NEWSLETTER

Friends of Meadow Park

AUTUMN & WINTER

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Rushcliffe Community Awards 2011

This certificate is awarded in recognition of the commitment shown

by Friends of Meadow Park

to Protecting and Enhancing our Environment

Presented by the Rushcliffe Community Partnership on 10 November 2011.

We were very gratified to be nominated by East Leake Parish Council for this award. 2011 was particularly busy, and it is good to have our efforts recognised.

Once the long-awaited notice board (twin to the one near the sculpture) is installed at the Bateman Road entrance to the park, the remarkably generous grant we received from the County Council last year will have been used up. The other board we're waiting for at that entrance is a replacement for the information board which suffered too close an encounter with a tractor during mowing.

Thanks to the 115 hours of effort that volunteers spent watering the new arboretum during last summer's drought, we have only lost two trees, which we hope will be replaced within the next few weeks. Permanent labels are presently on order, so it will soon be easier to identify just what species we have.

The main cross-park route which was properly surfaced last summer proved its worth in recent wet weather by remaining comfortably walkable, quite a new experience for regular park users!

The picnic bench/tables now installed in Play Field and Bateman Field are made of the most robust materials available, and should give good service for years to come. The Parish Council will soon install one waste-bin and re-site another in convenient spots nearby. On the subject of bins — sad to say, we continue to find them damaged or missing (two had to be fished out of the brook recently). As well as being a nuisance and an expensive business, it is also criminal, so if you have any information at all about it, please tell the Parish Clerk or the police.

Wheelchair friendly picnic bench

SO - WHERE **DO** WE GO FROM HERE?

It would have been exciting to follow the County Council funded improvements with the "Trim Track" (exercise trail) project we reported on last year. Unfortunately, you may recall, in spite of one large offer to part-fund, we failed to find the match offer we needed. There are a few projects within the Management Plan that we could pick up on, like creating a willow sculpture, or conducting more up-to-date wildlife surveys, which you may well be invited to help with in due course. But if we felt there was enthusiasm out there for the "Healthy Option", quite topical when so much emphasis is put on fitness these days, we might try again to find the finance for the Trim Track; it was a good bid, well-researched and costed. Please show your support by visiting www.east-leake.co.uk, (Amenities) and leaving a message on the Friends' Open Forum.

386

Volunteer hours were worked

in 2011, more than ever before.

(And that's not counting all the extra time people give without recording it)

WALKS ON THE WILD SIDE

Last year's programme of walks in the park with an expert, looking at our birds, trees and flowers, was reckoned a success by those who came along.

SO WE'RE HAVING SOME MORE!

Sunday 6 May (birds)

Saturday 12 May (flowers)

Saturday 19 May (trees)

(probably one on butterflies, too)

These are subject to change. Look out for details on noticeboards and on the East Leake Community Website

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, NOVEMBER, 2011

Abridged Reports

CHAIRMAN (ALAN BARLOW)

I find myself feeling really upbeat about the state of our 'friends' group'. We have demonstrated that we can work in harmony with our Parish Council. We put in nearly 400 hours of manual work between us over the past year, and in November received an award from Rushcliffe Borough Council for making an outstanding contribution to our community (nominated by the Parish Council).

A couple of years ago we successfully applied for a large grant from the Local Improvement Scheme administered by Nottingham County Council. Many of the changes you see are the result—the arboretum, a main pathway much improved, notice board, two excellent picnic benches.

We are optimistic about our future, and are already planning:

We will continue to nurture our new arboretum, which will gradually mature over our lifetimes.

In 2011 Wildlife Walks were re-introduced and these will be continued through 2012. These covered birds, trees and flowers, and our enthusiastic lepidopterist may add butterflies next year.

Also high on our agenda is the establishment of wildflower meadows Seed was sown last year and we will revisit the project again.

Hedgerow management will be continuing through the winter.

Morale in our team is strong, but we are always looking to increase our expertise, so I am delighted to welcome some new members who bring specialised knowledge to our group. We will make good use of that knowledge as we debate the best way forward. My only disappointment is that the heaviest users of the park, namely dog owners, are under-represented on our work parties. They obviously enjoy the park, so why not offer a couple of hours during the year to see what we get up to?

Finally I wish to thank Trevor, our secretary, Conrad, our treasurer and all the committee for their work this year.

SECRETARY (TREVOR JONES)

Finalisation of the Meadow Park Management Plan, first drafted in 2004, occupied much of my year.

Rushcliffe Borough Council included 49 prescriptions (precise instructions) on maintenance and development; when a subcommittee of Peter Bloxham, Andy Denker and myself scrutinised it we found that just 30 applied to Friends of Meadow Park. Once sorted out they formed the basis of the Activities Plan and Activities Report.

We knew that RBC had not carried out all of its prescriptions during the years to 2009 (when it handed over management to the Parish Council), but among unexpected findings was that the list of plant species we could introduce included some not native to Notts and the traditional Midland type of grassland that we are working towards. The map that was being worked to was inaccurate and out of date – thanks to Andrew Sandford, that has now been put right.

The Plan is long term and there has to be flexibility, but it is felt that each prescription should be adhered to unless there is a defined reason not to, while It is also accepted that situations arise for which there are no prescriptions.

Prescription 2b ii) "Produce a list of educational projects and circulate to local educational establishments and groups" has not been acted on. That's something we should address, if we are to attract the next generation of Members. Bonding with Nature can occur at a young age.

I should like to thank fellow Committee Members for bearing with me, when I (frequently!) raised the matter of the unfinalised Management Plan and the need for an accurate map. Debbie, the consultant secretary, must be thanked for her guidance and support. Lastly, thanks to our Chairman, Alan, for judicious impartiality and never failing to get through Meetings in two hours.

TREASURER (CONRAD OATEY)

2010/11 was another positive year financially. Membership income rose by about £76 and donations by about £64. Sales were comparable to last year, but fundraising was about £25 lower. Two Rushcliffe Conservation grants were received during the year to fund tools and seeds. Overall, income was lower than in 2009/10, because fewer grants were requested.

Expenditure was about £100 higher than last year. Savings of nearly £200 were made through not needing to purchase insurance (volunteers now covered under the Parish Council's scheme). Project expenditure was around £100 lower than in 2009/10, but cost of sale materials was substantially higher (for calendars, many still unsold as yet). It should be noted that costs associated with the Arboretum etc were met by the County Council and do not appear in these accounts.

The surplus for the year of £320.25, added to the opening funds, results in a very healthy balance of £1,644.97 being carried forward to help fund the coming year's activities

ELECTIONS

Conrad Oatey (Treasurer) and Peter Bloxham resigned from the committee and were thanked for their several years' input of time and expertise.

The Committee for 2012 will be: Chairman: Alan Barlow
Secretary: Trevor Jones
Treasurer: Andy Denker

Committee : John Adcock, Neil Hunter, Mollie Jacques, Andrew Sandford, Kevin Shaw, Marie Males, Deb Slade, Lorna Pilbin, Kevin Gibbons.

ELPC Representative: Richard Jenks

RBC Representative: Paul Phillips.

How to contact
THE FRIENDS OF MEADOW PARK
c/o The Parish Office,
45 Main Street, East Leake, LE12 6PF
tel: 852217 (weekday mornings)
email: meadowpark@eastleake.net
Find out more on the Community website
www.east-leake.co.uk (Amenities)

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

2010		2011		Notes
	Receipts			
£380.00	Member Subscriptions	£456.00		
£13.78	Other Donations	£78.00		
£444.63	Grants	£233.12		1
£256.50	Sale of Notelets / Photos / Calendars	£262.00		
£135.00	Fundraising	£110.80		2
£0.00	Other	£0.00		
£1,229.91			£1,139.92	
	Payments			
£35.00	Subscription - BTCV	£0.00		3
£155.63	Insurance	£0.00		3
£7.50	Costs of sale materials	£397.10		4
£518.13	Projects	£421.65		5
£0.00	Other	£0.92		
£716.26			£819.67	
£513.65	**Excess of Receipts over Payments**		**£320.25**	
	BANK RECONCILIATION			
£811.07	Opening Balance - Bank	£1,324.72		
£0.00	Opening Balance - Cash	£0.00		
£1,229.91	add Total Receipts	£1,139.92		
£2,040.98		£2,464.64		
£716.26	less Total Payments	£819.67		
£1,324.72	Balance Carried Forward	£1,644.97		

Notes

1 Grants for seeds & tools

2 Carnival Stall—games & plants

3 Covered by Parish Council Insurance

4 Mostly cost of calendars

5 Tools (£139.72, grant

Ann Weekley's WILD FLOWER REPORT 2011 (abridged)

Great burnet

An interesting year!

On January 1st the subsoil was frozen, and night-time temperatures were 5 degrees below freezing for the first eleven days of the month. Nothing was in bloom, though the old 'toughie' white dead -nettle had a bud showing colour. By February however, it was flowering in many places in the Park and snowdrops were also putting on a good show. Then the weather turned much warmer, but it forgot to rain!

By March, 11 species were flowering. Most widespread were the lesser celandines, glossy yellow flowers spreading into the rye grass and winning! In April, the flowers (22 species) were very luxuriant. In particular, Hall Field had a stunning patch of germander speedwell and another of field forget-me-not. In May the trend continued (38 species) with several species making inroads into the grassy areas, the most spectacular being great burnet, a plant described on the Notts Wildlife Trust website as being rare in the county. Ground ivy, cut-leaved cranesbill and creeping buttercup were all winning the 'grass battle'. Needless to say so were the docks, thistles and nettles, also hogweed and hemlock!

The great excitement in May was the discovery, initially in Little Meadow and subsequently in Stonebridge Field, of yellow rattle. Not only a new species, but being semi-parasitic on grass, which it weakens, it gives other species a chance of competing. Its seeds are notoriously difficult to germinate but we managed that as well!

By June the lack of rain had left the Sheepwash Brook dry, and a lot of under-sized flowers with a much shorter than average flowering period. Of the 51 species recorded, only docks, thistles, ragwort, white clover and rosebay willowherb bucked the trend.

The same was true in July. The species total was 59 but many were solitary specimens, and In August (40 species), it was a similar story. The healthiest looking plants, chiefly mallow, red and white campion and ox-eye daisy, were in the newly sown patches in the arboretum.

Flowers in September (35) and most of October (24) repeated the pattern of small specimens which were difficult to find. So far in November I've seen 12 species. They look a little happier than those in October.

It is difficult to know which species have been lost or gained, partly because it's impossible to cover every square yard of the Park every month and partly problems with identification.

I fear we may have lost the orchids in Hall Field, and I also thought we had lost the ragged robin, which I failed to find, but John's piece in the East Leake Times says it is still with us.

As for identification, some species are a nightmare! I quote from my trusty flower book, " Hawkweeds - an exceptionally variable and difficult group, with some hundreds of micro species" We have some of them but who knows how many? Certainly not me! The white umbellifers aren't much better.

But give or take the odd omission or misidentification I have recorded 93 species this year.

AUTUMN ACTIVITIES

September

The task for our 10 volunteers was to clear a 3 metre wide route into Hall Field in readiness for mechanical flailing later in the year.

We cleared a dog-leg path from the NW corner of the wide perimeter path, linking up two or three fairly open areas of scrub on the way. In the process, a lot of hawthorn and dog rose was cut down, and as usual the arisings were inconspicuously piled beneath dense undergrowth. The southernmost glade was widened to give the farmer easy access with his tractor.

We also collected a load of litter from a hidden den.

October

With just six volunteers this time, we coppiced a length of the plantation on the southern edge of Oak Meadow. This was planted by Rushcliffe Borough Council in the early 1990s when the park was first taken on, as a stop-gap measure without a detailed plan, and the growth over getting on for two decades had produced a dark, dense "tunnel" with little chance for ground-hugging plants to thrive.

Coppicing in full swing

The result proved surprisingly controversial, with a number of Friends considering that we had gone too far. One thing is sure, however, and that is that all those sawn-off stumps will regenerate, and in the meantime the bluebells we lovingly planted among the trees will enjoy the sort of dappled shade they thrive on.

Coppicing is a traditional technique in woodland management, and demonstrates perfectly the cyclical nature of conservation work. And it has a useful by-product, yielding a supply of stakes for the hedge-layers.

November

Eleven volunteers prepared the next stretch of hedgerow for laying in December. The boundary between Lagoon Field and Little Meadow was particularly straggly and unkempt; the scrub took a lot of clearing, so the northern side had to be left, but we cleared the whole of the south.

1

2

Once cleared, there was an exposed south-facing band of earth a metre or so wide, which cried out to be used for sowing with wild flower seed, An order was placed!

Little Meadow is already home to hay rattle (1) & meadow cranes-bill (2), and is one of our best wild flower areas.

December

It was a fairly lengthy session, starting with 7 volunteers, and ending with just three. We managed to lay about two thirds of the hedge, using 36 stakes, which with a less uneven subject would be a way of measuring what we had done. As it was, the hedge was so thin in places that we had to bend into it stems from behind the hedge line, which has led to some interesting curves along the way!

New hedge in Little Meadow

As it was a chilly morning, a cup of coffee courtesy of our "Kelly kettle", a recent purchase, was very welcome.

P.S. We completed the hedge for our January task.

Ian Weekley's NEST BOX REVIEW

(Abridged)

Bluetit

We began 2011 with 14 tit boxes and 5 open-fronted ones.

Ten of the tit boxes were used and it was not obvious why the other 4 were not, since they had been in earlier years. Reassuringly, all 4 of the boxes re-sited last year were used.

Of the open-fronted ones, the ¼ front had been smashed to pieces, the two ½ fronts were again not used, but both ¾ ones were - though quite possibly by tits rather than anything more exotic.

So of 18 eventually available two-thirds were used. It's not possible to tell how many broods successfully fledged, though there were addled eggs in two and a dead nestling in a third. The eggs of many of these small birds are not particularly distinctive and can vary anyway; one nest of 4 addled eggs had no two exactly alike.

We removed the vandalised box and one of the unsuccessful open fronts, repaired and re-sited them. Further work this winter should not be necessary.