Newsletter 41
July 31st 2022
A round-up of what has been going on in the Park since Christmas

Friends of Meadow Park

January/February/March

Over the winter months small groups of volunteers continued to work on hedge-laying, particularly in Play Field. These new hedges are greening up and are now bushy and wild life friendly. These hedges also give good definition to the meadow areas. The Saturday working mornings in December and January saw some general clearance of scrub type growth and the removal of some poplar and blackthorn growth in the Arboretum. The Oak Meadow tree border had all the crowns on the trees raised to allow more light in and enable plants to grow at a lower level. A 'dead hedge' was added to outline the border and give definition to the area.

A number of new nest boxes were put in place and others were repaired. A new Juniper tree was planted in the Arboretum and various trees had side shoots and suckers removed. Repair work at the base of various trees at soil level was required. This involved, on an experimental basis, the fitting of ground grab tiles around the trunk to prevent the soil being disturbed and the roots becoming damaged. Work on repairing the footpaths was started in March and continued through to around the middle of April. The Parish Council helps with this task as volunteers work in conjunction with the parish employee who drives the small tractor/trailer.

April

Work on repairing the pathways continued. One section of path in the Arboretum area was not only repaired but given an extra layer of limestone gravel at it is much used. The brambles growing on the two margins of Oak Meadow were getting too vigorous and a working party in April pruned some back, uprooted other plants and placed them elsewhere in the park, mostly in the 'dead-hedge' on field edges where they will establish and grow into the hedges. EL Scouts planted a tree for the Queen's Jubilee.

Also 15000 + wildflower seeds were sown in various parts of the park where bare soil has been available, the total number were a mix of seed purchased and harvested from the park last year. The sculpture border was also given a spring make over.

May

The working morning on Saturday 14th May was mainly concerned with picking litter. The team split into two groups, one group cleared rubbish from under the railway bridge and the surrounding area and the other worked on Kingston and Sheepwash brooks. Some volunteers donned wellies and walked through the brooks. The walk through the brooks collecting rubbish is usually done in April but was delayed this year giving the teams an easier task as the water levels were well down and wellies rather than waders were needed. In total the two teams found two shopping trolleys, a child's tricycle and managed to fill two huge bags of bottles (plastic and glass) cloth and the like. Also picked up were two long metal poles. Other tasks in the park included work on the pathways through Gibson Wood, cutting back overhanging branches and general maintenance. Some clearance work was carried out in Hall Field.

June

The work Party on Saturday 11th June was a welcome return to 'normal' as we were able to notify the whole membership and ask if they would like to join us on the day. Over the last two and a half years due to the pandemic we have been either not operating at all or with individuals/minimum numbers. A very good turnout of volunteers split into several groups and took on a variety of tasks. A local East Leake resident kindly donated trays of wild primroses which have been planted along Sculpture Alley (between the mill stone sculpture and the Arboretum). There are two blocks of primroses with a low 'hedge' of branches to try to protect them while they get established.

Other tasks included weaving/light pruning of the willow structure near the Bateman Road entrance and the willow tunnels near the brook. Willow was cut and added to the store for possible willow weaving by Forest School pupils. One group did some light pruning of the brambles, hawthorn and blackthorn that was encroaching on pathways and a general litter pick completed the day's work. The pace of the work was quite sedentary so that people would catch up with fellow volunteers they might not have seen on a regular basis for some time.

New equipment

On the morning of 11th June we were able to use some new, battery powered equipment. Alan Barlow, Conrad Oatey and Andy Denker had discussed a substantial purchase of equipment to be used by the Church-yard teams and Meadow Park. Alan applied for a grant from Rushcliffe Environment Support Group via Paul Philips, the RBC representative on the FMP committee. The kit came through promptly from the Upton's at Six Hills Farm and cost just over £1000. It was initially paid for by ELPC and the grant monies were then sent through from RBC.

The equipment comprises of:

- Multi tool power head
- Multi tool hedge trimmer
- Multi tool brush cutter leaf blower
- Along with associated batteries and chargers

On a very windy day we manned a stall at the village carnival (June 25th) and signed up some new members, but more importantly were able to talk to many people about our organisation. We handed out a lot of leaflets and hope that we get some new members.
Sadly there was some vandalism in the park in June. Another tree has been stripped of its bark and will in due course die. We have had to cut down trees vandalised in a similar manner and it is very disheartening.

July

More work was done on the two willow areas. A hedge in Play Field was cut back, foliage overhanging pathways was cut back and the sculpture border was spruced up. The usual litter pick took place, with particular attention given to the forest School area and the railway tunnel.

Wild flowers: Gwen Mountain

In total over 100 different types of wild flowers have been seen in Meadow Park from December 2021 to July 2022. It was pleasing to see the meadow saxifrage appear again in Play Field during May and also that yellow rattle grew in significant numbers in Oak Meadow for the first time. Meadow cranesbill has also spread well into various parts of Meadow Park. Orchids again appeared in Hall field during June and July.

In autumn 2021 as previously reported, daffodils, bluebells, foxgloves and snowdrops were planted. The foxgloves, snowdrops and bluebells flowered reasonably well but only a small number of daffodils had flowers. It is hoped that year on year the rate of flowering will improve.

In April 2022, wild flower seeds collected in August 2021 as well as seeds donated by a village resident were sown in various sites around Meadow Park. It was pleasing to see a small number of these plants flowering in June and July. It is hoped that they too will flower better and better year on year. The hay was cut in July and we look forward to seeing the late summer into autumn flowering of some of our native species.

Arboretum: Andy Denker

Arboretum - The trees in the Arboretum are progressing nicely, the replacements for the trees that have died over the last couple of years are doing very well in their temporary positions in my back garden - they are bare rooted and were not suitable for planting on delivery. The trees are downy birch, wild pear and sweet chestnut and were donated by a long term member of FOMP. All three replacements will be situated in a different position within the Arboretum as they did not seem to like their original positions. A replacement alder, donated by Arch Communications to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, has been planted in Oak Meadow adjacent to the Centennial Oak in the existing tree line. The sweet chestnut which was situated along Frank Kirk Way has been replaced in the same area by a silver birch tree donated by Lantern Lane Primary School in a project to highlight the benefits of looking after the environment from an RE perspective in the long term and will be monitored by the children as it grows. This was planted on 27/6/22 with the assistance of staff and a class of children from the school. The Juniper which died has been replaced and is doing well. All the new trees will be monitored and watered as necessary.

Birds

All the nest boxes have been inspected. Some have been replaced with new ones. More nest boxes are added each year and are readily taken up by our bird population. Good numbers of fieldfares and redwings were seen over the winter and we have a healthy population of resident birds.

gatekeeper

Butterflies and moths: Kevin Gibbons

Up to mid July 2022 it had been a good year for butterflies in the park, and the spring saw good numbers of the orange tip along with very good numbers of brimstone using the alder buckthorn bushes we have planted in previous years. There were reasonable numbers of caterpillars seen feeding on these bushes to feed on this year.

The summer butterflies were out slightly earlier this year with a few meadow browns flying by mid-June. By early July there were good numbers also of ringlets and small and large skippers around, and by mid-July the first few gatekeepers were flying. Unfortunately the meadows were cut very early this year on the 11th of July just as many of the meadow flowers were flowering, such as the great burnet and knapweed etc, sadly depriving butterflies and other insects of their nectar sources and larval food plants (FoMP have no control over this). However, despite numbers being drastically reduced, some have hung on in the field margins and arboretum. In terms of day flying moths, the cinnabar moth has had a very poor showing, but the 6 spot burnets are thriving in the arboretum area.

Cinnabar moth

Activity Days remaining in 2022

Saturday mornings 10 a.m. till noon (or earlier). Meet at the depot (behind the Parish Office) August 13th

September 10th October 8th November 12th December 10th