NEWSLETTER No. 28

SPRING & SUMMER 2015

WE'RE DEFINITELY GETTING SOMETHING RIGHT!

For the fourth year in a row, an assessor from the Keep Britain Tidy awards scheme decided that the Friends of Meadow Park deserve a "Community" Green Flag. The long list of boxes he had to tick included accessibility, biodiversity, sustainability, safety, education, litter management, information and, especially, the active involvement of local people.

The Parish Council kindly fly the flag on our behalf, which is wholly appropriate, because without the maintenance work carried out by the parish groundsmen the park would be in a sorry state, and the Friends' efforts would literally be lost in the jungle.

This year, we were invited to apply for an extra award. In response to the serious decline in the bee population nationwide, Defra has adopted a "Pollinator Strategy", one strand of which seeks to identify those parks or green spaces where a real effort has been made to attract bees:

"…..this award is looking to increase awareness and contribute to improved pollinator -friendly environments. Applicant sites were required to prove that they are making positive changes to their green spaces that encourage and increase pollinator-friendly habitats and food sources throughout the year."

All 1,582 Green Flag winners were eligible for this, from which 12 local authorities or large institutions and just 4 voluntary groups, including FMP, were awarded the additional "Bees Needs" certificate. It is gratifying to be one of such a select few, and proves the environmental worth of what we have been doing.

Projects like the 3 Bee Worlds (with another to come in 2016) and the Oak Meadow wildflower "ribbon" are obvious, but almost all our activities, from hedge-laying, to sowing yellow rattle in the meadows, to building hibernacula, are aimed at improving the range and quality of the park's wildlife habitats.

Like

East-Leake-Friends of Meadow Park

facebook

Have you found us on Facebook yet?

Look for:

www.facebook.com/east-leake-friends-of-meadow-park

Join in the conversations, send us your ideas and your pictures.

Above all, please "Like" the FMP page and the posts.

We have reached 172 page likes (from a start date in March this year) - we'd like 200 by the end of 2015, so please ask all your friends to like us, too.

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

Website:
www.east-leake.co.uk/friendsofmeadowpark.html

GUIDED WALKS

We put on two guided walks again this year.

1) BIRD WALK. In May, when most summer migrants had arrived, and nesting was in full swing, Ian Morrissey led a group of enthusiasts around the park. He sent us this:

Willow Warbler & Lesser Whitethroat

<u>Breeding Bird Survey</u>

The breeding bird survey was undertaken between 07:00 and 08:30 on the 2nd May with recorders Ian Morrissey, Ann Weekley, Matt Coward and Eric Bryson.

A total of 24 species were recorded along the 4 transect sections.

Summer migrant species such as blackcap, chiffchaff, whitethroat and willow warbler could be heard singing throughout Meadow Park. Hall Field was notable in that it supported 2 of three singing male willow warblers recorded at survey.

Lesser whitethroat was the highlight of the day heard calling just down-stream of Kingfisher Bridge. This species was confirmed visually by Matt during the guided bird walk held later in the day.

<u>Bird walk</u>

This was a well-attended event during which the majority of species recorded at the earlier bird survey were located and observed.

Many thanks to Matt Coward and his ability to quickly locate the species from their song, allowing Ian M to point out visual identification features in the field. Some of the attendees were fortunate enough to get a quick sighting of the lesser whitethroat and a kingfisher (just as we were bringing the guide walk to an end).

It might be possible to undertake another walk later in the year, when very different species will be present, including the winter thrushes, which should start arriving in September.

2) WILDFLOWER & BUTTERFLY WALK. Towards the end of June, it was the turn of Ann Weekley & Kevin Gibbons to lead a walk. Sadly, very few of people attended, although it was a warm, sunny day, ideal for the object of the exercise. It was slightly early in the season and Spring had been indifferent to say the least, but there were plenty of flowers in bloom, especially in the areas that we have sowed over the years, and they were being visited by several species of butterfly, bees and other insects.

Meadow Cranesbill & Ox-eye Dai-

Birdsfoot Trefoil

Meadow Brown (46 were seen!)

Red Admiral (just 2 of these)

THE ARBORETUM

In spite of 2015's distinct lack of warmth, the trees have put on quite a lot of growth this year, and with increasing maturity, identification is becoming easier.

The promised QR tags were installed a few months ago, so now smartphone users have instant access to information about each tree (Andrew Sandford, who did the work, chose to link to Wikipedia because most people are familiar with it, and for something as uncontentious as a tree it is reliable enough).

Since it was planted in 2010-11, the arboretum has mostly escaped the attentions of local "unFriends", but recently a couple of trees were damaged. The ring-fenced fund from the Sponsorship Scheme stands at nearly £600 now, but we didn't really want to use it for repairs of this sort.

As ever, many thanks to those of you who have signed the Arboretum Book. More names would be very welcome (enquire at the Parish Office).

"ACTIVITY DAYS"

JANUARY
In awful weather, four people managed to lay a stretch of hedge in Hall Field.

Hedge in Hall Field, laid in 2014. Today's crew did more of the same, but in the wind & rain

FEBRUARY
10 volunteers worked in Hall Field, and:

- Created a scallop in the northern boundary path to open up a piece of grassland.
- Cut back a large amount of hawthorn and dog-wood in the NW corner.

MARCH
There were 11 of us today, working in two parties.

- We dug an extension to last summer's successful "Bee World" in Bateman Field. The cut turfs were used to build a hibernaculum close up by the hedge, to provide shelter for hedgehogs, frogs, etc.

Digging out the New Bee World

- A second crew took loppers to the south facing boundary of copses in Gibson's and Bateman Fields.

APRIL
Eight volunteers had a busy morning preparing beds and sowing wildflower seeds donated through "Grow Wild" a Lottery-funded scheme run by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

MAY
Seven volunteers
• cut back overhanging new growth over walkways and new hawthorn growth in Play Field
• checked tree supports in the arboretum
• planted some plugs (mostly Birdsfoot trefoil) in wildflower areas and sowed Ox-eye daisy seeds
• removed mesh matting stolen from railway - you just never know **what** you'll find in the park!

JUNE
The weather was appalling, so hats off to the three people who came along for a session of trimming back the overhangs which can almost block some of our narrower paths at this time of year.

JULY
There were just four volunteers, who:
• cleared nettles and brambles from the southern pathway of Gibson's Field.
• removed some of the heavy dock growth in Oak Meadow
• pulled ragwort in Stonebridge Field.

All sessions include picking litter
All work is in accordance with RBC's Management Plan.
2015 Total volunteer hours so far - 104

EXTRA WORK SESSIONS

Friends contributed a further 103 hours of unscheduled work (January to August).

- They coppiced a section of the osiery (the whips were used to make a willow structure).
- They spent most of a day constructing this new Willow House.
- They worked on the railway embankment creating new habitat for the Grizzled Skipper butterfly.
- They sowed the seeds for Bee World III, and kept them watered.
- They rubbed, sanded down and repainted the picnic tables.
- They dug out Himalayan Balsam (designated an "Invasive Weed") from just upstream of the park, in an attempt to prevent its spread.

And much more……

MORE VOLUNTEERS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED.
PLEASE TRY TO GIVE JUST A LITTLE OF YOUR TIME,
THE ODD COUPLE OF HOURS FROM A LOT OF PEOPLE WOULD MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE

SEASONAL UPDATES FROM OUR EXPERTS

Wildflowers (Ann Weekley)

*By the end of July this year, over 90 different flower species had been recorded in Meadow Park. Possibly, even more importantly, 2015 has also been the year when the meadows have begun to **look** like flower meadows, in some cases spectacularly so. The yellow carpet of Cowslips and the mass of blue Meadow Cranesbill in Little Meadow, the flower strip in Oak Meadow, the 'bee patches' in Bateman Field, all have been appreciated by park users.*

This year has also seen the spread of species which were indigenous to the park. Flowers, which had struggled for years to compete with the dominant and dominating rye grass, are re-establishing themselves. We have helped them by introducing Yellow Rattle, a little yellow flower, which weakens the roots of the rye grass.

It has been good this year to see positive results from our labours over the years. It's nice to know we are doing the right things!

Butterflies (Kevin Gibbons)

This year the weather in the Midlands area has seen an unexceptional Spring and a cool and unsettled Summer. Despite this, the general number of butterflies in the park has been good and totalled 22 species including the first painted lady butterfly seen in the park for many years (Brian Johnson).

The continued slow expansion of the wild flower areas including the Arboretum "squares", the Oak Meadow "ribbon" and our third "bee world" has definitely contributed to the maintenance of our butterfly populations.

There are two species that particularly demonstrate this. The Common Blue, for example, was only recorded at a total number of 12 in 2013 (and even less prior to that year), but this grew to 15 in 2014, and a massive 39 this year (an increase of over 200% on 2013). Similarly the Small Skipper has increased from 12 in 2013, to 58 in 2014, and 189 this year! (an increase of over 1,500%). This is undoubtedly due to the increased foodplants and nectar plants that we have introduced to the park…definitely a case of "build and they will come".

By increasing and introducing other foodplants in the future (such as violets and honeysuckle) we could definitely look to get new species in the park such as the Silver Washed Fritillary and maybe even the White Admiral.

So, in conclusion, another great year for butterflies in the park, despite the poorish weather conditions.

* You can find Brian Johnson's detailed report on the Meadow Park pages of the village website:

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

AUTUMN ACTIVITY DAYS

Saturday 12 September

Saturday *3* October (NB change of usual date, due to Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Forum taking place in East Leake on 10th).

Saturday 14 November

Saturday 12 December

At this time of year, tasks include path clearing, dogwood control, hedge-laying, etc, and ALWAYS litter-picking.

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.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 18 November

7.30pm in the Parish Office.

Your opportunity to hear about what's been happening in the park, to ask questions and to put forward your ideas.

MEADOW PARK NEEDS MORE FRIENDS TO PARTICIPATE IN BOTH PLANNING AND CARRYING OUT THE PROJECTS THAT MAKE IT SPECIAL.

THIS YEAR

YOU COULD BE A REAL FRIEND & JOIN THE COMMITTEE - PLEASE!