Newsletter
No 32
January 2018

Friends of Meadow Park

Gatekeeper

Annual General Meeting November 2017

Friends of Meadow Park held their AGM on **Wednesday 16th November 2017**. Eleven committee members and seven members attended and wine was served after the meeting.

From the Chairman's Report (Ann Weekley)

Meadow Park is owned by Rushcliffe Borough Council. East Leake Parish Council manages it on their behalf, except for the emptying of the dog waste and litter bins. Trent Valley Drainage Board manage Kingston Brook. Kingfisher Way is maintained by the Nottinghamshire County Council. The Friends of Meadow Park group was set up to develop and enhance both the recreational and wildlife potential of the park, but we can only advise, the final say is with RBC. FMP works with RBC and to that end agree a plan to manage the park which is renewed every few years.

After much discussion and many minor adjustments we now have in place an updated Management Plan and Mowing Schedule. **This runs until 2021**. The Mowing Schedule has been simplified and incorporates a three year rotation for mowing the designated headlands and field margins.

Lantern Lane **Forest School** children continue to be very enthusiastic users of the park. They have an afternoon session each week. They begin by eating lunch seated on the log circle by the Bateman Road entrance. Ann Weekley has led two sessions on tree identification for them. Other activities include den building and basic forest/wood craft skills.

December 2017 – team working on pruning the willow and cutting back branches over-hanging Kingston Brook

We are delighted with the interest and enthusiasm shown by our young people. In November 2016 the Beavers raised **£50** for us at the Christmas Lights Switch On by making and selling Christmas tree decorations. Kevin Gibbons organised two **walks** in the park for Brownies and one for adults in July with a focus on flowers and butterflies.

Awareness in the park was raised at the Meet Your Village event in April and our stall at the Carnival in June where a mini beast discovery session was highly successful.

Working parties have tackled numerous tasks in their usual Saturday morning sessions. Work done includes pruning back overhanging branches and willow, planting shrubs, attacking American Dogwood and preparing sticks for Forest Schools den building activities.

A constant problem in the park is the amount of dog poo. We invested in some blue spray to highlight the offending mess with some success.

Ann gave a special thank you to all members as their subscriptions have helped us buy shrubs and other essentials for the general upkeep of the park.

From the Secretary's Report (Kevin Gibbons)

Membership is up from 149 to a new record of **202**, largely due to recruitment drives at the Meet Your Village event and the Carnival. It is clear that those able to help in the regular Saturday mornings have done an excellent job – areas tidied, hedges laid, benches installed and flowers and trees planted.

Social media has proved an important tool in publicising Meadow Park. Mel Roper has posted on **Facebook** regularly, as have others, and we now have a strong following and receive some very nice comments on our efforts, for example several people thanked us for the installation of the new benches in Play Field.

Treasurer's Report (Andy Denker)

Overall income for the year was a total of **£2031.95** which along with the opening balance of £1275.68 gave a total of £3307.63 at the year end. Thus 2016/17 was an exceptional year for FMP financially, with a steady increase in new members, donations and sponsorship of trees in the Arboretum. Membership subscriptions to the year end was **£762** with donations of **£603.95** (including **£102** from a collecting box in Mel's greengrocery to go towards a new bench in Play Field, and a separate collecting box for the general upkeep of the park brought in **£49**).

Arboretum sponsorship brought in **£594**, British Gypsum donated **£150.** A grant of **£205** was given by Rushcliffe Borough Council via Ron Hetherington which covered the cost of leafleting the village. East Midlands Airport Community Fund contributed **£700** and East Leake Neighbourhood Watch gave **£100** towards the new benches and associated fixtures in Play Field. Alan Barlow was thanked for his initiative in approaching EMACF on our behalf.

Andy expressed his thanks to Leslie Bancroft (retiring Parish Clerk) who has audited our accounts for the last five years. Our new Parish Clerk, Neil Lambert has agreed to audit accounts for us from now on.

Summary of work done by volunteers in 2017

Jan/Feb: The shrubbery was cut back and area near Bateman Road entrance tidied after c20 ash trees were cut down to allow more light into the area.
March/April: Rank weeds were removed and turf from willow bed extension distributed.
May/June: Around 130 shrubs were planted, mostly near the Bateman Road boundary.
July: Ragwort pulled.
Sept/Oct: Electric Avenue was tidied up after clearance of undergrowth by the power company. New shrubs were checked and cleared of weeds.
Nov/Dec: Invasive American Dogwood cut well back. Willows pruned and branches overhanging Kingston Brook cut back.

Arboretum (Andy Denker)

Inspections were carried out in June, April, August and November. Two new trees were planted – the Alder and Downy/Brown Birch, with the inspection in June highlighting the continued hot, dry weather and its effect. The Alder has smaller leaves than is normal but looks in good health, the Downy Birch had a lot of leaves scorched. Both trees have been watered over a period and hopefully will survive. All other trees are doing well, some growing faster than others. Over the coming year posts for the trees will be replaced when required as the trees grow. The name labels and **QR readers** will be kept at a suitable level to be easily read.

Wild Flowers (Ann Weekley)

2017 had some unusual weather. There was some very hot weather in late May and June with September being wet and cold. Flowers, however, are remarkable survivors. Last year's total was **92** species and this year's total is **92.** It is not the same 92 species thought. Our most exciting newcomer in 2017 was the **Southern Marsh Orchid**. We are in the small area of England where the distribution of Southern and Northern March Orchids overlaps, however our Southern Orchid is quite likely to hybridise with the established Common Spotted Orchids.

Another striking newcomer was **Viper's Bugloss**. We hope to see these new arrivals again, but in the past we have had some flowers for one year only (e.g. Meadow Saxifrage and Devil's Bit Scabious).

Viper's Bugloss

This year, the total number of species Ann recorded since 2006 reached **150**. The most we've had in any one year was 106 in 2015, followed by 101 in 2012. What is important is that the number of flowers, as opposed to the number of species, increases.

Bird Report (Matt Coward)

The mild weather of 2016-17 produced disappointing numbers of winter finches in the park during the first few months of the year. Winter thrushes were low on numbers with Fieldfares noticeably absent. Spring saw bird numbers increase with Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Whitethroats and Blackcap all breeding in the park and being especially abundant in Hall Field.

Previously scarce residents within the park boundaries that saw an increase in sightings during 2017 include Coal Tit, Greater Spotted Woodpecker and Little Egret. Alongside new residents came an apparent decline for some important birds in the park – reports of river-nesting birds such as Kingfisher, Mallard and Moorhen became worryingly sparse - possibly being disturbed by dog/human activity, or by the quality of the water in the brook.

Bee Worlds (Kevin Gibbons)

No new Bee Worlds were created in 2017. **Bee World 1** (created 2013) saw Bedstraw and Bird's Foot Trefoil. **Bee World 2** saw Ox-eye Daisy, Knapweed, Red Campion, Bedstraw and Buttercup. Bee **World 3** has been somewhat overtaken by grasses, but still had some Bird's Foot Trefoil, Clover and Knapweed. The intention is to remove some grass over the winter. The **Oak Meadow strip** is still looking great and full of wild flowers. Watch out for a good show of Cowslips. We intend to plant a small Bee World area in 2018 in the triangular area by the Bateman Road entrance.

Butterflies (Kevin Gibbons)

Orange Tip

Brian Johnson gathers the data as he does regular transect walks in the park to ensure that data is comparable year on year.

Weather conditions in 2017 were quite changeable with very few long spells of sunshine and therefore not ideal for butterfly populations. Despite this, populations are quite stable **– 21 species** were recorded in 2017. The Common Blue had a slightly better year, with the highest count being **15** (up 11 on 2016, but still not back to the heady eights of **42 in 2015**). The early Spring butterfly, Orange Tip, fared well with a top count of **21.** This would suggest that the field margins are holding well as its main larval food plant is garlic mustard. Brimstones numbered **5** so are holding well. Grassland butterflies fared well with the Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper showing slight increases in numbers (**191 and 43 respectively**). The count for the Small Skipper was down to **138** after a very high count of 280 in 2016.

It was pleasing to report that the hay cut was later – 11th August and this should help butterfly numbers next year (weather permitting).

Kingston Brook (Ian Morrissey)

It is clear the brook is in serious decline and will not recover without intervention. In terms of the physical habitat of the brook it is even hard to see which way it is flowing in many sections, as historical IDB (Internal Drainage Board) scrapes have created low, lake like, areas in some places as well as a higher area by the railway crossing. These historical issues have therefore created problems culminating in the decline of invertebrates.

Visiting the pumping stations in East and West Leake (organised by Alan Barlow) was very interesting as it is clear that there are no real capacity issues, but we can still get discharges into the brook. One problem is the blockages to the local system by fats etc.. Severn Trent will be putting in new filter systems in the near future, which is good news for our water courses.

Ian plans to do surveys in the Spring and Autumn 2018 to get some data. It is clear no single thing alone will help, so we will need a restoration strategy, identifying ideally what we would like to do. We will clearly need Rushcliffe Borough Council on board, but we feel we can improve some marginal areas. Ian is exploring funding opportunities that could help our efforts.

General comments made about Kingston Brook:

- Alan Barlow is to arrange another visit to the West Leake water treatment works in 2018.
- The general consensus is that fish appear to be absent in the brook.
- Due to the gravel extraction work the flow through the Sheepwash Brook has reduced which has therefore had an impact on the flow through Kingston Brook. The reduced flow of water is one of the main problems. Extraction of water from the smaller brooks due to farming is also a potential reason for reduced flow.
- Any new survey undertaken will be compared with the previous surveys.

Open Forum:

- Photographs of scenes win the park are still needed for the proposed new Notelets.
- Some of the paths in the park are eroding (holding water in some areas) and this needs addressing.
- A local resident wants to start a casual/social walking group in the park so watch out for details.

Activity Days January – July 2018

Jan 13th Feb 10th March 10th April 14th May 12th June 9th July 14th

(No activity day in August)