Newsletter
No 40
January 2022

Friends of Meadow Park

We did not hold an AGM in November 2021 so reports were submitted by email.

Chairman's report: Kevin Shaw

Two very testing years are now behind us and thanks to the vaccine programme we are slowly starting to get back to normal, but a significant number of the "friends" continued to work in the park, for which we are very grateful. Hopefully in the spring we will be able to start the monthly working parties again.

Secretary's report: Kevin Gibbons

Due to Covid restrictions and concerns, we have not had any committee meetings this year and the committee has kept in touch via e-mail, and the general work in the park has continued (under controlled conditions), with lots of work mainly led by Andy Denker, adding great value to the park. Amongst other things this has included installing new benches, bulb planting, maintenance of the willow trees and willow structure, creation of more bee worlds and hedge-laying. Everything keeps moving forward and the park continues to improve year on year and is a great asset to the village.

Putting in the bench donated by Arch Communications in March

Treasurer's report: Andy Denker

We currently have a balance of over **£2,000** in our general account and nearly **£500** in our Arboretum fund. Some of this money will be spent on new tools, safety glasses and more native bulbs. 2021 saw some significant donations with Arch Communications donating **£1,000** to mark their tenth anniversary which enabled us to put in a new seat in Gibson Field (March) and plant bulbs in various areas of the park. A donation of **£604** from the East Leake Strollers funded a seat in Bateman Field (October) and wild flower seeds.

Single snowdrops in Meadow Park February 2021

Arboretum: Andy Denker

Fortunately there have been no further trees dying in the Arboretum with the Downy Birch, Sweet Chestnut and Sweet Plum being the only ones over the year. We are at present looking to replace these trees with a supplier being located for the Birch and Chestnut. However the Sweet Plum is unavailable and could be replaced by a Wild Pear. A long standing member of FMP who was at the formation of the park is looking at donating the cost of the trees and this is still in progress. The replacement Juniper is still in my back garden and will be planted in the spring.

Work Parties: Andy Denker

Digging another bee world in March

As you are aware the Covid restrictions throughout the year have curtailed the monthly work parties – no work on this basis was carried out in November 2020 and January to April 2021.

However due to a relaxation of the rules, but in keeping with those in force at the time, work was carried out in December 2020 and May to October 2021. Unfortunately during this period it was only possible to work with a restricted number of volunteers, thus the work parties were not advertised to the full membership.

Work carried out over these months covered general maintenance along with harvesting willow and willow weaving, coppicing and pollarding the sculpture copse, opening up the sculpture border and adding more shrubs. Ground grip squares were laid under four seats. Oak Meadow ditch was cleared of brash and dead wood cut out. Hazel and crab apple were planted in certain places. Various paths were repaired with the arisings from the Green Climber Flail. ***Total hours worked in work parties – 262***

Whilst the monthly work parties were curtailed, the work by individual volunteers and those in pairs during the restrictions continued, more than making up the lost time. In Stonebridge copse there was clearance, coppicing, pollarding, and hedge laying, planting of bulbs. Sculpture Alley saw clearance, coppicing, pollarding and hedge laying, planting of bulbs and hazel. In Oak Meadow Copse there was clearance, coppicing, pollarding, and hedge laying and planting hazel. Volunteers fitted the two new donated seats and planted bulbs. New bird and bat boxes were fitted in various locations. Wood chippings were laid along Bateman Road path.

Volunteers assisted with work carried out by the Green Climber flail, willow weaving, with moving 'Breedon' gravel from Bateman Road to the store and with planting bulbs in the Sculpture border

A major thankyou to all our volunteers for their hard work and dedication throughout the last 12 months

Total hours worked in very small groups - 440

Overall Total volunteer hours – 702

Hedge laying in December

Forest School: Ann Weekley

The School has been attending more regularly after the relaxation of the Covid rules. We have supplied various lengths of willow for the children to build dens along with other activities. The only down side has been the strip barking of three more trees in the area, the earlier tree which was damaged and has since died is being considered for felling and then used by the children for various activities.

Butterflies, Moths and Bee Worlds: Kevin Gibbons

There were **21** butterfly species recorded in the park this year, and it was pleasing to see a good number of the beautiful yellow Brimstone butterflies visiting and laying eggs on nearly all of the Alder Buckthorn plants that we put in the park in previous years.

The new Butterfly bank in Play Field attracted good numbers of Common Blues as well as the uncommon Small Copper. Plans for next year include enhancements to the butterfly bank, and the planting of more native wildflowers.

Birds: Eric Bryson

Some of the bird boxes have been badly chewed by squirrels. They are mostly beyond repair and need replacing with boxes that have hole-guards. We have nearly **forty** bird and bat boxes in the park at the moment, but would like to buy more to replace the worn out ones. Almost all of the boxes saw birds nesting in them this year.

Wild Flowers: Gwen Mountain

In total **129** different types of wild flowers have been seen in Meadow Park from January to December 2021.There was a range of species in flower from July to August with some southern marsh orchids, purple spotted orchids, pink mallow, orange hawkweed, ragwort, scabious, various bindweeds, willow herbs, teasel, corn cockle, upright hedge parsley and rough chervil providing a good quantity of flowers overall. Meadowsweet was a particularly striking feature in Hall Field throughout the summer months.

The hay was cut in August and possibly due to the very dry conditions for several weeks thereafter there was little evidence of flowers in the main meadow areas but in late September onwards buttercups, white nettle, dandelions etc began to reappear. The Oak Meadow flower strip was not included in the general hay cut. Wild flower seeds were collected in August ready for sowing in March 2022. There has been planting of daffodils, bluebells, foxgloves and snowdrops in the autumn and it is hoped there will be a good display of these native species in spring 2022.

Funding Applications 2021-2022: Alan Barlow

One application has been put forward for consideration. It is for £543.00 to Rushcliffe Borough Council Biodiversity Support Grant. It is for a battery powered brush cutter and line trimmer. It is to be used in and around the arboretum and to maintain areas around seats, wildflower seedings and so forth. Unfortunately, RBC funds are exhausted for this financial year but I am informed our application will be considered for 2022-2023.

Our Parish Council is committed to a green initiative and though expensive this is the way forward for our partnership with RBC and ELPC. We have already planned a unified approach to the acquisition of tools for both St Mary's Churchyard and Friends of Meadow Park.

Lagoon Field

The actual area volunteers work on in the park excludes Lagoon Field which is the responsibility of RBC. They employ the company Streetwise Environmental to maintain this area as it is the balancing pond for the Gotham Road estate. They carried out the flailing in autumn and went beyond their remit and flayed areas outside the boundary of the lagoon itself. Some long grass areas have been cut to the west of the lagoon. This had also led to the crushing and destruction of quite a few Meadow Ant 'hills' which are becoming increasingly uncommon in the wider countryside.

We have a representative for RBC on our committee and he has raised this with the RBC's Streetwise Contracts Manager and the council's Design and Landscape Officer (who has responsibility for the site) and will be seeking assurance that the area outside the lagoon will not be cut again. The area outside the lagoon is included in the Service Level Agreement between East Leake Parish Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council, but excludes the lagoon. Streetwise are due to return to fell the establishing trees within the lagoon in due course - the timescale will depend on the weather.

Kingston Brook

We are concerned about the water quality and flow rate of Kingston Brook. The Rivers Trust has produced a map of England and Wales whereby you can search for information regarding the number of hours raw sewage has been allowed to flow into waterways. In 2020 East Leake treatment works spilled (untreated water) for a staggering **29** days in total. Broken down this number shows untreated water was released into the brook **58** times for a total of **715** hours. If you are interested in the scale of the problem or other specific areas of the country the relevant website to visit is: **https://www.theriverstrust.org/key-issues/sewage-in-rivers** where you can access an interactive map of the waterways

Kingston Brook upstream from Kestrel Bridge in August. Very overgrown and sluggish.

The Big Garden Birdwatch

You may be interested in helping the RSPB count the number and variety of birds this January. Simply go onto their website and either download their information or have a pack sent directly to your home.

January's Big Garden Birdwatch
Though it is organised by the RSPB you do not need to be a member to take part
Simply count the birds you see in your garden or in your local park for **one hour between 28 and 30 January 2022.**
How to take part in Big Garden Birdwatch
1. Watch the birds around you for one hour
2. Count how many of each species of bird **lands** on your patch
3. Go online and tell us what you saw

Go on-line and see the advice the RSPB give to help you bring all the birds to your Birdwatch. They give expert advice and top tips on what and how to feed the birds. Last year over one million people took part, counting over **17 million birds**.