NEWSLETTER

No. 24

Friends of Meadow Park

SPRING & SUMMER 2013

TWO IN A ROW!

Winning a Green Flag Award in 2012 was the reward for a lot of hard work over several years, but it also presented a challenge - how to maintain the park's reputation as a well-managed public place that the people of East Leake can enjoy at various levels.

Through the combined efforts of the Parish Council (mostly in the person of groundsman Steve Marriott) and the Friends of Meadow Park (including many who are not formally signed-up members, but who still do their bit to keep the place tidy), we were able to persuade this year's assessor that the park is worthy of a flag for 2013, too - hence all the smiling faces in the picture - and the new flag will replace the one we've all quite liked seeing outside the parish office.

From left: John Thurman (PC), Carys Thomas (PC), Trevor Jones (FMP), Alan Barlow (FMP), Lesley Bancroft (Parish Clerk), Mollie Jacques (FMP), Andy Denker (FMP)

Unfortunately, not all park users treat the place with respect. We regularly have to clear away often offensive litter from round picnic tables, especially in Gibsons Field; we understand another waste-bin should be installed there soon, which will give the culprits even less excuse for leaving such a mess. "Dens" aren't always harmless fun, and wanton damage to fences and benches, and to trees and the stream, is criminal behaviour, which should be reported. If you have any information at all that might help identify those responsible, the police would like to know - they are quite willing to take action under "Anti-Social Behaviour" legislation.

THANKYOU

During the year, we received £500 each from Arch Communications, East Leake Parish Council, Rushcliffe Borough Council and East Leake Town Lands Trust, which enabled us to

- make good the damage done to the new footpaths by last November's flood.
- upgrade another few hundred metres of paths - most of the park is now accessible to most users.
- lay a drain and sump at the SW corner of the Play Field, where the path was habitually muddy.

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 our Secretary:
meadowpark@eastleake.net

AUTUMN ACTIVITY DAYS

Saturday September 7

Cutting back Dogwood and Brambles, mainly in Hall Field

Saturday October 12

Bird Box maintenance & manufacture

9 November and 14 December:
to be confirmed, probably hedge-laying

PLEASE JOIN US WHENEVER YOU CAN

Meet at the depot behind the Parish Office at 9.50am, to collect tools and discuss the morning's work.

From time to time, unscheduled jobs crop up, and we get small work parties together during the week. If you would occasionally be free and willing to join in at short notice, please let our Secretary have your phone number.

NOW THAT
THE ARBORETUM IS
BEGINNING TO DEVELOP,
WE INVITE YOU TO BECOME A
"TREE SPONSOR"

FOR £10, WE WILL ENTER YOUR NAME AND ANY DEDICATION IN A SPECIAL BOOK.

YOUR CONTRIBUTION WILL HELP TOWARDS THE LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE OF THE ARBORETUM

To find out how to become a sponsor, email our Secretary at meadowpark@eastleake.net

OUR BUTTERFLIES

Kevin Gibbons wrote one day towards the end of July:

"The arboretum area today was alive with meadow browns, gatekeepers, ringlet, small skippers and the occasional small copper. Small tortoiseshells are just starting to show up, as are peacocks. ....

*In this small area ("Bee world") I saw 2 brown argus butterflies (1) mating This is a relatively new species for the park and it is clearly doing well here...very exciting. I also saw common blues, small coppers and (if confirmed) an extremely rare sighting of a chalkhill blue (2). I'm still awaiting expert opinion on this.**

All told, 21 species have been seen.....and if my sighting today is confirmed we are up to 22! "

*Kevin later received confirmation that what he had seen was indeed a chalkhill blue, which has not been seen in Nottinghamshire for years

WILDFLOWERS IN THE PARK

1 Lady's Bedstraw
2 Bladder Campion
3 Bristly Ox-tongue
4 Perennial Flax

You may recall that in 2012 Ann Weekley's running total of flowers identified in the park since 2006 was 123 (126 actually, on a recount!). She has just sent in this year's figure: it is now an amazing 132. One of the newcomers is the very attractive Perennial Flax; come the winter, the birds will love its rich, oily seeds.

2012's star find, Meadow Saxifrage, has sadly not reappeared this year, but Lady's Bedstraw, first seen in Bateman Field last year, has survived. Increased populations of Hay Rattle, Great Burnet and Bristly Ox-tongue (what a name!) among others have all been noted. The conclusion must be that overall, our wildflowers are doing well.

The two specially prepared seed beds have made good progress. In spite of losing quite a lot of ungerminated seed to the November floods, the Oak Meadow patch set in 2012 has produced a reasonable variety of flowers, such as Bladder Campion, and a sprinkling of red Poppies.

The second site, in Bateman Field, was created as part of the Friends of the Earth's "Bee-Cause" campaign, and has grown into a really rich floral area that is usually swarming with bees and other insects. At first, Cornflower predominated, but other species have appeared, in particular Birdsfoot Trefoil, which is the common blue butterfly's preferred food.

The placard leaves no room for doubt!

"ACTIVITY DAYS"

JANUARY

12 volunteers finished laying the hedge on the north side of Little Meadow.

This was a long and difficult stretch, which took more than two work sessions to complete, so it was not surprising that it generated a good deal of waste material. Some was added to the hibernaculum in the NW corner of Little Meadow, and the scrappier brash was piled in readiness for the Parish Council's hired shredder.

FEBRUARY

There were nine volunteers on hand, and they

- dug a slit trench in SW corner of the Play Field in readiness for laying a drain to take excess water from an area that is notoriously muddy
- reviewed all the bird boxes and assessed work which will be carried out in the Autumn when this season's broods are long gone.
- assessed any minor tree surgery needed in "Electric Avenue"

MARCH

We had 10 volunteers, including two new members, very welcome! The tasks were to

- dig out and prepare a seed bed in Bateman Field for bee-attractive wildflowers as part of a Friends of the Earth campaign.
- give the shrub border its first pruning of the year

- clear a blockage in Sheepwash Brook (where logs and debris had been thrown).

APRIL

We had 12 volunteers, who got busy

- sowing "Bee World" seed in the prepared bed in Bateman Field
- repairing the hedge where stake poles had been removed
- demolishing the illicit den that the poles had been used for, and clearing a lot of associated rubbish including broken glass.
- intensively picking litter in various black spots. The haul from the brook included a picnic chair and a motor-cycle wheel.

MAY

There were just six volunteers, and they spent the morning mostly in the water. The entire session was devoted to cleaning up assorted mess, either careless or malicious:

- garbage from both brooks
- a dam near the railway arch, apparently built with wood from the railway fence
- compacted litter under and round the picnic benches

JUNE

5 members, 3 tasks:

- cutting back American Dogwood in Hall Field, near the embankment and also on the margins where there were many saplings

- clearing the brook—again
- raking offensive litter from under Gibson's Field picnic bench

JULY

We had 12 volunteers, who again had to spend most of their time clearing mess, including dismantling a new den in Bateman Field.

They also cut back overgrowth which can obstruct some of our narrower paths, notably in Gibsons and Bateman Fields.

2013 Total volunteer hours so far - 138

EXTRA WORK SESSIONS

Friends' volunteers contributed a further 61 hours of unscheduled work in the first seven months of the year:

Coppicing willows in the osier bed in Gibsons Field

Laying the land drain in Play Field

Repairing the land drain

Trimming and adjusting straps in the arboretum

Mapping the arboretum

Surveying path works with contractor

Pulling ragwort

"HAVE YOUR SAY" CORNER

Trevor Jones writes:

"The aim of Friends of Meadow Park is to preserve the character of the site as a South Nottinghamshire Meadow...." appears on the notice at entrances.

The character included the enclosing neat annually trimmed hedges. Hedging and ditching was a major portion of farm work prior to mechanisation.

The photo is of the NW corner of Little Meadow taken in April of this year. The recently laid northern boundary hedge is on the right, merging into the as yet unlaid part. Another unlaid hedge forms the background. Much of the foreground is occupied by a margin, 22ft/6.7m wide in parts, recently cleared of weeds and scrub. A few strong saplings remain (left of centre).

The plan was and is for the desire line around Little Meadow to be mown 9 times a year, as is Hall Field, Gibson's Field and Oak Meadow (Meadow Park Management Plan, Appendix 1.4). Perhaps there has been no clear desire line on this boundary of Little Meadow for years, but a narrower margin could have been left when hay/silage crops were taken.

Should not strategy akin to traditional practice with regard to the hedges have been adopted by Rushcliffe Borough Council at the outset in 2000? Some hedge trimming strategies are acceptable to conservationists. Hedge laying would have been best carried out when stems had reached a diameter of about 2-4 inches at base. A considerable portion of FMP's very limited and unmechanised labour resources subsequently expended on this and other field boundaries (tree hedge laying; removal, transport and shredding of trunks and branches; cultivation of margins and sowing of wild flower seeds) could have then been directed at other pressing tasks.

RBC would have known at the outset that FMP's meagre voluntary resources would be inadequate for keeping the hedges under control. It is not clear what RBC's plan and budget for the hedges was in 2000 or the subsequent early years of Meadow Park's existence.

Editor's note:

These are Trevor's own views. Contribute **yours** via the Open Forum in the Meadow Park pages of the Village Website. Better still, attend the AGM 20 November in the parish office, when there will be an opportunity to have your say.

GUIDED WALKS in 2013

We had an excellent attendance in May, when Robert Hoare led a party of 28 looking at and listening to our birds. We were grateful to Robert, who stepped in at relatively short notice when our regular expert had to pull out.

Dennis Fox with the "Tree Walkers"

In June, only seven came along to Dennis Fox's walk looking at trees, which was a great shame, as it was a fascinating morning. We spent a lot of time in the arboretum, and were encouraged to see that for the most part the young trees are developing well. But there was also a wide variety of other woodland to enjoy, from the newly extended osier bed in Bateman Field to our lovely old ash trees (which have quite a complicated sex life, it seems!)

The third walk was a combined wildflower and butterfly expedition, led by Ann Weekley and Kevin Gibbons. About fifteen people came along - there would have been more if we hadn't clashed with the Wimbledon Ladies Singles Final! - and they were well rewarded. They saw many flowers in their midsummer glory (fortunate timing, because just a few days later the farmer came to cut the hay and the flowers were lost) and there were a lot of butterflies revelling in the hot sunshine.

Kevin Gibbons' flock are actually looking at a shoal of fish in Kingston Brook!