Newsletter

No 44

January 2024

Friends of Meadow Park

In November 2023 we held our AGM with the usual series of reports being presented:

Chairman's Report: Kevin Gibbons

The three-yearly Meadow Park Management Plan was reviewed and updated with RBC and ELPC. The main changes were to the grass cutting regimes. We are now leaving the Arboretum or Stonebridge Field uncut on alternate years to aid wild life. We also made progress in the following areas:

- Ensuring that firebreaks are cut by the East Leake Parish Groundsmen.
- Using the Streetwise team to cut the arboretum for the first time this year.
- Utilising the Green Climber for a full day to tackle heavy and encroaching scrub.
- Mowing narrower paths in Gibson's Field.
- A new butterfly leaflet produced by Diana and Mary.

RBC funded new signs in the park to replace worn our/outdated ones. Various tasks have been successfully completed, including hedgelaying (with skills provided by Andy and Conrad), the re-worked butterfly bank, the planting of seeds and bulbs and the maintenance of the two most used pathways through the park (along with other sections as necessary). We also have new signs aimed at dog owners to ask them to keep their pets away from human visitors. Next year will have its challenges as we deal with the new pumping station development.

Treasurer's Report: Andy Denker

The balance carried forward from 2022/23 is £3,750.76. Lantern Lane School gave £100 towards the updating of the log circle and British Gypsum gave £2,000 towards the maintenance of the pathways. Membership subscriptions and generous donations added a further £3,343. Expenditure for the year was £2,380.80 so currently the account stands at around £4,700 some of which we intend to spend on seeds, bulbs and tools (primarily a 'tree-popper').

Arboretum: Andy Denker

Regular inspections have been carried out over the last year and maintenance carried out where required. The sweet chestnut, downy birch and sweet plum which had previously died have been replaced. The new alder died because the ground was not wet enough. The three new trees, kindly donated by Shirley Fox in memory of her husband - a downy birch, sweet chestnut and wild pear have been planted. Clive and Joan Higgens have donated significant sums to the arboretum over the years and much long term good work has been undertaken as a result. All the new trees along with the new juniper are doing well. The arboretum is now well established and much appreciated by our local community.

Forest School: Andy Denker

Over the last year the Forest school has been operating their regular sessions on Monday during term time. They have also had several all day in the Park sessions. FOMP have assisted where necessary in providing materials for example den building/willow weaving and keeping the area safe. The silver birch planted by Year 6 adjacent to the area is showing signs of healthy growth. The major change to the area over the last year is the replacement of the 'log circle' with an updated design which has proved popular with the Forest School children and other residents of the village.

The new, more comfortable circle with higher seating

Work Parties: Andy Denker

We have a very hard working dedicated team of regular volunteers on the workdays and also individuals/pairs/small groups who work on un-scheduled activities. There has been an **increase of 110 hours** from last year's total. Activities included: cutting back of dogwood, path/border clearance, hedge laying, coppicing, planting of wild flower plug plants, sowing of wild flower seeds, removing ragwort, Himalayan balsam and the regular litter picking.

Total hours worked on scheduled work group: 359.5

The Unscheduled Activity days are carried out throughout the year and covered extra work required as necessary. For example: liaise and assist in Forest School, wild flower planting, hedge laying, coppicing, cutting back of path overgrowth, path repairs, arboretum tree inspections, tree planting and watering trees, wild flower count, butterfly count, nest boxes, bulb planting, sculpture border, limestone bank, liaising with the hay cut, green climber, arboretum 'cut and collect', path repair contractors.

Total hours worked on un-scheduled work groups: 436

OVERALL TOTAL – 795.5 HRS AED 1/11/23

This, together with the December hours worked, took the total number to well over 800.

Wild Flowers: Gwen Mountain

In total **119 different types** of wild flowers have been seen in Meadow Park from January to October 2023. The weather for this period can generally be categorised as mild and wet, resulting in the hay meadows not being able to be cut until September, as July and August were wet and did not allow the grass to dry out. However it was amazing to see how quickly some plants were already flowering again by late September to early October.

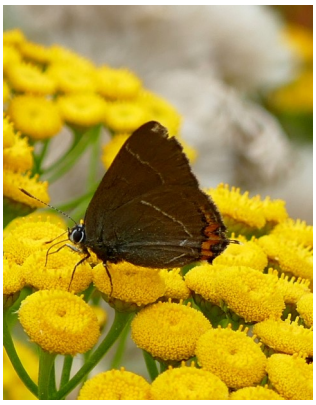
Dark mullein

Whilst the number of flowers recorded is slightly down on last year it is likely that some species may have been missed. Therefore I am always grateful to receive comments asking me if I have spotted such and such a plant in flower in a certain area. Since 2006 when records of plant numbers started to be kept a total of 155 species have been recorded. There were two newcomers this year, **hesperis** or sweet rocket, in Play Field hedge and **dark mullein** on the butterfly bank. There was a further sighting of a relatively newcomer in **dropwort**. **Pepper saxifrage** was also recorded for the first time since 2018.

Butterflies, Moths and Bee Worlds: Kevin Gibbons

There were **21 species of butterflies** recorded in the park this year mainly thanks to Brian Johnson who made 24 transect visits into the park to do this (please see Brian's separate report). In terms of moths, we saw the day flying chimney sweep moths and six spot burnet moths in reasonable numbers. Amazingly the bee worlds and wild flower squares in the Arboretum which date back to 2012 still have a large proportion of the original wildflowers seeded in them. The Bateman Road entrance bee worlds were recently badly flooded, so will be reseeded this year.

Butterflies Report: Brian Johnson



White-letter hairstreak

All the regular **21 species** of butterflies that occur in ELMP (see separate chart) were recorded during their different flight periods from April through to September. 24 transect visits were carried out during this period and photos taken of each different species. In August we had a rare visitor to the park, the **white-letter hairstreak**, this was sighted and photographed by Kevin Gibbons. I had previously spotted this rare and protected butterfly back in 2010, in the same part of Gibson's field and the same month. The speckled wood has increased in numbers and can be seen in many areas of the park, it thrives in partially shaded areas where dappled sunlight can break through trees. There are now many such areas in the park which allows this, where tree branches have been cut back, and passages widened. The holly blues, common blues and the meadow butterflies have also done well, whereas the small tortoiseshell and peacock not so.

Meadow Park Strollers report: Anne Rippon

The Meadow Park Strollers celebrated their **fifth anniversary** this year. Strolls around the park continue to take place every Thursday. Thirty people are part of our group and most weeks there are usually about ten of us enjoying our half hour stroll around the park. We have also added an alternative extension walk for those who would like to do a longer, brisker walk. This alternative walk is available when we have spare leaders!

The walk is part of the Rushcliffe Move and Mingle Wellbeing Walks programme. **British Gypsum generously contributed £200** to enable us to meet our leader training and insurance costs and this means we are able to keep activities free of charge. New walkers are very welcome. Volunteers to join our leader's rota are most welcome – training is given and there is no weekly commitment. More information from Anne on 07913 328 971

A Year in the Life of Meadow Park

January to March 2023

Small working groups prepared the ground for hedge laying and dug large holes for the new trees in the Arboretum. The work was weather dependant and had to be organised around the freezing conditions which persisted in the early months of this year. The working morning scheduled for 14th January was moved to 21st January because of the cold snap. Volunteers cleared Russia Vine from the Bateman Road boundary. When the vine was cleared spring bulbs were uncovered and gave a good display of snowdrops and daffodils. By the end of February the new trees (alder, sweet chestnut, downy birch) had been planted in the Arboretum. Hedge laying between Gibson and Bateman Fields was a huge undertaking and looks very impressive. These hedges are making a big difference to the quantity and variety of wild life we see in the park.

April 2023

The brash from the hedge making was taken away and wither woven into existing dead hedges or used in the wooded areas of the park. Bluebells and snowdrops were planted in Sculpture Alley. A grit layer was put under a number of seats and wood chipping put on the entrance path to Hall Field. The log circle used by Forest School was replaced.

May 2023

In May some of the most damaged paths were repaired as an interim measure. Russian Vine (mostly new growth) from the Bateman Road bank. Some weeding was done in the shrubbery. The new butterfly leaflet was printed. The park looked very colourful in May after a lot of rain with an abundance of wild flowers.

June and July 2023

The yellow rattle we seeded years ago has spread remarkably and is doing a great job in suppressing the growth of tall grasses. Yellow rattle is used to create or restore wildflower meadows, where it maintains species diversity by suppressing dominant grasses and recycling soil nutrients. The usual tasks were undertaken and we had a stall at the village carnival.

August 2023

August in Meadow Park was a very busy month. An extra working morning was added on Saturday 12th August to transfer limestone chippings to the butterfly bank in Play Field, harvest the willow and weave additional willow tunnels for children to run through. The willow structure near Bateman Road entrance was trimmed.

September and October 2023

The grass in the Arboretum was cut on Tuesday 26th September. Volunteers rescued a number of voles, frogs and toads. The magpies came down and alerted the volunteers to the location of some of these and they were scooped up and taken to the long grass in the margins. The hay was gathered up and taken away on 4th October. In all about four loads were taken away.

The **green climber** was in the Park Tuesday 3rd October. 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. The green climber cut back the scrub near the boundary with The Burrows, the edges of Stonebridge Field and cleared all of Hall Field. Other specific areas were tackled here and there in the park. It was a busy day and much was achieved, helped by the very pleasant weather. The work party on 14th October mainly carried out work on the northern boundary of the park where, after a visit from the Green Climber, there was a lot of tidying up/finishing off to be done.

November and December 2022

The weather for the scheduled working morning on 11th November was very pleasant and much was achieved. Volunteers planted 400 bluebells and 400 snowdrops in the Forest School area. Some of the overgrown bushes near the Bateman Road entrance were cut back as it was difficult to gain access with the machinery for the hay cut in late summer. The hazel was coppiced. The scheduled working morning for December was cancelled because of the weather and flooding. Smaller work parties completed tasks as and when time and weather permitted.