Newsletter
No 42
January 2023

Friends of Meadow Park

In November we held our AGM with the usual series of reports being presented:

Acting Chairman's Report: Kevin Gibbons

Kevin thanked members who were stepping down from the committee for their work. The Management Plan needs updating with specific attention given to the grass cutting plan. Our focus for 2023 continues to be increasing biodiversity so careful planting and mowing is essential.

Secretary's Report: Kevin Gibbons

Our membership continues to increase. In 2019 we had 190 members and in 2022 there were 221. It is gratifying that so many villagers tell us how much they appreciate the 44 acres that make up Meadow Park. We aim to increase our membership and maintain a high profile in the village.

Treasurer's Report: Andy Denker

We ended the year with a balance of over £2,000. There were several generous donations ranging from £100 to £600. This has been used to buy an alder to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and more willow trees (Arch Communications). The Happy Crocodile donated £600 and £205 was donated to the Arboretum Fund. Some of this money has yet to be spent but will buy new trees, equipment, bulbs and seeds. Unfortunately our bank charges have been increased so we are in the process of moving to the Co-Op bank.

Arboretum: Andy Denker

Regular inspections have been carried out. Excessive water or drought conditions have caused problems and the alder, sweet chestnut, downy birch and sweet plum have died. Replacements will be planted when conditions allow. (*Planted in December*)

Forest School: Andy Denker

Forest School returned to normal operations in 2022 with children from Lantern Lane spending Monday afternoons practicing willow weaving and den making and also learning about natural areas/habitat. Year 6 planted a silver birch adjacent to their log circle and will monitor its growth. Sadly there was some vandalism to the children's area as six small log seats were uprooted. We are considering whether to replace them or to have something different to serve as seats. The log circle is now very worn and will be replaced in the near future.

Work Parties: Andy Denker

We are very fortunate to have so many dedicated volunteers. They work on the designated second Saturday in each month and in smaller groups on an ad hoc basis. Activities include cutting back dogwood, path/border clearance, hedge laying, coppicing, planting wild flower bulbs and plug plants, sowing wild flower seeds, removing ragwort, Himalayan balsam and litter picking. The total volunteer hours is 784 (*as of early November so will increase*).

Wild Flowers: Gwen Mountain

In total 126 types of wild flowers have been recorded. This is a slight decline in the number of flower species compared with precious years, probably due to the summer heat and drought. The yellow rattle continues to do its job of inhibiting vigorous grass growth. Cowslips flourished in April and meadow sweet grew in profusion in Hall Field. The mild, wet October encouraged some species to bloom for a second time.

Butterflies, Moths and Bee Worlds: Kevin Gibbons

A total of 21 butterfly species were recorded. Brian Johnson made 17 visits and Kevin slightly fewer to take this count. We are delighted to see such a high number of species. The day-flying moths continue to do well and the chimney sweep moth was seen in Little Meadow. The bee worlds continue to thrive and the flowers support lots of insects. Dog violets have been planted in a number of areas in the hope of attracting fritillary butterflies.

Lastly, in the autumn we got some help in our planned hedge laying between Bateman and Gibson's Fields as a local farmer brought his tractor to prepare the area for us.

Elections to the committee.

Over the last couple of years several committee members have stepped down. We are delighted that four of our members have joined the committee

A Year in the Life of Meadow Park: January to April 2022

Over the winter months small groups of volunteers worked on hedge-laying in Play Field. Others cleared some of the scrub type growth, especially the blackthorn growth in the Arboretum and brambles in the Oak Meadow margins. The trees in the Oak Meadow border had their crowns raised to allow more light in and enable plants to grow. A 'dead hedge' has been added to give definition to the area. New nest boxes were fitted in various places. A juniper tree was planted in the Arboretum and various trees had side shoots and suckers removed. Ground grab tiles were fitted around tree trunk to prevent disturbance.

Pathways were repaired; the section near the Arboretum was given an extra layer as it is heavily used.

May 2022

A litter pick was undertaken, with some volunteers wading in the brook to gather litter. Two huge bags were filled with bottles (plastic and glass). Two shopping trolleys were returned to the Co-Op, a child's tricycle and two long metal poles were retrieved. Other tasks included cutting back overhanging branches and some clearance work in Hall Field.

June and July 2022

This month saw the return to 'normal' working mornings. Tasks included planting primroses, light pruning of the willow structure, cutting willow for Forest School pupils to weave with. We were able to use our new battery powered equipment, but sadly this was stolen in September. The meadows were mown on 11th July and some damage was caused to the farmer's equipment as a tricycle had been abandoned in the long grass.

August 2022

On 10th August three fires were deliberately started in the park and the fire brigade was called to the Bateman Road entrance. The fires were quickly dealt with. There was an extra working morning on Saturday 13th as we needed to take the seed heads off the Himalayan Balsam growing on the edge of the brook to prevent further spreading of this pernicious weed.

September and October 2022

Three trees that had died in the Arboretum were dug up. Rushcliffe Borough Council funded the use of a flail machine in Meadow Park in late September. This was through the Notts Wildlife Trust. The **LV 500 Green Climber** is a long range [300m] remote controlled, steep terrain mower which is fitted with a high performance flail as standard, for use on roadside/overgrown areas. As the operator is not on the machine it can go into steep or uncomfortable areas i.e. mixed scrub/ bramble/blackthorn. The area near the railway embankment was very overgrown and not good for birds/wildlife so by keeping it fairly contained it is better habitat. It has saved many, many hours of work, and quite unpleasant work too. The resulting wood etc. was turned into chipping which can be used in other places in the park.

Photograph taken in autumn 2020 showing how the green climber is operated

Resurfacing in Gibson Wood

November and December 2022

A downy birch, sweet chestnut and wild pear were planted as replacement trees in the Arboretum. The log circle was tidied up and assessed for new logs as the old ones are not in a good condition.

Preparing for hedge laying

Working Saturday mornings January to July 2023 (second in the month)

Jan 14^{2h} Feb 11th March 11th April 8th May 13th June 10th July 8th

(No activity day in August)

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. 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 **27th and 29th January 2023.**