NEWSLETTER
No. 29
Autumn & Winter 2015/16

Annual General Meeting, November 2015

From Chairman's Report (Alan Barlow)

A lot of hard work goes into Meadow Park, both in the thinking and planning of what to do and in the actual physical work needed to make things happen. Thanks go to everyone involved, whether it is those who turn up on an activity morning or those whose membership subscriptions and donations supports the work. East Leake would be poorer without Meadow Park.

Alan Barlow stepped down as Chairman after six years' service and Ann Weekley agreed to become our new Chairman and has seen Meadow Park go from strength to strength. Mollie Jacques stepped down as publicity officer after a very creditable fifteen years' service and Brenda Lewis has now taken on the task. Mollie has kept a low profile and not many people realise just how much she did. Both Anne and Brenda hope to do as good a job as their predecessors, but will have something of a steep learning curve to cope with. Melanie Roper and Philip Cleaver will update our input to Facebook and would welcome your contributions and comments. Other members of the committee continue to work hard in their respective areas of interest.

Autumn Colours in Hall Field

Once again we gained a Community Green Flag Award and we were one of four winners in national DEFRA 'Bees Needs' Awards. This is very pleasing and a reflection of the hard work and vision of everyone involved with the development of the park. The tree sponsorship scheme has really taken off and several trees have been planted, most recently a sessile oak. Thanks to everyone who donated £10 for a tree to be planted. The scheme is on-going. The Education Walks where information was given on wild flowers, butterflies and trees took place in the summer. It is hoped that in the future more people will come along to these events. Dates for 2016 will be announced in due course.

East Leake was chosen as a venue for the Rushcliffe Conservation Group to hold a day's workshop and lunch. A number of interesting talks by experts were given throughout the day and after lunch a walk round Meadow Park brought some useful exchanges of ideas.

On a sadder note our willow structure in Bateman Field was destroyed, some fires have been lit in the park and there is some evidence of drug misuse. It is difficult to know how to combat this anti-social behaviour.

Spring/Summer Activity Days

We meet at the depot behind the Parish Office at 9.50 am to collect tools and to discuss the work.

Sat 13th Feb	**Sat 9th April**	**Sat 11th June**	**Sat 13th Aug**
Sat 12th March	**Sat 14th May**	**Sat 9th July**	**Sat 10th Sept**

All skills and abilities are needed. From the more physical cutting and digging to the lighter clipping and litter picking, there is something for everyone to do. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Membership costs £3. Forms for renewal/new members can be downloaded from the village web site. You may like to forward this newsletter to a friend considering joining FMP.

From Secretary's Report (Trevor Jones)

FMP now has over a hundred members. We would like to attract younger members and this is an area in which we can all help. You may know someone who might be interested in our work and be able to encourage them to come and join us – if so please speak to them. It is felt that more direct contact with local schools could bear fruit, with this in mind we are having some ideas.

Before the next AGM the Management Plan is due for its five year revision. This plan involves talking to East Leake Parish Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council and will need their agreement to be adopted. Obviously a lot of thought goes into this plan.

From Treasurer's Report (Andy Denker)

Wildflowers (Ann Weekley)

Yellow Rattle

2015 has been the best year so far for flowers, not only in the number and species recorded but, more importantly, in the appearance of the grassy areas. Over the last fifteen years we have tried to create the right conditions for meadows to replace the grasslands where only docks, thistles, nettles and ragwort could compete with the grass. We have tried to produce an environment where the native flowers, some which were clinging on at the field margins, could flourish. We have achieved this as a result of many hours work, removing turf, sowing seed, planting plug plants and digging up some of the more aggressive species. Over the last few years we have introduced yellow rattle (a little yellow flower which weakens the roots of the rye grass) and this combined with judicious mowing has gone some way to keep the grass in check.

In 2015 we were at last able to see that real progress has been made. Over a hundred different species of wild

Butterflies (Kevin Gibbons and Brian Johnson)

In the last five years we have increased butterfly numbers by a process of introducing more butterfly food plants and nectar sources, and by a more sympathetic mowing regime. 21 species now commonly appear in the park. Most species have shown a general increase in numbers over the last three years.

The five most common butterflies in 2015 were: the Meadow Brown (203); the Small Skipper (189); Ringlet (78); Small Tortoiseshell (48); and the Common Blue (42).

In terms of overall butterfly numbers we have seen good year on year increases for most of our butterflies. For example before 2012 we were lucky if we saw one or two Common Blues in the park, but last year our highest count in one day was 42! Similarly the highest counts for the Small Skipper have gone from 12 in 2013 to 189 in 2015.

cont)

So – what about the future? ….. well, certainly more bee worlds. We will also be planting more Alder Buckthorn plants to boost our Brimstone butterfly numbers and dog violets to maybe just encourage beautiful fritillaries to move in over time ….

It's a case of ……. 'Build and they will come' (hopefully!)

Common Blue

(Top R) Ringlet

(R) Small Tortoiseshell

Nest boxes (Eric Bryson)

Three boxes were missing on the last count, plus one derelict box needs replacing. One box needs a new hole protector. Of the 17 remaining, 12 were used. This is a very good ratio. Even the bat box had a bird's nest in it.

Arboretum Update (Mollie Jacques)

There have been few developments in the arboretum since the last newsletter, but the long-running saga of the "wrong" sessile oak is at last resolved - we hope!

Before the arboretum was planted, there was already a well-established English (or pedunculate) oak in the designated area, and the thirty or so trees chosen when the work started in 2010-11 included a sessile oak, also a native British tree, to be a companion specimen so that people could compare the two, which have similarities but also distinct differences.

You may recall that this turned out to be a hybrid (which happens not infrequently), so in late 2014 we acquired a replacement, which the nursery supplying it assured us was a true sessile. It was bought at the appropriate time, after leaf fall, so it was only in the Spring of 2015 that our tree expert recognised a second hybrid and persuaded our secretary to send a stiff letter, plus a leaf, to the supplier. Result - tree No.3, a guaranteed specimen grown at the nursery, not bought in, as last year's was confessed to be, was supplied with an apology, and we planted it shortly before Christmas.

The acorns of the pedunculate oak (L) appear in clusters of two or three, and are carried on a long peduncle (from the Latin for "stalk"), while those of the sessile oak (R) have no stalk at all and sit directly on their twig (sessile is from the Latin for "seated" or "fixed")

All this may seem like a lot of pedantic fuss, but both native British oaks (pedunculate **and** sessile) are important in any collection worth the name, so we really want it to be right.

Autumn/Winter Activities 2015/16

September 2015

We started the Autumn series of Activity Days with a good turnout of 12 members, who had to brave the odd shower. We pruned blackthorn and some quite aggressive wild rose bushes in Gibson's Field.

We cut back two hedges in Playfield. We made yet another attack on the Dogwood in Hall Field.

Naturally, we picked litter.

October 2015

The turnout was even better - 15 people, who:

- Dismantled a den and fireplace in hedge/copse between Oak Meadow and Bateman Field.
- Created a new walk-through path from the 'tunnel' up to NW corner of Oak Meadow
- Dug up some smaller patches of dogwood in Play Field by the path
- Made progress in establishing a new corridor around NW corner of Hall Field.
- Removed detritus from Kingston Brook and picked litter.

November 2015

There were 8 volunteers, and we:

- Planted some donated trees along a stretch of Bateman Road boundary,
- Dealt with more dogwood in Hall Field

Completed the additional foot-path through the top corner of Hall Field and picked litter.

Photograph by Tom Gwynne 17th January 2016

December 2015

The weather was dreadful, so congratulations and thanks to the eleven people who came along to finish our year's activities on a high note.

We spent the morning cutting and pulling yet more dogwood in Gibsons Field and Bateman Field and elsewhere. The Borough Council ground-staff who planted the dogwood way back in 1990 or so, when the land had only just been given to the village, and before a management plan was in place, unwittingly did the park a serious dis-service. It's an American species, which looks attractive, but is far too vigorous, impossible to control and is a permanent problem.

Hope you have enjoyed this newsletter which is under new editorship.

The next one will be published in September.