Newsletter

No 46

January 2025

A round-up of 2024

Friends of Meadow Park

Green winged orchid

Summary of our AGM in November 2024:

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 Stone-bridge 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.

A Year in the Life of Meadow Park 2024

January & February 2024

Work was undertaken on the Stonebridge copses. We had the use of a mechanised strimmer. Volunteers removed resulting branches/brash. The weather for the scheduled work party in February looked pretty grim so we moved the day to the first Saturday (**3rd February**) and we had a lovely day with warmish sunshine as work on the copses continued.

March 2024

The work party on **9th March** created a bee world near the Bateman Road entrance. Stonebridge copses were opened up to allow ground cover growth. Work was done on the entrance to Playfield to Little Meadow to allow access for equipment to mow Playfield.

April 2024

In April thirteen saplings, comprising a mixture of alder, rowan, holly and fruit trees were planted in Stonebridge Field. The trees will also grow to give form to the field edge and more effective shielding from Gotham Road. The shrubbery was tidied up and some light pruning around the park was done.

May 2024

Tasks included fence repairs adjacent to the Bateman Road gate, the fitting of post and iron work for restraining the gate; fitting a bat box, pruning the willow tunnel, work on the shrubbery. Later in May ad hoc work parties replaced the gravel under various seats and started renovating the metal benches. Lastly, and very sadly, two more trees were stripped of their bark. This was in the area of the log circle used by Forest School children.

June 2024

On **Saturday 8th June** we had a busy work day focusing on a general tidy up. Volunteers walked along the paths and cut back excess growth of hawthorn, blackthorn and bramble. The new trees along Stonebridge were checked. The work on the shrubbery continued. We had a stall at the village carnival on **22nd June** and recruited twelve new members/families. Some wooden picnic tables were painted.

July 2024

In July work continued on the shrubbery and all paths were made clear of brambles and black-thorn. The Bateman Road path and the Hall Field circuit were particularly time consuming. Some of the trees in the Arboretum had growth around their base which needed cutting. The willow tunnel was pruned and shaped and the bee worlds were opened up by cutting the long grass.

August 2024

The meadows were cut on **Thursday 1st August**, turned the next day and baled on **Monday 5th August**. The weather was perfect for the process and a good hay crop was harvested. On 10th August the work party strengthened the willow structure, cut back brambles and worked on the shrubbery. On a sadder note our litter pickers worked hard to pick up broken fluorescent tubes under the railway tunnel. Two bags of debris were retrieved; some very fine glass was in this.

September and October 2024

Once again RBC funded the use of a flail machine on Friday 13th September. RBC did this through the Notts Wildlife Trust who contacted their various reserves and other community parks offering the use of the flail machine with its operator. The Green Climber is a remote controlled, steep terrain mower which is fitted with a high performance flail, 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. Hall Field was very overgrown and some firebreaks needed attention. The resulting wood was turned into chipping which were used in other places in the park. Another task that had to be undertaken was the repair of the Forest School tarpaulin pole which vandals had pulled down. Some of the benches were also strengthened.

November and December 2024

Work was carried out on the North section of the Hall Field horseshoe path, opening up the side growth and working on the copses to provide more daylight onto the path and enable it to dry faster. It will also create a better environment for increasing the growth of ground cover and any new planting. Some dead hedging and hedge laying was carried out in the area of Hall Field.

We are now a Local Wild Life Site

In May this year Meadow Park was designated a 'Local Wildlife Site'. Local Wildlife sites are recognised in the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF), which gives them some protection from being developed. The citation states Meadow Park is an 'amenity park with areas of relict grassland'. Basically it is a remnant lowland meadow, a priority habitat under the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Since our very beginnings in 2002 we have managed the grassland to support wildlife; more varied grassland with a range of shorter and longer grass across the six fields, reducing the total area of closely mown grass, and making some more meadow-like areas with longer grass. A range of short and longer grass is better for wildlife, and wildflowers can be encouraged to grow and seed in the grass by mowing later in the year. Removing longer grass cuttings stops plants being smothered and soils becoming too nutrient-rich. It removes nutrients, lowers soil fertility, and prevents a 'thatch' of dead grass developing.

Maintenance of pathways in the park

Early in 2024 Friends of Meadow Park applied to British Gypsum's Community Projects for a donation of £2,000 to assist in the upkeep of the park, contributing to the improvement of vital paths that had suffered significant damage in the aftermath of the 2019 floods and the greater footfall during Covid. East Leake Parish Council contributed most of the money for the project (£8,000). The repair project, costing around £10,000 in total, involved scraping the existing surface, increasing the width to 1.2 metres and adding Type 2 limestone gravel to enhance the height. The paths were then top dressed to create a durable surface. Sadly there had been further flooding since this work and some damage has been done. We are considering how best to deal with the problem of flooding in the future.

Severn Trent pipeline through Meadow Park

On 16th February 2024 Alan Barlow attended a meeting with representatives from STWB, a rep from Fisher German (the land agent overseeing the work), Chris Garbett ELPC, the EL Parish Clerk and EL groundsman and learned that the pumps at Gotham Road pumping station will be replaced to increase the flow handling capacity. A new pipe will be placed parallel to the existing pipe which will remain in situ and used as a 'back up' pipe for removal of waste water, being flushed through on a regular basis to keep it operational. The new pipe will be made of a plastic material (the old one is of metal) and will be able to withstand greater pressure and therefore able to pump at double the rate of the existing pipe. The diameter of the new pipe will be 355mm (the diameter of the existing pipe is 255mm). The pipe will be 4m below ground and at least 1.4m below the water course of Sheepwash Brook. Land drains should not be affected at this depth. Work is behind schedule at the moment because work on the West Leake road facility was delayed. Consequently we think work in the park will come when flowers are in bloom and not in the winter months.

Activity Days in 2025:

Saturday mornings 10 a.m. till noon (or earlier). Meet at the depot (behind the Parish Office) at 9.45 a.m.

Jan 11th Feb 8th March 8th April 12th May 10th June 7th July 12th
Aug 9th Sept 13th Oct 11th Nov 8th Dec 13th