Newsletter

No 47

July 31st 2025

A round-up of what's been going on in the park since Christmas

Friends of Meadow Park

January: The flooding of the village on **6th January** saw the highest water level ever recorded in Meadow Park with flooding just beyond the Bateman Road gate. Jason Billin (Parish Councillor) contacted Severn Trent and managed to get them to raise the overflow by 15 cm and our MP James Naish is involved in tackling the problem. Happily for the trees in the Arboretum the flood water subsided fairly quickly and therefore roots were no submerged for too long. However the work party on **Saturday 11th January** (working in very cold conditions) spent quite a lot of time gathering up the litter that had washed along the Bateman Road boundary (as well as other places). Many cans, bottles and cartons were retrieved. Sadly some sewerage was mixed in the flood water and took a few days to neutralise which delayed the start of Forest School and was a hindrance to dogs (and their owners). Some minor repairs were carried out on paths that had been washed away by the flood water. Limestone gravel was used to fill in dips and holes.

February: **Saturday 8th February** was very cold with rain forecast. A stalwart group of volunteers worked on the copse north of Play Field to create an area ready for under-planting later in the year. They planted violets, foxgloves and such like plants to encourage more butterflies and create egg laying habitat for them. On **Friday 14th February** a group of eight children from Lantern Lane School planted foxgloves and ox-eye daisies in various parts of Stonebridge copse. The children particularly liked seeing and holding the worms. The bird box team sussed out where to put the new bird boxes and then placed them accordingly. On **19th February** Aart de Groot kindly gave us some wood chippings. He delivered them to the Bateman Road entrance and a small group of volunteers wheelbarrowed them to the Forest School circle and various footpaths that had uneven surfaces or were muddy. The pupils were delighted with their new carpet

March: The weather was glorious on **Saturday 8th March** for the usual work party and much was achieved. Further clearance and dead hedging in the northern border of Hall Field was undertaken and wild foxglove plants from Naturescape were planted. The usual litter pick took place. In late March **Aart de Groot** gave us another large load of tree chippings which we spread along paths that are prone to dipping and pooling.

April: **Broadleaf Midlands Tree Care** donated a load of chippings for our path maintenance and we were delighted. This enabled us to repair/upgrade paths in several areas of the park, especially in those parts prone to dips and uneven surfaces which often remain muddy in shaded areas and make it difficult for walkers. The work morning on **Saturday 12th April** had more to deal with than anticipated. The winter work ended in late March as the birds started nesting so no more hedge cutting/work could be carried out.

There was a lot of tidying up to do, especially after the hedge cut. Some had already been done, but Nixon Walk and the Stonebridge copses were still to do. The work in these areas was completed. However, there was a lot of litter to be picked up, especially round the Forest School area. Broken bottles and cans were gathered up and we hope that this scale of litter is a one off.

May 2025 : The work morning on **Saturday 10th May** saw volunteers striding through the Kingston and Sheepwash brooks.

By May water levels are usually fairly low and this gives us a chance to walk along both brooks to remove any litter or debris and also remove a minimum of low hanging branches that can act as obstructions. We took care not to interfere with the flight path of our regular kingfisher. Volunteers put on waders and wellies to complete this task. They found a lot of debris/rubbish and significantly a discarded bike in a difficult place to get at but it was eventually pulled out of the brook. Martin Spratling, from **Martin Tree Care**, kindly dropped off a load of chippings for us to use in the park and more have been distributed in the Forest School area.

June: The working morning on **Saturday 13th June** was very well attended and much was achieved. Vegetation overhanging pathways was cut back and cleared away, with hedge bottoms being cleared where possible. The willow arch at the Bateman Road entrance was pruned and the shrubbery weeded. The Forest School area was tidied up. The trees planted along the boundary of Stonebridge Field and the road were inspected and seemed to be holding their own, despite some very dry spells. Watering them is impossible so we can only hope they will survive/thrive in the future. We had a stall at the Carnival **28th June** and signed up some new members as well as publicising our group.

As part of our efforts in increase biodiversity Kevin Gibbons introduced **nine marbled white** butterflies into Stonebridge Field. A number of studies indicate that global warming will rob many species of their current habitat, pushing them towards extinction. Some conservation biologists argue that the only way to save some species is to move them to new ranges that they can't get to themselves. There are currently a number of discreet colonies in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire which have been created in this way already, and with a bit of luck we may see a small colony in our meadow. The ultimate aim is for colonies to eventually link up to form viable populations which can thrive in the long term. Their key caterpillar food plant is red fescue grass.

July: The **RBC tree officer** checked for ash dieback in the park. He has to do this as a matter of course to ensure no tree is a hazard and therefore in need of removing. It is best to wait until mid-June onwards to see any definite signs, which are usually more visible in late summer, once the foliage has matured. Committee member Neil Hunter has monitored the spread of ash dieback in the park over the last twelve years, noting it mainly affects the smaller saplings. Some trees have the ability to recover from the fungal attack, which seems to vary in its severity depending on the vagaries of the weather conditions in any particular year. Neil noted that in general, most of the larger trees in woodlands and hedgerows across much of the Midlands are still alright, as compared to badly hit areas of the country like the Mendips, Cotswolds and parts of the Peak district. In Meadow Park most trees were found to be fine, with only a handful of smaller trees needing further attention or felling.

On **9th July** Gordon Dyne, chair of the Wild Life Trust, Rushcliffe local Members Group led 42 people on a walk in Meadow Park assisted by Kevin Gibbons and Sarah Postlethwaite. Trees, flowers, grasses, butterflies and their interdependence explained. One example given was goat willow, better known as pussy willow. It is a food source for several types of caterpillar including the purple emperor which has been spotted in Bunny Woods and may be attracted to Meadow Park. Certain species of trees and shrubs have been planted by volunteers, for example rowan and rose with the specific aim of attracting fieldfares and redwings on their migration from Scandinavia. The flower count has increased year on year with some plantings to encourage the spread. Cowslips, yellow rattle and cranesbill to name but a few have been seeded/ planted over the years and spread. Grasses were identified (e.g. quaking grass and rye grass). As a result of a number of identifications Meadow Park has been designated a **Local Wild Life Site (2024)** recognised by the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) which gives some protection from being developed. The citation states Meadow Park is an 'amenity with areas of relict grassland'. A good variety and number of butterflies have been spotted in the park and the railway line provides a green corridor for wild life from Ruddington Country Park to Loughborough Big Meadow. Currently the **grizzled skipper** project is managing the line to provide habitat for this small, rare butterfly. Ours is one of the most northerly locations of the grizzled skipper. Working parties clear the embankment to keep an open aspect (also important for trains) and put down ballast chippings. The chippings keep a good temperature and are not overgrown, just the sort of habitat the grizzled skipper needs. The walk lasted nearly two hours and proved to be a pleasant and informative evening n the park.

The timing of the **hay cut** is very important and weather dependant. The flowers need to have set their seed before the grass is mown. This year the weather has been hot and sunny so the hay was cut on **17th July**. Sometimes the hay cut is best done in August. We have a policy regarding this process, choosing not to cut every field each year. One is always left on rotational basis for invertebrates and the hay is removed rather than left as a 'thatch'. It is quite easy to see the old ridge and furrow pattern of ploughing before the cut with pignut and greater burnet in the bottom of the furrow.

On **9th July** BG volunteers worked in the Arboretum. The July work morning was **19th July** which was warm with light rain. Volunteers removed the scrub around the Centennial Oak in Oak Meadow opening up the area to give the tree some space to grow and repaired the damage to the fence around the trunk. They also tidied up of the sculpture border, cutting back bushes and weeding as necessary. A litter pick of areas in Lagoon Field and Forest School completed the morning.

Wild Flowers: Gwen Mountain

2025 started off very wet with the worst floods recorded in Meadow Park. Thereafter followed some very cold nights and then a very short spring as temperatures soared. This had an impact on the flowers with early flowering plants being delayed in flowering and the later ones having a short flowering spell as the high temperatures caused flowers to die back quickly. Nevertheless **88 species** have been sighted to date. Sadly the previous year's seedings did not in the main put in appearance. This year the pyramidal orchid was spotted for the first time in Lagoon Field. There have now been **159 species** sighted since Meadow Park was first established.

Arboretum: Andy Denker

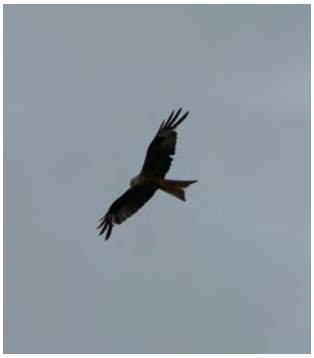
Arboretum - Obviously we have been very concerned over the last few months with the very dry and hot weather, although the majority of the trees are now mature they can still be stressed due the weather conditions. Fortunately they, along with the recent arrivals, are still coping very well and continue to grow. We are also looking to renew the information display as there have been several changes over the years with trees being replaced by the same or different varieties or moved to a different site. The display will need a new map and additional information on tree type. Continuous maintenance is carried out where necessary i.e. removal of damaged branches and growth around the base of trees. A team of volunteers from British Gypsum have recently removed all the growth from the poplar trees prior to the hay cut. The hay cut was on 17th July and various parts of the Arboretum were cut with the remainder left to seed and act as cover for small mammals and insects.

Work parties set dates and ad hoc:

Tasks included the cutting back of various growth, mainly on Hall Field north path plus others; the removal of Himalayan Balsam from Kingston Brook in Stonebridge and Oak Meadow; to liaise with both Forest Schools; clear poplar and blackthorn sucker growth from the Arboretum. Volunteers from British Gypsum enjoy their work sessions in the park .Also included is work on various leaflets for FOMP. **Total Hours to date: 664.5**

Birds Steve Jones

Resident birds noted in the park so far this year include **kingfisher** and **little egret** along the brook, **bullfinch** in Hall Field and **gold crest** in the Arboretum. **Red kites** are an increasingly common sight overhead. In winter, **redwings** were noted on several occasions, but sadly this year there were no reports of **fieldfare**. Summer visitors began to arrive in March and while **willow warblers** were briefly present in April they did not settle. Throughout the summer, the characteristic song of **chiffchaffs** and **blackcaps** could be heard across most of the park



Red kite over Meadow Park

Butterflies: Brian Johnson

Pleasingly, I am glad to report that the warm spring gave a brilliant start for the survival of overwintering (hibernating) butterflies **(peacock, small tortoiseshell, comma and brimstone)** to come out early and enjoy the warm weather to nectar. The continued warm and dry weather has helped the emergence of this year's spring and summer butterflies, some species being up to **2 weeks earlier** than the norm. This is a complete contrast to last year, where the cloudy and prolonged rain spells flooded the park causing the ground to remain sodden and delaying the nectar sources that most insects rely on. The **peacock, comma and gatekeeper** have had a brilliant year to date and the **common blue** has made a good recovery – whereas the **brown argus and small copper** remain scarce. Meadow butterflies – **large/small/Essex skippers, meadow browns and ringlets** are also doing well. A **purple hairstreak** was seen on the oak in Gibson's Field by Kevin Gibbons and Ian Morrissey on **11 July.** The purple hairstreak is a tree living butterfly that spends 95% of its time in the canopy of oak trees feeding on aphid honeydew, it rarely ventures down to the ground and is normally seen by an experienced eye, mainly with binoculars. We have **21 regular species** of butterflies in ELMP, let's hope that the purple hairstreak makes this 22 year on year.

Purple hairstreak in Gibson's Field

Forest School: Lantern Lane and Brookside Forest Schools have now finished for the summer break and will be back in September. Lantern Lane work on Monday afternoons and Brookside have all day sessions on Tuesdays. They continue to enjoy themselves with various activities enjoying willow weaving, den building and river raft races on Kingston Brook. They are provided with various materials to assist them throughout their term time by FOMP volunteers and they also report back with any other requests for help. Earlier in the year one of the support poles for the tarpaulin fell over and had to be moved. Brookside requested the post and it will be moved in due course along with a second post. Also the two dead trees (stripped of their bark last year) were found pushed over and had to be moved with one being sawn into pieces and removed.

Leaflets: We have **five leaflets** on what to see in the park. Diana Jones and Mary Mays have worked hard, creating leaflets explaining what you may see in the park. We now have two on wild flowers, two on birds and one on butterflies. All are downloadable from the village website. Hard copies are available in the parish office, the library and Mel's shop.

Information of interest:

Slow worms: Gordon Dyne has asked if we could put down some **slow worm mats** in the park, to see if any slow worms are present. Slow worms are attracted to the warmth generated by the mats (as they are cold blooded reptiles) and they like to live under the mats. Kevin Gibbons will place the mats in selected discreet places around the park.

Helicopter in Meadow Park: The helicopter buzzing over the park in June was surveying "Electric Avenue", the electric wires that run through the trees at the south side of Gibson's Field. It is likely that the Electric Company will come to cut back some of the branches near the wires.

Black Poplars: Notts County Council are planning to do some DNA sampling of the black poplars that Neil Hunter planted along Kingston Brook several years ago. They aim to see if they are native with a view to taking cuttings for propagation. Neil confirmed that the black poplars are native.

Severn Trent pipeline updates: Site investigation has been carried out by Severn Trent with a trial hole being dug and a couple of employees walking the park with sensors to locate where certain pipes are located underground. We have no new updates with regards to when any work will commence across the park. Jason Billin confirmed that this work is still at the design stage, but ST are tendering out to see who will do this work. Jason will continue to liaise with ST to ensure we have as much information as possible from them. Andy Denker mentioned that **ELPC are planning to do the path repairs in the park** at the start of August, and hence ST will have to repair any path damage. Kevin Gibbons has contacted Georgina Robinson (Fisher German Surveyor), who has said that she will liaise with the project team and let us know timings and what is happening.

Activity Days remaining in 2025:

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

Aug 9th Sept 13th Oct 11th Nov 8th Dec 13th