunteers, working from about 10am till 12.15pm each time. Richard Jenks started to mow the grass on our final morning, and he offered to burn the hedge brash, which seemed a very good idea. Within a couple of days all had been tidied up and the only evidence was a small ash pile.

BATEMAN FIELD HEDGE

We all enjoyed the activity and are getting quite good at it, but agreed we would enjoy it even more if we had a half-time cuppa. The purchase of a field kettle for tea-mashing is therefore high on our treasurer's "to-do" list.

The **Decembe**r task was to coppice around 12 hazel "stools" in the south west corner of Gibson's Field, and eight people turned up.

We cut the stools as low as possible, and the arisings are to be used in 2 ways:

Suitable straight pieces were cut as stakes for use in due course when hedge laying for the Parish Council at the Burial Ground.

Long thin pieces were put to one side for binding the hedge. They have been left together and will be transported later to the Burial Ground.

As usual, what couldn't be used was pushed under the embankment hedge to rot down.

HAZEL

VOLUNTEER HOURS IN 2010

315

That's over TEN working weeks' worth of maintenance and improvement the park could not otherwise have had.

Please help FMP to reach an even higher figure in 2011.

JANUARY 2011 ACTIVITY DAY

We had a very welcome complement of twelve volunteers to celebrate the New Year by coming to do a variety of jobs.

On the positive side, 3 of us carried out the annual maintenance work on the nest boxes, ready for this season's occupancy.

Less positive was that we had to repair a path in Gibson's Field where a miniature BMX circuit had been created by some of our younger park users. We flattened the hillocks and holes that had caused at least one fall we knew of and trimmed some branches that had been damaged round about.

The park is for everyone but we must be responsible about how we use it. PLEASE, no unauthorised initiatives.