Newsletter No 35

July 31st 2019

A round-up of what has been going on in Meadow Park since Christmas

Friends of Meadow Park

January 2019

Over the winter period you may have seen a team of workers using heavy equipment along Kingston Brook. Responsibility for Kingston Brook is with the Trent Valley Drainage Board.

They have a large area to look after, going up as far as Doncaster. The Parish Council and our chairman had a couple of meetings with them last Autumn to discuss future maintenance plans for the brook. The brook had become overgrown, some of the willows were in danger of falling and the water channel was blocked in several places .The purpose of the work was to remove blockages in the stream, check which willows were sound and fell those that were unsafe. You will have noticed a big difference in the area along the brook as most willows have now been pollarded (to avoid them splitting and falling into the brook). Several willows had to be cut down as they had died and were hollow. Some vegetation on the south side has been cut back as the working party needed to access to the brook.

The dead trees in the Arboretum were removed (alder and juniper). Holes were dug for the replacement saplings (wild cherry and alder) planted in mid-January. We had bought a juniper but it was too small to be planted in the Arboretum so it is being grown-on in a member of the committee's back garden to be planted in the autumn.

The scheduled work party continued with the hedge-laying in Bateman Field and cleared up the debris resulting from the work done by the Trent Valley Drainage Board. Streetwise now maintain the stretch of Sheepwash Brook between the road and the metal sculpture at the entrance to the Park which was found to be unregistered land.

February 2019

The willow was harvested this month and has been sorted ready for use in the summer. Forest School children will enjoy making willow structures – both small and large.

A new Bee World was dug in Bateman Field and seeded. The copse in Bateman Field was tidied and the branches/brash piled in hatching constructions (alternated cross branches) to created wild life 'safe' areas when dogs enter the copse. The structures will also make good nesting sites for small mammals.

The shrubs planted last year (around 130) were inspected and most had survived and were thriving. We had worries about them over the hot dry summer last year, but they were obviously very hardy. One group of volunteers weeded the area around each shrub in February (and March) – a painstaking task, but very rewarding.

February (continued)

Our long term aim is to increase the flower selection in the Park, and we had enough money from donations to buy some plug plants and bulbs (woodland variety). We bought a selection which included native bluebells, wild daffodils, wood anemones, single snowdrops and fritillary and planted them in a variety of locations in the Park. We also planted nearly two hundred plug plants, especially in the areas near the Park entrances and these should add colour in due course. These plug plants included fifty primrose, fifty foxglove and fifty oxlip.

The blackthorn and elder was cut back, especially along the field margin in Little Meadow. Quite a lot of litter was picked up, mostly as a result of work done on the brook. It always amazes us how much plastic and packaging is picked up.

March 2019

In the Arboretum a replacement alder, a horse chestnut, a second beech and second wild cherry were planted and all seem to be doing well. The trees in the Arboretum were all inspected and were doing well. Areas of scrub were cut back/strimmed (especially in Hall Field).

The existing nest boxes were inspected and cleared out. Sixteen new bird boxes were put up. One was in use as soon as it was nailed to the tree as a great tit had a look at it and came back with nesting material while our team was considering where to put the next box. We now have nearly thirty bird boxes and two bat boxes in the Park. We think that habitat loss is having an impact on our local bird population and this is where our gardens are so useful.

April 2019

The 'Meet Your Village' event on 13th April was very successful for Meadow Park, raising our profile and bringing in new members. In April and May volunteers worked on the shrubbery, clearing out the numerous pernicious weeds like ground elder.

Wild flowers seeds were sown in the Bee World near Bateman Road entrance and habitat construction in the copse near the Arboretum was undertaken in March's working morning. The copses are areas small mammals can shelter/live. However, they are popular with dogs and so frighten the small mammals. We constructed a series of hatching/piles of brash to give protection and potential homes for small creatures.

May 2019

Meadow Park had a good display of blossom in the Spring and the wild flowers looked very colourful. A little egret was photographed in Hall Field. Quite rare in the UK, there are only 700 breeding pairs.

A number of saplings, which have either been grown by some of our members or donated by friends, are very healthy and will be planted out in the autumn. We have twelve alders, twelve wild cherry, and some juniper and rowan trees. The alders will be planted in Bateman Field, the wild cherry along the boundary of Lagoon Field and we're not sure where to plant the others – but we'll find a space or two.

June 2019

The wet weather in June hampered efforts to work on the willow bed and keep pathways clear. Work continued on weeding, litter picking and general tidying up.

July 2019

The wet weather continued but we made the best of it, trying to keep the Park as tidy and user friendly as possible. Willow was harvested. The willow trees were pollarded. Sadly the meadows were mown on 10th July before the flowers had time to set seed. Flowers like greater burnet, birds foot trefoil and knapweed were all cut down. This will impact on the number and variety of butterflies, as well as bees and other insects in the Park. Also there may be fewer flowers next year. This was an unfortunate mistake and it is hoped we can find ways of ensuring it does not happen again. We have an agreed management plan which stipulates the meadows be mown no earlier than 1st August and it is now a case of finding a way to ensure this plan is adhered to.

Arboretum

The wet weather earlier this year has helped the saplings/trees in the Arboretum to thrive and all (except the larch) are looking good. We think that the sessile oak sapling may not be what we thought, but another type of oak. Though looking similar to sessile oak, the late-leafing leaves and tasselled-twigs of this young tree don't look quite right. It has every appearance of being a hybrid or the sort of oak found in southern or eastern Europe e.g. Hungarian or Turkey oak. We will consider our options here when we know its true identity. The grass in the Arboretum is usually cut every other year but it was cut this year (two years in a row) by accident. The reason for cutting alternate years is to allow small mammals and invertebrates to thrive and thus give birds a better food source. Also wild flowers have time to set their seed. We especially want to nurture hay rattle as it suppresses long grass with the effect of encouraging greater variety and numbers of wild flowers. The Arboretum will be left unmown next year.

Bats in the Park

We have borrowed a bat detector and have identified some of the bats in the Park. We have soprano pipistrelles, daubenton and whiskered bats in the Park, mostly by the railway embankment.

Young People in the Park

Forest School continues to thrive. In their log circle by Bateman Road entrance we have put up some wooden poles from which a large tarpaulin can be strung to protect the children in wet weather. Bird spotting sessions were held in January and February and though the weather was not kind the children were very enthusiastic. Two sessions of paddling in the brook (in wellies) were undertaken on 8th and 15th July to great enjoyment. July also saw a large number of Lantern Lane children have 'discovery workshops' in the Park.

We have ordered a thousand more bulbs for the Park and village children (e.g. Lantern Lane School and guides) will be asked if they would like to plant some of them in the autumn. The bulbs are wild daffodil, wood anemone, fritillary and native bluebell.

Outdoor Gym

We now have the outdoor gym in place. It is near Kingfisher Bridge and half way between the village centre and the Gotham Road estate in Play Field. It is proving to be very popular and those using it particularly like the location as it catches the evening sunlight. Many people are only able to visit the Park in the evening and have been very supportive of this initiative as it adds another dimension to an evening stroll. The gym cost £23,000 and the money came from Section 106 money (housing development) and the Parish Council.

Bateman Road Boundary

We need to think of how to show a clear boundary between the Park and Bateman Road. Not so long ago the trees along the boundary were accidentally cut down by Streetwise and the original fence fell into disrepair. We are considering putting up a post and wire fence leaving pedestrian 'squeeze gaps'. There will be 40 posts and 400 metres of wire.

Wild Flowers in the Park

Eight pepper saxifrage have been found in Gibson's Field. It made its appearance for the first time last year. The pepper saxifrage is mainly in the northern half of the field and appears to have survived as a relic population in this ancient hay meadow. A new plant has been found in the Park – dropwort (like a small meadow sweet). It normally grows in dry pastures rather than wet meadows so may be an interloper. Dropwort used to be common in the Townlands Trust fields near the gypsum works before these old pasture fields (on medieval ridge-and-furrow) were sprayed with herbicide and chemically fertilised in the 1980s.

Paths in the Park

The limestone grit paths in the Park are in need of repair. The paths are uneven and some areas allow rain water to 'pool'. To enable the work to be carried out we put in a successful bid for funding from Notts County Council Local Improvement Scheme. East Leake Parish Council have match funded the bid and a total £28,000 has been raised. We are delighted to tell you that work on the paths will start in September. The limestone grit removed from the existing paths will be left as a fairly large heap (where exactly tbd) and seeded with flower varieties that like limestone.

Some Vandalism

Sadly we have had some vandalism in the Park. In January the fire brigade was called to put out two fires in Hall Field. They arrived very quickly and damage was limited (but still over 40 volunteer hours were 'lost' as the good work done on the field was destroyed). An ash tree was stripped of bark and will consequently die/have to be cut down. A bird box was destroyed and the nest containing small chicks fell to the ground. We would urge anyone seeing any vandalism to report it. This is best done by 'phoning 101 so that the damage can be logged or you can email Kelly Carlile, PC 1530, our community officer.

Remaining Work Sessions for 2018 (no work morning in August)

September 14th **October 12th** **November 9th** **December 14th**

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 there is no need 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.