NEWSLETTER

No. 30

Summary of 2016

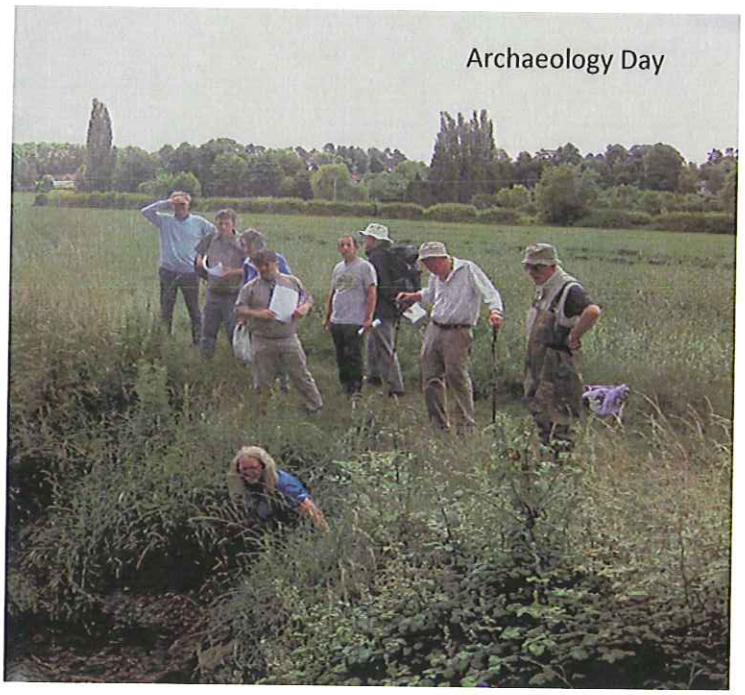
Annual General Meeting November 2016

Friends of Meadow Park held their **AGM** in the Parish Office on Wednesday 16th November at 7.30 pm. Nine committee members and fourteen other members attended and wine was served after the meeting. **Trevor Jones**, our Secretary since 2010, stepped down and **Kevin Gibbons** was voted in as our new secretary. Trevor has given a great deal of time and effort to the Friends of Meadow Park group, and we are particularly indebted to him for his careful steering of the up-dated Management Plan. The Plan has to be reviewed every five years to update objectives and agendas.

From the Chairman's Report (Ann Weekley)

Ann Weekley, thanked Trevor for all his hard work over the last six years. In summing up the Management Plan Ann noted how difficult it was to balance conflicting interests, especially in relation to the grass cutting schedule. A late mowing benefits most butterflies and some flowers but it results in a nutritionally poor hay crop. Also, mowing in the Arboretum can affect the growth of the trees. The final decision on mowing rests with the Parish Council, FMP committee can only advise.

The **Archaeology Walk** in July, when County Archaeologist Ursilla Spence and Community Archaeologist Emily Gilliot were joined by members of both FMP and the History Society, was a great success. Archive material such as maps dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries helped us understand how the Park area had been farmed/ maintained in the past. There are plans to access aerial photographs dating from WWII to further our understanding.



Archaeology Day

One of the most heartening aspects of 2016 has been that our schools are getting more involved in Meadow Park with weekly **Forest School** sessions held by Lantern Lane and biodiversity sessions undertaken by East Leake Academy. Also **British Gypsum's** charity is donating £150 and much appreciated manual labour. Some planning is already underway as to how best to deploy these resources.

Hay making in the arboretum

Ann gave a special thankyou to ***all*** members as their subscriptions have helped us buy some very good quality tools and plants which has widened the scope of our projects. Those members who turn up to Activity mornings were thanked. **Hilary Morrissey** has very kindly volunteered to be our dog warden and will receive training, wear a high viz jacket and patrol on a regular basis. Hilary will not have an easy job and everyone thanked her for being so public spirited. She will patrol for two hours each day. Lastly, our publicity leaflet brought in over fifty new members.

From time to time extra working sessions are organised. The most important one this year was in August when over twenty members helped gather up the mown hay in the Arboretum. The Parish Council let us use their tractor, driven by Adey, and the hay was moved so that tree roots and flowers would not be smothered.

From the Secretary's Report (Trevor Jones)

Membership stands at **148**. The five yearly review of the Management Plan fell due this year. Updating and refining our objectives has been quite a long process involving much thought and discussion. Happily this seems to have been achieved to everyone's satisfaction and the plan will be adopted early in 2017.

Trevor noted the breadth of knowledge and expertise in both our ordinary members and our committee members. Wild flower counts, butterfly and moth statistics, hedge laying and willow cultivation would be impossible without this knowledge. David Bridge has written a book on the geology of Meadow Park and Ian Morrissey has written a book on the Kingston Brook. Both are in East Leake Library and are well worth reading.

From the Treasurer's Report (Andy Denker)

Finances are looking healthy. Membership subscriptions in 2016 were £783, with donations adding a further £573. A further donation of £500 enabled us to put a bench in the Arboretum. Rushcliffe Borough Council gave us a grant of £136.74 from their Biodiversity fund and this was spent on new gardening tools. Money was spent on Yellow Rattle seeds, new safety equipment, the publicity leaflet, new bird boxes and replacement trees in the Arboretum.

Brown or Downy Birch

Arboretum update (Andy Denker)

Most of the trees in the Arboretum are now well established, but there has been some problems with three species – Alder, Brown or Downy Birch and Sessile Oak. The Alder and Birch have now been replaced twice, firstly with bare root and latterly with pot grown specimens. The new Sessile Oak has been planted since the AGM. As there has been a problem over the years with bare root trees, particularly with watering, any new trees will be pot grown as they have a better chance of survival. The new trees will be monitored carefully.

Sessile Oak

Wildflowers (Ann Weekley)

The unusual weather we experienced in 2016 has had a significant effect on the wild flower count. Apart from a brief cold spell in February and a downpour in March which led to short lived flooding, the first four months of 2016 were mild and largely sunny. May, in contrast, was cold and wet. From then onwards the weather was generally warm and windy. September 13th was the hottest day of the year and the warmest September day for over a century.

92 species of wild flower were recorded in 2016. There were magnificent displays of Ragged Robin (liking damp meadow land). Cowslips and Yellow Rattle were in abundance. The Yellow Rattle is a semi parasitic plant and helps to limit the growth of tall grass thereby enabling more flowers to flourish. There were good numbers of Common Spotted Orchid (especially in Hall Field), Great Burnet, Meadow Cranesbill, Cuckoo Flower and Creeping Buttercup to name but a few. The Hawthorn and Blackthorn were both smothered in blossom. However, some of the flowers seen in the past did not appear this year, for example Meadow Saxifrage.

Ox –Eye Daisy

Butterflies (Kevin Gibbons and Brian Johnson)

The changeable weather also had an impact on the butterfly population. The Common Blue had a very poor first and second brood with numbers down from 42 to just four. The Brown Argus was down from 18 to just three, and the Small Copper was also down from 11 to just one. The early cutting of Little Meadow and the cutting of the small area at the north of Play Field may also have had an effect as these two areas are generally a stronghold for several species. To compound the problem flowers in both Bee World Two and Three did not do so well this year and this reduced the nectar source. However, there was success in the Brimstone butterfly population as the six Alder Buckthorn trees planted earlier in the year attracted them.

Red Admiral

Small Copper

Brimstone

Meadow butterflies (Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Essex Skipper and Gatekeeper) all fared well. The timing of the hay cutting in the Arboretum did not help the flowers in that area and the consequent lack of nectar kept the butterflies away. It is hoped to time the cutting better in 2017.

Ringlet

A total of 22 recording visits were undertaken, covering each week from April through to August. In total **20** different species were recorded (one down on last year). The one species missing from the 2016 count was the Painted Lady which did not migrate through the park, though was spotted by some people elsewhere in the village.

Kingston Brook Report (Ian Morrissey/Trevor Jones)

Ian Morrissey reported that Kingston Brook is a cause for concern. The only length of the brook which is in good condition and supporting wildlife habitat is that extending 50 metres upstream from the railway crossing.
Much damage has been caused to other sections of the brook largely because of the routine maintenance undertaken by the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) most recently in 2012. A heavily sedimented bed and ponded flow conditions limit the ecology supported. Wider pressures such as storm water overflow from the local pumping station, diffuse pollution from agricultural practices in the catchment and fine sediment run-off also act to limit the potential of the brook. Ian recorded only sticklebacks and three adult chub on a visit in the autumn. Low flow conditions in the Kingston Brook are exacerbated by the lack of flow from the Sheepwash Brook. The quarrying near the source of the Sheepwash Brook is thought by some people to be the cause of this low flow.

There had been some discussions with the Trent Valley IDB. Whilst this body's priority is flood prevention, it is aware of its responsibilities under the Water Framework Directive not to cause deterioration to the watercourse through its activities. The IDB is presently developing a flood model for Kingston Brook which Ian hopes will demonstrate that the continued invasive maintenance of the type seen through Meadow Park is unnecessary in terms of reducing flood risk. Ian plans to develop a restoration plan for the brook over the next year and take it to the IDB. FMP would need consent from the IDB to undertake any in-channel works specified by Ian's plan, but could attend to the vegetation on the banks.

Ian is confident Kingston Brook can be improved if farmers provided buffer strips i.e. do not cultivate up to the edge of the watercourse. Whilst there may not be large water extraction for irrigation upstream of Meadow Park, quantities of water can be extracted without licensing being necessary and this could be exacerbating low flow periods through Meadow Park. (Old Dalby, where Kingston Brook arises as a spring, is 9.4 miles from East Leake by road according to Google maps so Meadow Park will inevitably experience the effect of these agricultural practices).

Nest Box Report (Matt Coward)

2016 saw 11 of the 22 nest boxes inhabited. One box contained a clutch of nine eggs that had not hatched, and one box may have been used by a field mouse. Four boxes needed replacing with new ones.

Meadow Park Activity mornings and extra sessions in 2016

January & February: Tree ties in the Arboretum were checked and six Alder Buckthorn trees were planted. Two dead trees in the Arboretum were dug up. Docks in Oak Meadow and scrub in Lagoon Field were cleared. Dogwood was cut back in the Bateman area and willow was collected form Lagoon Field. Bee World was tidied up. Five new bird boxes and three new bat boxes were put up.

March & April: Bee World was re-dug and extended. The turf from this was collected into piles, with tunnels/holes in them for hibernating small mammals like hedgehogs. One member who lives near the area undertook to water Bee World on a regular basis. A new seat was installed in the Arboretum. Wood/logs were provided for the Forest School.

May & June: The trees in the Arboretum were inspected and the wire and posts protecting the sapling were removed, no longer being needed. Paths were tidied up to cut back overhanging branches and trailing plants like brambles. Information signs were put up to make everyone aware of the ground nesting birds in Hall Field. Bird boxes were inspected.

July & August: There was a general tidy up of overhanging growth along pathways. Particular attention was given to the four entrances to the park. Ragwort was removed from Stonebridge, Little Meadow and the Arboretum. Though there was no scheduled work for August, a group of over 20 volunteers turned out for a special work session to clear the hay in the Arboretum area.

September & October: Overhanging branches in Bateman Field were cut back. The dead Downy Birch, Sessile Oak and Alder trees were removed from the Arboretum. A new Downy Birch tree and a Sessile Oak were planted. American Dogwood was removed (as far as possible) from Hall Field. Fire damage in Lagoon Field was assessed.

November & December: A new hedge was laid in Bateman Field adjacent to the Arboretum. Dogwood was removed in Hall Field. Hall Field was strimmed. A possible new shrub area was reviewed in Gibson Field.

Number of volunteer hours worked in Activity mornings was **251**

Extra volunteer hours worked was **143** Total hours worked by volunteers was **394**

Activity Sessions for 2017

We meet at the depot behind the Parish Office at **9.50 am** the **second Saturday in the month** (except August). We work till noon (but do not feel you have to stay for the whole time). We collect tools and discuss the work to be done. 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.

Jan 14th	**Feb 11th**	**March 11th**	**April 8th**	**May 13th**	**June 10th**
July 8th	**Sept 9th**	**Oct 14th**	**Nov 11th**	**Dec 9th**	

New bench in the Arboretum

New hedge in Bateman Field near the Arboretum

Membership

In 2017 we are simplifying the way we deal with membership renewal. It is very difficult to keep track of when, exactly, each member joins. This means it is impossible to send out reminders when membership is due to lapse. Our new approach is to time the annual membership from the beginning of January for the whole year. If you joined fairly recently you will get a few months membership for free. For those who join mid-year in the future they may well get a short time 'free' to keep everything in line with an annual membership based on the calendar year.

For regular updates on the work of FMP see Facebook or the village website. The webmaster is currently getting to grips with the new way of putting information on the site. He will then show us how the new system works and we can update our pages. Our website is out of date at the moment, but in the near future will be back to normal.