Newsletter

No 34

January 2019

Friends of Meadow Park

Pepper Saxifrage – a new flower to the Park in 2018

Annual General Meeting November 2018

From the Chairman's Report: Ann Weekley

The main task achieved this year has been the updating of our Constitution. Certain points were made clearer (for example who is allowed to sign cheques) a new classification of membership was added (the household membership) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which came into law May 25th 2018 were adopted in the updated document.

In April the Meet Your Village event brought in many new members. In June we had a stall at the Carnival and demonstrated willow weaving skills, had a 'mini-beast' water tray where pond/river invertebrates were identified. At the 'Christmas Lights Switch On' event the Park hosted a Fun Run organized by Physio Needs. It was a popular event.

Forest School continues to thrive as Lantern Lane Primary School children in Year 3 have regular half day sessions in the Park in term time. The children enjoy learning basic wood-craft skills, identifying trees, flowers, butterflies and birds. The number of children in Year 3 has increased so the log circle had to be made bigger. Andy Denker and Conrad Oatey worked hard on this project – they sourced the logs, had them cut to size and then secured them to the ground with thick metal hoops.

Forest School's log circle

Meadow Park is popular with dog walkers and we are pleased to see it used so well as, for the most part, people clean up after their pets. Two members are still spraying offending mess blue and have been thanked by locals for keeping attention focused on this very important issue. Ann stepped down as chairman and Kevin Shaw has been elected to the position. Ann was thanked for her hard work and her focus on the evolving needs of the Park both as a leisure resource and an area for wildlife to flourish.

Thursday's walk in the Park group. Meet at 1.30 by the millstone sculpture

From the Secretary's Report: Kevin Gibbons

We had 186 members in 2018 (down from 202 the previous year) but we are still pleased with the numbers and know we have a great deal of support from villagers. Good numbers of volunteers have turned out for the regular working mornings and the ad hoc sessions so a lot has been achieved. It has been notable how many favorable comments have been made about Meadow Park – children enjoy cycling/walking in it and feel safe, there is a friendly feeling as people exchange greetings and the regular Thursday group of walkers/ strollers appreciate what the Park has to offer.

Treasurer's Report: Andy Denker

We started last year with a healthy balance of nearly **£4,000** and this has been spent on buying 120 shrubs, several saplings, wild flower seeds, a new willow bed and fencing for Little Meadow. We have also bought a new trolley and a wheel barrow, as well as having our publicity leaflet updated and reprinted. A generous grant of **£700** from East Midlands Airport Community Fund, **£104** from collecting boxes in village shops plus a donation from East Leake Neighbourhood Watch enabled us to buy two benches for Play Field. Over **£500** has been donated to the Arboretum fund over the year and this has been very useful, allowing us to carry out important work.

One of the new benches in Play Field

Our membership now runs January to January so we hope members renew their subscriptions and donations so we can continue to fund our projects.

Arboretum: Andy Denker

Inspections were carried out in January, April, August and October. Two saplings were planted in 2018. The Downy/ Brown Birch survived but the Alder died despite heroic efforts to keep it watered. The Juniper has now died and the Larch has lost its needles early, but may survive. Both the Alder and the Juniper will be replaced and a second Beech tree will be planted. All the other trees are doing well, some growing faster than others. We have decided not to replace posts and labels where the trees are sturdy and well established.

Work Parties: Andy Denker

It has been really pleasing to see how many people have been able to help in the Park both on the regular work mornings and on the ad hoc tasks undertaken seasonally. The April work party had to be cancelled because the Park was flooded. Activities included cutting back Dogwood, path/border clearance, hedge-laying, planting shrubs in the area of Electric Avenue and Bateman Field, digging Bee World 4, removing ragwort, litter picking and leading walks for Brownies to help them identify butterflies and flowers. Other work undertaken included assisting with Forest School, sowing wild flower seeds, hedge laying, Arboretum tree inspections, bird box Inspections, bench fitting, watering trees, attending the village events in April and June. Volunteers worked a total of 603 hours in 2018 – a remarkable effort.

Wild Flowers: Ann Weekley

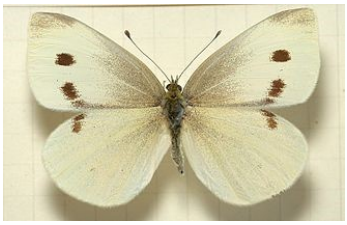
Meadows after the early hay cut

Once again we had an unusual weather pattern in 2018. From late February to early March we were in the grip of the 'Beast from the East'. Temperatures fell to well below zero, Kingston Brook froze over and the Park was covered in deep snow. In April much of the Park was under water. By July temperatures had reached 30 degrees C. Add to that months of virtually no rain and it is easy to understand why the flowers struggled. The Meadows were mown early (9th July) in an attempt to minimize the fire risk and we wondered what the impact on the flower population would be. However, flowers are great survivors and 86 species were recorded over the year. It was amazing to see how rapidly some species re-grew after the mowing, despite on-going drought conditions. We had one new species in 2018 – the pepper saxifrage, which (despite its name) is a member of the carrot family. The new species of last year, the southern marsh orchid, increased in number. The number of flower species recorded since 2006 now stands at 152. However, Ann is more pleased with the overall increase in flower numbers as year on year this is increasing steadily.

Flowers in Bee Worlds

Bee Worlds: Kevin Gibbons

We decided to create a new Bee World (4) at the Bateman Road entrance. This was dug and sown over February and March. Unfortunately April saw the Park flooded and the patch had to be baled out. Later in the year Bee World 4 had to be watered because of the lack of rain! Amazingly many flowers bloomed despite the unfavourable conditions. All the other bee worlds and the Oak Meadow strip continue to be flower rich and provide a good supply of nectar for bees and other insects.



Small White

Holly Blue

Butterflies: Kevin Gibbons

2018 saw many challenges for our butterfly and moth populations. A local Lepidopterists (20 miles away) recorded 73 days of sunny and hot weather (above 23 degrees C) between 1st April and 31st August compared with 37 days in 2016 and 29 days in 2015. This hot weather in 2018 adversely affected the caterpillar food plants (mainly grasses). Butterfly numbers were reduced because of the hot weather and early grass cut on 9th July. Even before the cut the meadow butterflies were significantly lower this year. Numbers were: Meadow Brown 41, Ringlet 22, Small Skipper 10, Large Skipper 3, Essex Skipper 1 and Gatekeeper 5.

Other butterflies that struggled in 2018 were the Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and Comma. On a more positive note the Small and Large White butterflies had a good year (33 and 6 respectively). Speckled Wood (9) and Holly Blue (4) numbers also held up well.

Kingston Brook : Conrad Oatey

Responsibility for Kingston Brook is with the Trent Valley Drainage Board, who have a large area to look after, going up as far as Doncaster. The Parish Council and Ann (chairman of FoMP) have recently had a couple of meetings with them to discuss future maintenance plans for the brook. The purposes of this work will be to remove blockages in the stream such as willows and reeds (work is planned to be done this winter). The most visible work will be on the willows, as it is likely that most of these will be pollarded (to avoid them splitting and falling into the brook). As part of this work, some vegetation on the south side may have to be cut back in order to get access into the brook. The understanding is that this work will be done sensitively.

Thanks were conveyed to Paul Phillips with regards to his involvement in getting Streetwise to maintain the stretch of Sheepwash Brook (between the road and the metal sculpture at the entrance to the Park), which has found to be unregistered land.

The other ideas for the brook re-modelling are still under consideration, and may (or may not) come back to us for consideration at a later stage.

January 2019 work on Kingston Brook.
The dry summer (though difficult for us) meant that the heavy equipment used to clear out the brook and pollard the willows did not churn the ground up to any great extent. The branches cut off have been burned.

Santa Fun Run December 2018
139 runners raised £344 for The Tomorrow Project

Activity Days January – July 2019

Jan 12^{2h} Feb 9th March 9th April 13th May 11th June 8th July 13th

(No activity day in August)