Our AGM was held in the Parish Office on Wednesday 6th November and below is a summary of the reports:

Chairman's Report, Kevin Gibbons:

Our volunteers have worked hard over the year and much has been achieved. Our aim is to increase the natural biodiversity by ensuring we have the right habitat management, grass cutting and planting regimes. We now leave an increasing amount of long grass areas in the park to allow insects and small mammals to survive the winter. Hedges have been layed, fences repaired, benches renovated, bat and bird boxes placed, scrub and trees managed and invasive species controlled. We work with local school children and additional volunteers from British Gypsum. We were designated as a 'Local Wildlife Site' this year. Projects for 2025 include creating another 'bee world', wildflower planting, coppicing and managing overgrown areas. Kerry Bently has recently started helping us with marketing, giving her time and expertise free.

Treasurer's Report: Andy Denker

Membership subscriptions and donations have increased slightly. Path repairs have been funded by our Parish Council and British Gypsum. Tools, equipment, seeds and bulbs have been bought.

Arboretum: Andy Denker

All trees are doing well, with the exception of the rowan. Remedial work in pruning the suckers from the poplar trees will be done over winter. The new line of trees planted along the Stonebridge border are mostly doing well, with only one casualty despite the dry, hot period in summer.

Forest School: Andy Denker

Both Lantern Lane and Brookside Primary are continuing to enjoy Forest School activities. We provide materials for activities such as den building. The repairs to the area (refitting of the tarp supporting pole and strengthening of the small section of the circle) was completed successfully.

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. 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.

The Unscheduled Activity days are carried out throughout the year and covered extra work required as necessary. For example to 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. This, together with the December hours worked, took the total number to nearly 800.

Wild Flowers, Gwen Mountain:

124 species of flowers have been recorded in Meadow Park from December 2023 to the end of October 2024. Cowslips and meadow cranesbill continue to spread across the park. The green-winged orchid was recorded for the first time. This short plant (7 – 15 cms) normally grows in unimproved grassland and flowers in May/June. The two wild flower leaflets produced by Diana Jones and Mary Mays have stimulated a lot of interest. Since we started keeping records 159 different species have been recorded in Meadow Park.

Butterflies, Moths and Bee Worlds: Brian Johnstone and Kevin Gibbons

Sadly 2024 was a very disappointing year for butterflies both locally and nationally. Having monitored butterflies for over 15 years this year is the lowest sightings for the majority of the 21 species we have in the park. Due to a very wet spring and a dull and wet summer most species of butterflies succumbed to these conditions.

Bird Report, Steve Jones:

Steve started recording in July. A total of 23 species were recorded by November with the high spots being the little egret (Heron Bridge, 27/08/2024) and the green woodpecker (Hall Field, 29/10/2024). Buzzard and red kite have been seen on a regular basis flying over the park, but no landings are recorded.

Meadow Park Strollers report: Anne Rippon

The group has grown to about 30 people, with between 15 and 25 walking each week. A short walk on Thursdays afternoons ends with tea/coffee in the village. Currently they have three leaders, but would like to recruit another.

An over view of what we have achieved in 2024:

November & December 2024

The work parties on Saturday 9th November And Saturday 14th December tackled more winter work focusing on the north section of the Hall Field horseshoe path, opening up the side growth and working on the copses. This will provide more daylight onto the path and copses enabling them to dry faster; it will also create a better environment for increasing the growth of ground cover and any new planting. Some 'dead hedging' was undertaken to stop dogs going into certain coppices. The shrubbery was tidied up, tree guards were collected up and the usual litter pick took place.

October 2024

On Saturday 12th October our work party had a lot to do. They split into groups and tackled a number of tasks including removing some branches that had been dumped at the end of the shrubbery, weaving them into the dead hedge in that area. The area around the Centennial Oak (the fenced-in oak) was cut back and some lower branches of the oak removed. Various trees in the Arboretum were also treated to the same clean up. The sucker growth from the poplar trees and blackthorn in the Arboretum were removed. The trees around the Bateman Road entrance were trimmed back to allow improved access for

the vehicles used in the annual hay cut. A cut back of the hawthorn growth in the north border of Play Field was completed. A small amount of willow was harvested from the bed in Gibson's Field for Googies for a trial run of some weaving, and lastly the usual litter pick was carried out. Volunteers ran out of time and did not manage to get round to attacking/cutting back the pernicious Russian Vine on the boundary of Bateman Road, but it is definitely on the list of jobs!

On Thursday 17th October a group of volunteers from British Gypsum, linked to the park, worked on the cut back of the growth in the two Stonebridge copses and had an enjoyable day of work in the sunshine. We are very grateful for their cheerful contribution.