Newsletter

No 49

August 2026

A round-up of 2026 so far

Friends of Meadow Park

January

In January winter work continued with more clearing of blackthorn, particularly along the Bateman Field borders. On **6th January** Martin Spratley donated seven tons of wood chippings which were spread along the path around Hall Field. The January working party met on **17th (instead of the 10th)** because of the weather conditions, winter work continued and the bird boxes were checked. The Rushcliffe tree warden assessed the three large ash trees along the Bateman Road boundary and decided they needed a lot of remedial work. The trees were not felled but had large branches removed, their height reduced by three metres and their crowns cleaned. We were runners up in the Rushcliffe Environment Award 2025. The winner was Simon Lane, tree warden from Hickling. As runner up we got a certificate and our MP James Naish sent a letter recognising our achievement.

February

British Gypsum volunteers had to delay their work party till March because of bad weather. February saw the continuation of winter work in the Bateman Field border removing the encroaching blackthorn, smaller stumps being removed with tree poppers. The clearance was done up to the markers for Severn Trent to erect the exclusion fence. The dead hedge was also completed up to the fence. Work carried on along the railway embankment with the hope that the grizzled skipper butterfly will find the right habitat as it travels along the railway line.

March

The fencing for the pipeline was put in place but Severn Trent has to reschedule work because in mid-March birds began nesting in the area of the proposed pipeline. Members of the FoMP committee (Kev Gibbons and Andy Denker) met with David Moore (Forkers project manager) on **10th March** and also spoke with Mark Woods, the county plant recorder, who is a grassland expert working with Severn Trent on the project. They made a plan to ensure rare plants were protected. Over the following months this plan has had to be revised. On **Saturday 14th March** volunteers planted honeysuckle and focused on the route of the pipeline digging up and transplanting plants to other areas of the park to limit the loss of wild flowers in the meadows. This was mostly focussed on Oak Meadow. A number of dead elm trees were removed and the blackthorn hanging over the Nixon Walk entrance was cut back to enable farm machinery to access the park for maintenance work.

April

The regular work party met on **Saturday 11th April**. They took advantage of the low rainfall and the drop of water level in Kingston Brook to don waders and wellies to carry out the first stage of the work requested by TVDB (Tent Valley Drainage Board). The aim is to adjust the flow of the brook, slowing down run off and therefore helping with flood management. The first state of the work concentrated on the area around Kestrel Bridge upstream towards Kingfisher Bridge. This involved removing restrictions under and around the supports of Kestrel Bridge and cutting back a minimum of low hanging branches on the bank side up to Kingfisher Bridge. Some volunteers were in the water, others handed them tools and helped remove branches and litter.

May

On **Saturday 9th May** Meadow Park volunteers tidied up the Forest School area and the parts of Hall Field where fires had been started intentionally. About seven fires were started in all, the fire brigade was called to put them out and investigate. In a couple of instances they found aerosol cans which was clear evidence of arson. They report all fires found to be started intentionally to the police. Other work carried out in May included cutting back blackthorn and adding to the dead hedging. On **Wednesday 27th May** around 20 people attended an evening walk in the park organised by Gordon Dyne, Chair of the Wild Life Trust, Rushcliffe, with Kevin and Sarah of Friends of Meadow Park to view flora and fauna. They saw some peacock and brimstone butterflies, six spot burnet caterpillars and some interesting plants including grasses and adder's tongue fern.

June

Work in June consisted of trimming overgrowing brambles and a general tidy up. The grass area inside the wooden fencing was cut. A lot of thought and work has gone into how to protect the rare plants in the ancient meadowland. Specific location (grid references) was used and a number of members with knowledge of grassland habitat and water channels worked hard to minimise any damage done in the waste water project.

July

20 tonnes of aggregate was donated by Cemex. Cemex delivered it and spread it along the pathway north of Hall Field. Although 20 tonnes seems a lot it will cover only about 100 metres of path. Volunteers explained what needed to be done but the actual work was done by the Cemex team – we are extremely grateful. The work party on **Saturday 11th July** once again waded into Kingston Brook to clear it of Himalayan Balsam, overhanging branches and general debris. Some scrap metal was also retrieved from the brook. Later work included clearing the poplar sucker growth in the Arboretum and trimming the willow sculpture near the Bateman Road entrance. On the night of **Monday 13th July** Paul Dulwich set up two portable moth traps to record the number and species of moths in the park. He recorded **35 Macro and 35 Micro species** of moths and some interlopers such as bush cricket. The black arches moth was a male with beautiful feathery antennae which enables it to detect a female up to 200 metres away.

Forest School: Andy Denker

Both Lantern Lane and Brookside have been using the area, although not on a regular basis i.e. they have been also staying within their school grounds for their activities. Unfortunately due to the fire in the area all the loose den building material has been removed with the only items left being the long branches for various uses. Near the end of the summer term both schools used the area for longer all day sessions. The support posts for the tarpaulin have been felled and transferred to Lantern Lane for use at the school. Some sessions of Forest School have had to be cancelled because of the hot weather.

Arboretum

Both the Arboretum and the Stonebridge border have been through a stressful first six months of the year, particularly the recent planting at Stonebridge and the few new replacement trees in the Arboretum. Unfortunately three of the trees have died in Stonebridge - two alders and one rowan. The replacement trees in the Arboretum have so far survived. While the flooding through the park in the early months was eventful it was short lived, subsiding within a day or two. However the recent dry spells with high temperatures and with very little rain has been very stressful for young and mature trees alike. Hopefully the mature trees with a better root system will cope but it is always a worry where the new plantings are concerned, even though they have been there for some years, only time will tell with regard to the survival rate. Nature tends to deal with these problems better than we do, trees tend to lose branches or drop leaves and/or fruit early to conserve moisture and allow them to live for another day

Work Parties: Andy Denker

A major thank you again to all our regular volunteers, along with our friends from BG, who have all worked hard on our sessions carrying out various tasks outlined in the previous timeline of events.

Scheduled: Hours worked to date: 269.5

Unscheduled: Hours worked to date: 425.5

Unscheduled hours include the regular surveys; planting and watering flowers and seeded areas in the Bateman border; opening up various overgrown paths in the Lagoon Field area; strimming grass in Bateman and Gibson's Fields between ST fencing; liaising with forest school providing materials and timber for the pupils; cutting back overhanging growth, raking and removing hay from Gibson's Field, removing the remaining three posts from the forest school area.

Total Hours to date: 695

Wild Flowers, Gwen Mountain:

Unfortunately as a result of Severn Trent's work in Meadow Park it is impossible to give an accurate and meaningful count of wild flowers seen this year in the Park. So here are a few highlights of the year. The late winter/early spring opened with a fine show of snowdrops, there was a good display of wood anemones in the arboretum and cowslips were a memorable display in the following weeks throughout Meadow Park. I was pleased to see that cranesbills still flowered well at the side of the

excavations done for the pipe laying but sadly before they had an opportunity to seed the plants were covered by further works carried out. Time will tell if this impacts on future growth and spread of these lovely plants. Finally the cornflowers sown two years ago have continued to spread giving a vibrant show of colour in June and July. However the heatwaves of this year have impacted on the length of time these and other flowers have been in bloom as they have gone over early in the heat. Sadly this reflects the effects of climate warming.

Butterflies: Brian Johnstone & Kev Gibbons

Not surprisingly, the warm weather in Spring and now Summer is really good for many butterflies. The meadows have been a flutter with small and large skippers, and the larger meadow grassland butterflies have appeared in great profusion, in particular the meadow browns, ringlets and now the hedge browns (gatekeepers). There were many peacock butterfly larvae seen feeding on nettles in the park in June, and they have emerged now in good numbers. It has also been a good year for migrant butterflies with painted lady butterflies appearing in numbers not seen in many years. There were counts of over a dozen seen nectaring on bramble flowers at the northwest corner of Gibson's Field in late June and early July. We are now starting to see common blue, holly

blue, brown argus and small copper second broods as well, in much higher numbers than previous years. Unfortunately, the small tortoiseshell has not fared so well with numbers down compared to previous years; this is also the case in other parts of country. Also, still waiting to hear a confirmed sighting of the purple hairstreak, a difficult butterfly to observe as it spends most of the time in tree tops feeding on aphid honey dew. Last but not least the marbled white butterflies have appeared for the second year, with a mating couple seen a few weeks ago.

Bird Report, Steve Jones:

The laying of the new sewage pipe across Meadow Park has not had any noticeable adverse effect on the birdlife in the park. All the common resident species, such as blackbird, robin, blue tit, great tit and wren, have been present in the usual numbers. Winter saw numerous redwing and the occasional fieldfare. Summer visitors began to arrive in March and April. chiffchaff and blackcap can still be heard singing all over the park, and willow warbler, whitethroat and garden warbler have also been recorded. Overhead, red kite is an increasingly common sight, along with buzzard. Along the brook, little egret can often be seen, as can the occasional moorhen.

Progress with our application to be a Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

Meadow Park has formal approval from RBC to become an LNR, but the process is not yet complete. The proposal needs to be publicised to see if there are any objections. If there are no objections then an official document is produced to formalise the listing. The document is kept by RBC with a copy sent to Natural England. This listing will not increase our work load significantly but we do need to include it in our five year plan. Paul Phillips, Sarah Postlethwaite, RBC, ELPC and FoMP members all helped in making this become a reality. LNR status will give us better protection from the land being sold or developed and we can also initiate bye-laws to protect the park. RBC will arrange and pay for a LNR sign for the park, which should also include mention of our lowland meadow, history and species.

Severn Trent pipeline – so far

The new wastewater pipe will be 355mm in diameter, the old one being 225mm. The old pipe will be left in situ as backup for the new pipe. The sewage will be pumped through the new pipe at a higher rate and should reduce drastically the number of times raw sewage is discharged into Kingston Brook. Forkers is the ground construction contractor and they are carrying out the work on behalf of Severn Trent. The easement width is 20m with fences erected. The actual trench is around six metres wide. The fences may stay in place for up to a year so that the meadows can regrow. Deadlines have been changing mainly because of the issues with Gotham Road and the railway tunnel. They hope to complete the pipeline from Gotham Road to the railway tunnel by the end of August. The restoration of the meadows is the responsibility of Ramms Anderson and they have a duty/liability for getting it right. They will probably use Ermosgate seeds (a specialist seed company near Kings Lynn) and we have requested a seed mix for low land meadow. However, we would still like to use the green hay cut (seeds being contained in it) for the easement area. Our hope is that the hay can be baled up as usual then some moved to the easement area to be unbound and spread. This will retain the seeds in the bale and not spread them in other areas.

The Hay Cut; Monday 3rd August

The hay in Bateman and Gibson's Fields was cut along with the Arboretum. The hay was baled and wrapped in black plastic, then removed from the site. Sadly the north side of the park could not be mown as the Nixon Walk entrance had a broken bollard so the machinery could not get in. We hope to cut this section in the near future when we can get access.

Remaining Activity Days in 2026:

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

(behind the Parish Office) at 9.45 a.m.

August 8th; September 12th; October 10th; November 14th; December 12th