Newsletter

No 36

January 2020

Friends of Meadow Park

Large Skipper

Annual General Meeting November 2019

From the Chairman's Report: Kevin Shaw

2019 was a successful year for Meadow Park, with much achieved. Forest School pupils continued to enjoy learning about wildlife and nature in general, wild flower surveys and butterfly counts have continued. The paths have been re-surfaced and the notice boards re-furbished. Funds have been ably managed by the Treasurer and publicity has continued in the usual way.

From the Secretary's Report: Kevin Gibbons

Membership was slightly up in 2019 and stood at 190. This is a good number, but we are always looking for ways to encourage new members to join. The 'Meet Your Village' event in April brought twelve new members. We did not have a stall at the Carnival in June as we did not have enough committee members able to set up and take down the stall on the day due to holiday arrangements. Members have worked very hard and this is a list of just some of the tasks they have undertaken:

- Improving, fixing and maintaining the Forest School area
- Building our profile through publicity, new banners etc
- Introducing high vis Meadow high vis vests
- Working with the Forest School Children
- Keeping Hall Field under control
- Maintaining bird and bat boxes
- Planting bulbs and wild flowers
- New fencing along Bateman Road
- Lots of general conservation work
- Hedge laying
- New paths!

Meadow Park Strollers

The Strollers Thursday afternoon walks in the park have been very popular. As many as twenty people joined the walks to enjoy some gentle exercise and see the changing seasons. The walk is now a recognised Health Walk as part of the Rushcliffe Move and Mingle programme. They have four leaders, meet at the millstone sculpture at 1.30 pm on Thursdays and follow the walk with a visit to Chefs Café. The repairs to the paths have made their walks enjoyable, even during the wet weather.

Santa Fun Run.

The **Santa Fun Run** in the park on November 30th was very successful. There were **93** runners who raised **£384** for Prostrate Cancer UK. See the photos on Facebook.

Photo taken by Hayley at Captcha Photography, www.captcha.co.uk

Treasurer's Report: Andy Denker

Our **finances** are very healthy as we have members' subscriptions and donations **(£743)** donations from our boxes in village shops and gifts from East Leake Dog show organisers **(£913)**. We also had very generous donations, totalling **£280**, to the Arboretum sponsorship fund. There was a very generous grant from British Gypsum of **£400** which was used to refurbish the notice boards and buy plug plants and bulbs. However the major news for 2019 was due to the hard work put in by Alan Barlow who obtained a grant from the Notts County Council local Improvement Scheme. This funding is split between NCC and ELPC and is for a total of £**28,608 (£14,308 each)**. This has been used to improve the accessibility within the park. Unfortunately there was a lot of heavy rain just after the paths were completed and some damage was done, in a couple of areas the path was left with deep grooves where the run-off water had gouged out some of the surface. Happily we had already made contingency plans to carry out running repairs as required so had a stock of the limestone material which we were able to use to repair the damage straight away.

We spent **£305** on nest boxes, wild flower seeds and plants; **£311** on plug plants and wild flower bulbs; **£301** for news trees and associated equipment. Though our resources are small we manage to do a lot to improve the Park. It is very satisfying when people say hello and thank us as we get on with the work. In 2020 any funds we raise will go towards new fencing, weed control mats (around trees and shrubs) and a bench. No doubt other things will crop up that need spending on and we will take them in our stride.

Arboretum: Andy Denker

Inspections were carried out in January, April, August and October. New/replacement trees were added – Beech, Wild Cherry, Silver Birch and another Alder. With the hot weather again being evident this year, all trees have been watered over the period and have survived. The Larch, although its needles have regrown this year, is still not happy and will be monitored. There is also a major concern with the Sweet Chestnut which is probably suffering with a virus. All the other trees are doing well, some growing faster than others. The Juniper is still not big enough to transplant to its position and will be planted when ready.

Work Parties: Andy Denker

We would like to give a big thankyou to all those who took part over the year. We have a very hard working, dedicated team of regular volunteers on the workdays. The scheduled Activity/ Working days every month throughout the year (except August) generally follow the management plan, but there is flexibility to work on various projects and react to weather events like the recent flooding. Activities included cutting back Dogwood, path/ border clearance, hedge laying, planting wild flower plug plants, sowing wild flower seeds, removing ragwort, Brownie and Butterfly walks and the regular litter picking. The total number of hours worked on Activity days is nearly **257** for 2019. Unscheduled work such as help with Forest School, tree inspection, aggregate bund, tree planting, hedge laying, wild flower and butterfly count, and bulb planting added approximately another **343** hours to the total. Altogether **600** volunteer hours were worked in 2019.

Forest School: Ann Weekley

Forest School is a programme of outdoor activities which are aimed at encouraging children to enjoy being outdoors while at the same time respecting the natural environment. There are creative activities such as making bird feeders, making ink from oak gall, planting saplings and building shelters from sticks. There are sessions where pupils are taught to identify trees, birds and small aquatic creatures living in the brook. There are other challenges as well, including walking a tight rope and scrambling under cargo nets. The children are Year 3 (7-8 year olds) from Lantern Lane Primary School. There are two classes in this year group and every child gets an afternoon every other week in Meadow Park. The 'base' for the Forest School is in the wooded area in Gibson Field. There is a log circle where the children eat their lunch, protected by tarpaulins attached to six poles on wet days. For the fixing of the log circle and the siting of the poles for the tarpaulin we thank Andy Denker and Conrad Oatey. They had to do this job twice as the first log circle was stolen and the poles uprooted and stacked nearby waiting to be collected by the pilferers. Fortunately we got them first so managed to retain them. The second log circle was fixed down with strong wire and the poles were cemented into the ground. This solution has been very successful, but a lot of hard work.

It has been a very successful year for Forest School. The children are enthusiastic and by nurturing a love of the park and the environment we know the children will grow in awareness and understanding of wildlife and nature in general.

Butterflies. Moths and Bee Worlds: Kevin Gibbons

Butterfly monitoring in the park was limited in 2019, largely as a result of the early mowing (10th July) which should not happen again. Unfortunately this is the time when the main grassland species such as Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small and Large Skippers lay their eggs or have just started their life-cycle as small caterpillars. The situation was further compounded by the fact that the arboretum was also mown, cutting down all of the nectar rich flowers (many of which had not yet produced seed) … swathes of purple knapweed, greater burnet, birds foot trefoil, bedstraw etc all disappeared overnight. This early mowing also affected other insects such as beetles, grasshoppers, spiders, bees etc as well as the food chain above them. It is hoped that we can move to a later grass cut (start of August at the earliest) and keep some areas uncut on a rotational basis.

Greater Knapweed

Overall however, there was a total of 21 species of butterfly recorded in the park, albeit in low numbers, with the highlight being the sighting of two Painted Lady butterflies on 28th June. (The Painted Lady is a migratory butterfly that is generally uncommon in the UK year on year, but arrives in certain years and not others). Rigorous scientific monitoring began in the 1970s and since then there has been a 13% decline in average abundance across wildlife studied and that the declines continue unabated. Butterflies and moths have been particularly hard hit with numbers of butterflies down 17% and months down by 25%, so it is important that going forwards we must do whatever we can in our own little area to help protect and hopefully grow the number of species in our park. The bee world this year did pretty well and was well used by various species of bees.

Wild Flowers: Gwen Mountain

Gwen carries out a **survey of the wild flowers** every month. It usually takes her two hours to walk the park and record what she finds. A total of 82 different flowers were recorded over 2019. This is a conservative estimate of what was actually there as Gwen went on holiday around the time the orchids flower and then the hay cut was early. The highlight of the year was the profusion of cowslips which have spread to most areas of Meadow Park. Of note is the white deadnettle that flowered in every month in 2019. Red clover was still in flower in November and field scabious re-flowered in October.

Kingston Brook and the Pumping Station

During flooding water enters the park by Heron Bridge (which is its lowest point). There is probably little point in raising the bank there, as it will only break somewhere else. There was also further discussion about the flow going in and out of the pumping station and the situation with the storm flaps getting stuck due to the amount of water in the brook. The storm tanks in the centre of the village hold 308 cubic metres of untreated waste water and they discharge into Kingston Brook when they overflow at two metres of depth.

For many years Friends of Meadow Park have taken a keen interest in issues relating to Kingston Brook. Similar watercourses in the UK have improved over the past 10 years but ours has not. Our sewerage system was installed years before the increase in population and Severn Trent Water Authority has licence to discharge untreated liquid sewage into the brook when the pumping station is overwhelmed. This autumn has seen several overflows of sewage onto Gotham Road, the car park and playing field. Discharge samples, tested by Rushcliffe Borough Council showed high levels of ammonia indicating pollution. A letter was acknowledged by the Environment Agency earlier in December and awaiting their response to the following questions;

Flooding 15th October 2019

Do the discharges of effluent onto the highway/pavement/ playfield pose any public health risk?
If so, should the public be made aware and by what means?
Will the Environment Agency be communicating any concerns with STWA?

Friends of Meadow Park understand from unofficial sources that the prospect of any upgrade to East Leake's sewage disposal is only at the most preliminary stage and we can look forward to sewage overflows for the foreseeable future. Friends of Meadow Park are in close contact with the Parish Council and they are aware of this ongoing correspondence. We will give you updates whenever possible.

We are always looking to extend our membership. If you know anyone who may be interested in Meadow Park please mention our organisation to them. It only costs £5 a year for a house-hold membership. Application forms are available at the parish Office and from Mel's shop.

Activity Days January – July 2019

Jan 11th Feb 8th March 14th April 11th May 9th June 13th July 11th

(No activity day in August)