NEWSLETTER
No. 6

SUMMER
2004

MANAGEMENT -

In the last newsletter, we reported that the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust had applied to WREN (the fund available to support community environmental projects within 10km of a landfill site – in our case Bunny) for funding to create detailed management plans for all Rushcliffe Borough Council's public open spaces, and that a decision was imminent. Sadly, we learned recently that the Wildlife Trust's bid was not successful, and that the Borough Council will continue to organise its parks and open spaces site by site.

Haymaking in Bateman Field, June 2004
photo by Ian Weekley

We had looked forward to being under the umbrella of a Wildlife Trust/Borough partnership, which would have put us more decisively on a par with the other sites. As it is, we must now wait for Paul Phillips, Rushcliffe Community Environment Officer, to complete the management plan he started over a year ago, which was put on hold while the Wildlife Trust's bid was in progress

There is in existence an interesting and detailed document called *Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Action Plan*, produced by the Borough Council early in 2003. It is available on the RBC website (www.rushcliffe.gov.uk) and would make encouraging reading, except that none of it has been implemented in relation to Meadow Park. Our Borough Councillors have been alerted to this, and we hope they may be able to bring pressure to bear on the powers that be in West Bridgford. Mean-while, individual residents might care to contact Paul Phillips, Brian Knowles (Leisure Facilities Manager) or Keith Wood (Head of Community Development) at Rushcliffe – Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 5FE) to ask when East Leake is going to be brought in line with the rest of the borough.

Sorry we always seem to be going on about this, but without a proper management plan in place and operative, the park will have no chance to reach its proper potential.

- and MAINTENANCE

We seem to have fared somewhat better this year as regards a sensible mowing regime. The timing has to accommodate a number of conflicting priorities: birds' nesting habits, wildflower seeding cycle, butterfly feeding and egg-laying season all have to be taken into account, as well as the preferences of humans who do not like the grass too high. The resulting compromise seems mostly acceptable, although the Borough's contractor was perhaps a little over-zealous when it came to cutting the "headlands" at the edges of some of the fields. Neil Hunter's farmer contact again mowed and removed the arisings from the southern fields, which will help towards reducing their fertility and enable the gradual re-introduction of traditional meadow flowers.

Unfortunately, the triangular patch surrounding the mill-stone sculpture is not included in the Borough's mowing schedule, and frequently looks very unkempt. Heartfelt thanks to those people who take a surreptitious strimmer to it occasionally. The Friends hope to find a permanent solution to the problem in the coming months.

FLORA DATABASE

The list of sightings for June is really impressive, and shows just how varied a habitat we already have in the park:

Birdsfoot trefoil (photo below right)
Bittersweet
Broad leaved dock
Bulbous buttercup
Chickweed
Cleavers
Common mallow
Common spotted orchid
Cow parsley
Cuckoo flower
Cut leaved cranesill
Dame's violet (below left – photo by Ann Weekley)
Dandelion
Field forget-me not
Greater stitchwort
Greater willowherb
Ground ivy
Heath speedwell
Hedge cranesbill
Hedge mustard
Hogweed
Hop trefoil
Leopardsbane
Lesser hawkbit
Meadow buttercup
Milk thistle
Mugwort
Nettle
Nipplewort
Pineapple mayweed
Ragwort
Red clover
Rosebay willowherb
Scentless mayweed
White clover
White dead nettle

And there were more in July:

Bristly ox-tongue
Great burnet
Meadowsweet
Scarlet pimpernel
Square-stalked St John's wort
Teasel

EXPERIMENTAL SOWING

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we decided on a little helpful intervention on the wild flower/ hay meadow front.

John Adcock traced a supply of appropriate seed, and over a couple of weekends in April more than a dozen Friends dug out and sowed 22 plots in various sites, principally in Little Meadow. At 1 metre square (and ambitiously deep!) in compacted earth, which had probably not been ploughed for generations, this was a mammoth task, and the work force are to be congratulated.

After a couple of months most of the squares were still clearly evident, in spite of the encroaching coarse grasses and nettles; the rather damp weather had been good for germination, so a reasonable number of new plants were thriving. The majority flowered and set seed before the meadows were mown, so should produce a new crop next year.

John expressed himself tolerably well satisfied, so now he and Neil Hunter are considering whether and how it might be possible to organise a communal sow-in during the autumn in order to have young plants ready for transplanting next spring. If the call comes, we hope lots of people will offer their window-ledges as temporary nurseries.

MEADOW PARK PICTURES

We are gradually amassing quite a collection of photographs taken by Friends, and a number have been used to produce notelets, as a fund-raiser for FMP.

These are on sale at the Parish Office, and cost £1.50 for an assorted pack of ten with envelopes. They are useful, and make good presents, too.

PLEASE SUPPORT US!

More pictures would be welcome – we would like to mount an exhibition to show how the park is changing and developing. Keep on clicking!

Remember ragwort and the hard work we put in pulling the stuff a couple of years ago? Max Watson's pictures show a much less backbreaking solution, involving some happy caterpillars.

LEAFLETS

The activities sub-committee produced an attractively illustrated brief guide to the park, and every household in the village received one, courtesy of the Parish Council who included it in the delivery of the April parish newsletter.

We have heard many favourable comments – thank you! – and hope that people's pleasure in the park has been enhanced by having it to hand. There are plenty more copies available in the Parish Office and the Post Office, so please help yourselves, and make sure that any newcomers get one, too.

Joan Meakin and her colleagues, who designed the leaflet, would be pleased to have your ideas for future publications, either similar general information sheets or more specialised papers on trees for instance, or birds. Joan can be contacted via the Parish Office, tel 852217, or e-mail c/o parishclerk@east-leake.gov.uk

POLLUTION

Sincere apologies for putting this item so near a pleasant topic like our leaflet, but life can be a bit nasty sometimes.

Some of you may have seen, or at least heard about, a few occasions recently when raw sewage has flowed into the Kingston Brook from the pumping-station on Gotham Road. The Parish Council have been in touch with both Severn Trent and the Kingston Brook Drainage Board, to complain about the clear health hazard of a polluted stream in a public park where children play, to say nothing of the danger to fish (several have been found dead).

Our latest information is that Severn Trent have a dispensation if conditions are extreme, i.e. if there has been very heavy rainfall which overloads their system, but we doubt if this will satisfy many, and both the Parish Council and the Friends are pursuing the matter.

If **you** observe this overflow, please let the Parish Clerk know (tel 852217), or get in touch with Severn Trent or the Kingston Brook Drainage Board. The more reports the authorities have, the more they have to take notice.

FUTURE PLANS

All these come with the proviso that we have to persuade one or another grant-awarding organisation that Meadow Park is as worthy a cause as the Friends think it is.

- As the Play Field gradually becomes more suitable as a play area (a very slow process, when what it really needs is a radical and expensive re-contouring), we reckon a picnic table would be a welcome addition. This has been costed, and we think is achievable for Spring 2005.
- The Manor Farm Meadow entrance needs to be completed along the lines we have described before: repair/reconstruction of the fences on both sides; improvement to the "triangle" round the sculpture; orientation and information board.
- We hope to complete the tree census which was started last year, and incorporate it into a comprehensive database of Meadow Park flora and fauna.
- Following the success of the "What to look out for" leaflet, we are considering a series of more educational worksheets. Dennis Fox is hoping to develop the learning potential of the park through co-operation with our schools.
- The wildflower project mentioned elsewhere is yet to be decided on.