NEWSLETTER No. 2

Friends of Meadow Park

AUTUMN 2002

Photograph by Mollie Jacques

As the MANOR FARM MEADOW ENTRANCE is the principal way in and out of Meadow Park, we are hoping its present undistinguished appearance will be transformed over the next few months.

Many of you will know that we failed in our bid to *Awards for All* for funding towards a Jubilee Archway, so the tatty, overgrown triangle will not be getting the comprehensive treatment we had been hoping for, at least not as a seamless project to provide both an archway and a feature for the central space.

The Committee, in conjunction with the Parish Council, has yet to decide whether to re-apply in the same terms, or to modify the scheme, but meanwhile "Phase I" can go ahead, and will be in time to be eligible for Rushcliffe Borough Council's Jubilee grant of £500, and "match funding" of £500 from the Parish Council.

As reported in the last Newsletter, Sharon Scaniglia, the Borough Council's community arts officer, is willing to organise a project to develop the overgrown area shown in the main picture. With the Jubilee grant, the funds remaining from the East Leake Roundels project and an additional sum from her own budget, she is now able to proceed, and has already invited a number of local artists to apply for the commission – **to create a piece of work which will incorporate the old millstone and make a pleasing and relevant impact at the entrance to the Park.**

Short-listing will take place very soon, and on 14th November the selected artists (up to three) will be invited to spend a few hours in East Leake familiarising themselves with the place and meeting members of FMP and other invited groups who will have the chance to say how they would like the space to look. All members of FMP will be welcome at the Parish Office between 5pm and 7pm, and you may catch one or other of the artists out and about in the village any time from 3pm.

Detailed designs and/or models will be on display in the Parish Office throughout January next, so members of the public can vote for their choice.

The winner will be announced in early February, and we hope the work will be completed by the end of April.

P.S. The southern end of Kingfisher Walk suffers badly from nettles, as we all know (some of us the hard way!). We are indebted to Dennis Fox, our local Parish Footpaths Co-ordinator, who has more than once taken his strimmer to them. We hope for a more rigorous maintenance regime in future, which will keep nettles and other rampant weeds in check (see page 2).

A.G.M.

Nobody likes them

Everybody has to have them

PLEASE support

the FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK

by coming along on

Wednesday 27th November

DETAILS ON BACK PAGE

Photograph by Mollie Jacques

VISITORS to Meadow Park in about 300 years' time may see something like the tree on the left. The Parish Council recently negotiated an equipment exchange with the internationally known MicroPropagation of East Leake – a PC for a tree! – the upshot of which is that the village is to have its very own **Major Oak**. A clone of the famous old tree will shortly be planted in Meadow Park, in Oak Meadow (where else?)

"FRIENDS" often express their frustration when what seem glaringly necessary things in the development or care of the park take ages to happen or don't get done at all. Unfortunately, we have to accept that in practice FMP has only a tiny voice, being peripheral to the relationship between the statutory authorities of Rushcliffe Borough Council, and East Leake Parish Council.

When the 11 hectares of farmland which became Meadow Park were given to RBC by the Kirk family as part of their transaction with the developers of the new housing estate, the gift was accompanied by a large sum of money for the exclusive benefit of the people of East Leake. This paid for the earliest work done in the park, and the assumption was that it would continue to fund both upkeep and development. However, RBC then took the decision to use the entire balance as a contribution to the new swimming pool due to open next year. This did not seem unreasonable; a pool had long been top of the village wish list.

The effect for Meadow Park, sadly, was that it became just one among all the rest of the Borough's responsibilities, competing for its share of the overall leisure budget. RBC liaises with the Parish Council, and can also take FMP's views into account, but decisions involving expenditure are taken in West Bridgford. The mowing schedule that was devised after consultation between the Borough Leisure Services Department and both the Parish Council and FMP seemed to be a model of good practice, allowing for varying frequency of cutting in the different fields, with close-cropped 1½ metre strips alongside all pathways.

It hasn't turned out like that and all users of the park are concerned by its poor state this year …. Anxieties about the security of the vehicular entrances have been conveyed to RBC a number of times….. Neighbouring residents are not happy about invasive weeds ……

Rushcliffe Director of Leisure Services, Brian Knowles, is coming for a site visit and walkabout in early November, when members of the Parish Council and representatives of FMP will seek to address these issues with him. The Borough Council already provides dogbins (both installation and emptying) and also helped towards the cost of the benches. It might encourage the "Mars Bar and curry brigade" to be tidier if we had litterbins alongside the benches, so we shall ask Mr Knowles if he will provide some.

The Parish Council has no financial responsibility for the park, but can make a contribution for the general good. The Jubilee grant mentioned earlier is a case in point, as is the siting of the infant Major Oak, while this autumn the park will be included in the parish bulb-planting scheme.

When it comes to finance, however, both borough and parish councils are bound by statutory duties and restrictions. Voluntary groups like FMP have no such restriction, provided they act within their own constitutions. We have access to various funding bodies, like the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (and, oddly, RBC's own community initiative budget), and can undertake some projects the Borough would never prioritise. What we can't do are the cost-heavy routine maintenance jobs, which cause the grief we are all too aware of.

Sadly, there are some people with a nasty urge to spoil things. In particular, the benches on Kingfisher Walk have been defaced a number of times with graffiti, which Ian Weekley, Kevin Shaw and others, have spent hours cleaning and over-painting.

A message to the few from the many:

PLEASE respect the environment

BIRD COUNT

You may recall that one Saturday in April, visiting ornithologist, David Sales, with Ian & Ann Weekley, got up with the lark, in a manner of speaking, to count birds. The following table is condensed from the record David kept of sightings between 6.15am and 8.05am. We would like to arrange more such fact-finding trips, so we can put together a Meadow Park data base of both flora and fauna. Would you help?

	Stone-bridge Field	Lagoon Field	Play Field	Hall's Field	Oak Meadow	Bate-man Field	Gib-son's Field	TOTAL
Moorhen	1			1				2
Wood pigeon	1	1	1	1	3	2	3	12
Collared dove	2							2
Wren				1	3		1	5
Dunnock				1				1
Robin	1			3	3			7
Blackbird	3	4	1	3	7	3	9	30
Song thrush	1							1
Mistle thrush	1							1
Blue tit				1	2	1	2	6
Great tit				3			2	5
Magpie		1			1		1	3
Carrion crow				2				2
Starling	2	2		26	6		2	38
House sparrow				1	1			2
Chaffinch				2			2	4
Green finch	3				3	2		8
Gold finch		2	2			1		5
Linnet				4				4
Yellow hammer	1							1
						GRAND TOTAL		**142**

Weather: Sunny intervals, one shower, cool.

Later in the day 2 Mallard & 1 Kingfisher were seen in Stonebridge Field.

Flew over: 1 Jackdaw, 1 Sparrow Hawk

FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK

Notice is hereby given that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held on WEDNESDAY 27th NOVEMBER, 2002 at the PARISH COUNCIL OFFICE, 45 Main Street, East Leake, commencing at 7.30pm.

All members are cordially invited to attend

AGENDA

1 Apologies for absence
2 Chairman's report
3 Secretary's Report
4 Treasurer's Report & adoption of the Accounts for the year ended 31/10/2002
5 Election of Officers for 2002/3:
- Chairman
- Secretary
- Treasurer

7 Election of ordinary members of the Executive Committee
8 Open forum to discuss future plans for the development of Meadow Park and other projects that the "Friends" would wish to be involved in
9 Any other business

PLEASE ATTEND AND BRING THIS AGENDA WITH YOU

TIMBER!!

Is there anybody out there who has just felled, or is just about to fell, a large tree?

If FMP could get hold of some substantial pieces of wood, we could turn them into simple benches for the western area of the park, or make extra litter bins.

Practical help and guidance is available, so we wouldn't need volunteers with mega woodworking skills, just enthusiasm and a willingness to have a go.

If you know of a source of timber, please tell Kevin Shaw, Secretary, at the Parish Office (tel: 852217)

Remember the famous midsummer Ragwort Pull?

25 Friends came on at least one of the three sessions held during late June, putting in a total of about 80 man-hours, and we built a mountain of well-filled black bags. Although we made a visible difference in a couple of fields, a total clearance was way beyond us.

The park is not grazed, so there is no legal requirement to deal with ragwort, and we know when we're beaten!

So, we probably shan't be repeating the exercise next year, but thanks for coming, anyway.

And finally .....

whatever our gripes about felt-tip artists, or failed funding applications, or why we can't have our fields mown the way we want, or whether litter-bins are more urgent than dog-bins ....

Meadow Park on a summer's evening, with the mist rising, is definitely a place to be enjoyed.

Photograph by Clive Billson

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