NEWSLETTER No. 5

Friends of Meadow Park

SPRING 2004

Our second Annual General Meeting was held last November – not a very nice night, so thanks to those who braved the elements.

The Chairman's review of the year was mostly positive, as the following extract indicates:

It might not always have seemed so, but I think this second year has been quite successful. Maybe that's because our difficulties seem to have stabilised.

The cutting regime is a case in point. Last year we tried to involve a local farmer, an experiment that didn't really work out, so this year the task was handed back to the Borough Council who are responsible for maintenance of the Park. We were all very impressed by the way the path edges and the green paths were cut. But the Council fell far short of the schedule as far as the fields themselves were concerned. With the exception of the Playfield, they weren't cut at all, and we were finally told they wouldn't be able to do it this year. Recently, however, through the sterling efforts of Neil Hunter and the backing of the Council we've been able to find a farmer with the conservation experience and the commitment to get them all cut.

A further gain this year, this time from an administrative point of view, is that the Borough Council have appointed a Community Environment Officer, Paul Phillips, with specific responsibility for all public open spaces instead of it being just one of the duties of Leisure Services. We've already reaped the benefit of that in the cutting regime.

A third reason I rate our progress is because of the improvement in our seating. We've had a wonderful seat from the Guides (for which we thank them very much) which was beautifully positioned by a Friends' working party. In addition Kevin has erected a useful bench on the edge of the Play Field, and will be adding more. We've also had, and I cross my fingers here, much less vandalism. Regrettably I can't say the same about dog muck, which is still far too widespread along the paths and path edges. I don't suppose it worries the wildlife much but it is certainly a hazard for the humans.

The new entrance feature is, strictly speaking, nothing to do with the Friends, being a Parish and Rushcliffe initiative, but many Friends helped with the labouring and sculpture and shared in the Opening celebrations. When the final touches are done it will provide a distinctive southern entrance to the Park.

Another innovation this year is Joan Meakin's Activities Committee. It organised a bird walk and tree walk, and more recently has been putting together an information leaflet about some of the things to be seen in the Park.

The wildlife continues to thrive. On one occasion the kingfisher was seen to catch five fish in as many minutes while the heron at the same time was frogging (catching frogs!) in the ditch at the field edge.

As usual our thanks go to the Parish Council for their continuing support. Thanks, too, to the Committee, particularly to Debbie and Kevin for their continuing hard work. And finally the Members – although numbers have fallen a bit this year, the Membership is vital for all its contributions, physical and financial. So thank you all.

Ian Weekley

VILLAGE SPRING CLEAN DAY

SATURDAY, 17 APRIL, 2004, 10am – 12noon

Meet at the Parish Office or at the Manor Farm Meadow entrance to the Park.

Black bags provided, bring your own wellies.

PLEASE HELP TIDY UP THE PARK READY FOR SUMMER.

Accounts for year ended 31/10/2003

2002 £			2003 £	£
	RECEIPTS			
178.00	Membership donations	Note 1	231.00	
50.00	Donations			
1,097.00	Grants	Note 2	163.00	
0.13	Bank interest		0.23	
1,325.13	**Total receipts**			**394.23**
	PAYMENTS			
25.00	Subsription BTCV		35.41	
153.33	Insurance (net)		166.25	
3.57	Publicity		16.50	
0.24	Bank charges		-	
313.95	Tools & equipment		-	
711.64	Projects	Note 3	50.00	
1,207	**Total payments**			**268.16**
117.40	**Excess of receipts over payments**			**126.07**
	BANK RECONCILIATION			
-	Opening balance		117.40	
989.80	add total receipts		394.23	
989.80			511.63	
872.40	less total payments		268.16	
117.40	Closing balance		243.47	

Notes

1. **Membership donations**. Whilst the minimum donation is £2.00, many members have contributed well above this figure.
2. **Grants.** Rushcliffe Borough Council - £80.00 towards insurance premium
   East Leake Parish Council - £83.00 towards insurance premium
3. **Projects.** Materials for benches - £25.00

Looking towards Kestrel Bridge, December 2002

Looking towards Kestrel Bridge, January 2004

E-mail addresses, please!

If you have an e-mail address, which you would let us use, it would help us contact you more easily.

Just email Debbie Slade c/o ParishClerk@east-leake.gov.uk, and she'll add your name to our address book.

SITUATION VACANT!!

Reliable weather forecaster urgently sought

D is for DELUGE.

Saturday 29 November must have been one of the wettest days of 2003, so all the more credit to the twenty or so Friends who turned out for a working morning. What was intended to be a strenuous end of year effort making benches, planting bulbs and trees and generally tidying up had to be restricted to getting a load of bulbs into the ground before they floated away. FMP are very grateful to Mr & Mrs Parkin and to Country Gardens, who donated a dozen sacks of bulbs. Now, in April, we can enjoy some splendid, bright clumps of daffodils.

AD is for ANOTHER DELUGE

The first day of Spring was on 20 March, and the Activities sub-committee invited people to come on a discovery walk around the park. 22 accepted, and must have wondered **why?** as they battled the elements. Many thanks to those who stayed the course. One of the morning's objectives was to make a start on a census of Meadow Park's flora and fauna. In spite of the conditions, the following data were collected:

FLOWER	PLACE	COMMENT
Chickweed	Along edges of field, in rough grass	
Coltsfoot	2 clumps, on the banks of Sheepwash Brook	
Daffodils	Round edges and near plantings	Planted in Autumn 2003 by FMP
Dandelions	In open fields	Only a few specimens in flower, mainly in Oak Meadow
Daisy	In the open field	Only a few in flower, in Oak Meadow
Germander speedwell	Near Manor Farm Meadow entrance and path near Kingston Brook	Largest patch by park entrance
Lesser celandine	Under hedges, banks of brook, edges of fields	In profusion
Red dead nettle	Near hedges	A good sized patch near Bateman Road hedge in Gibson's Field
Self heal	Edge of field near railway embank-ment	Only a few flowers out
Shepherd's purse	Edge of path by Kingston Brook, in Oak Meadow	Several clumps
Snowdrops	Edge of Bateman Field, near houses	Planted or spread from gardens?
White dead nettle	Edges of paths and by Kingston Brook	Much still in bud

Lesser celandine

It would be interesting to collect this sort of information on a monthly basis through the growing season, and gradually build up a comprehensive data base. If you would be willing to help, please let Debbie know.

The park benefited in 2003 by being allocated a number of trees from the Borough Council's annual contribution to the villages in Rushcliffe. Now, as the original sapling plantations thicken and the trees Neil Hunter gave us in March 2002 begin to mature, the place is beginning to look well-wooded and bird-friendly. Perhaps in 2004 we shall manage to complete the tree census which Dennis Fox began last year.

Activities

"WHAT TO LOOK FOR"

Joan Meakin and her colleagues have produced an illustrated A4 leaflet, in colour, describing what birds, trees and flowers the visitor to Meadow Park may expect to see. Every household in the village will receive one in good time for the summer season, and a further supply will be kept in the Library and Parish Office.

SCHOOLS

The park already has considerable potential as an educational resource, and this will grow as time goes by and more varied habitats are developed. The sub-committee is hoping to establish links with local schools, in order to (a) make the most of this resource, and (b) spread the sense of "ownership" of the park as far as possible so that people take more responsibility for protecting it.

INFORMATION BOARD

Plans for what we would like to be the first of a series of lectern-type boards are well in hand. This one will be sited at the Manor Farm Meadow entrance as a finishing touch in the area near the millstone sculpture.

Quite a lot more finishing is still needed, unfortunately. The fences to be made good are the responsibility of various authorities, but FMP are involved in trying to replace the stretch between the footbridge and Kingfisher Walk. A grant from the Airport Community Fund has been promised, if we can get match funding from elsewhere to complete the job. The letter-writing continues……

Hazel catkins in Gibson's Field

FMP membership is stuck at about 70. Do you know anyone who might be interested?

If so, please tell them Debbie or Kevin would love to hear from them. Tel. 852217

Coltsfoot by Sheepwash Brook

Conservation

WILD FLOWER MEADOW

As reported more than once, we had hoped that by regular removal of the arisings from an organised mowing regime, it would be possible to re-create an old-fashioned wild flower meadow in at least one of the fields. It looks as if this is not going to happen, so we have decided to experiment. Twenty or so small patches will be sown this spring with seeds appropriate to the area, and if they grow well, we shall try to set up a much bigger scale community "plant-in" next year. Could be fun!

MANAGEMENT PLAN

The problems associated with trying to get this off the drawing board have also been reported before. As we all know, Rushcliffe Borough Council own the park, with the Parish Council and FMP deeply interested but powerless parties. Our latest information is that the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is mounting a bid to develop all Rushcliffe's amenity sites, which would include designing a coherent management plan for each site. Paul Phillips, Rushcliffe Community Environment Officer, has indicated that a decision should be reached some time in April.

At least we seem to have an agreed mowing schedule in place again for 2004.

NOTELETS FOR SALE IN AID OF FMP

Friends' photographs of Meadow Park

Packs of ten, all different, with envelopes

£1.50 per pack

Available at the Parish Office

Have YOU any photos we could use?