

Meadows Newsletter

May / June 2024



Project Update

The Meadows Rejuvenation Project continues to progress. In May, a contractor was appointed to the project: Wildscapes are a Community Interest Company based in Sheffield. It was agreed that Wildscape's experience, location, proposed methods and overall ethos were the best fit for the project.

Work is scheduled to begin on site in September, following the increased footfall of the school holidays and when any nesting should be finished.

The first phase will be to create the new pathways and to upgrade the existing paths. Neighbouring residents will be provided with more information nearer to the time.

Off site, preparations and planning are already underway, alongside continued fundraising for additional elements of the scheme.

The Town Council only has a very small staff team, so in order to conserve the new

meadow (and wider site) in the long-term it is hoped to establish a group of volunteers who will act as custodians of The Meadows within the community, just as was done at Stoney Wood nearly 20 years ago.

Volunteers may take part in tree planting, pruning or coppicing, seed collection or weeding, stewarding educational visits or carrying out field surveys. The space will be for the whole community and we hope residents will be able to engage with the site in different ways. Please register your interest in volunteering by emailing us with the word 'Volunteer' in the subject line and giving your name and contact details, to: enquiries@wirksworth.gov.uk

Finally, we want to thank residents for their support of the project so far, we certainly wouldn't have got this far without you. Together, we can make a real difference to the biodiversity of the town, whilst creating a community space to be proud of.

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Archaeology

As explained in May's newsletter the most exciting discovery that the Wirksworth Archaeological Society made in The Meadows was that of a domestic Anglo-Norman croft. This is unusual in the first instance because small structures of this period are uncommon finds, but the really extraordinary thing is that it had an *indoor* water supply. Running down the west side of the site is a stone-lined channel that served a covered duct on the inside of the building. This caused considerable excitement amongst archaeologists because indoor water supplies are rare inside domestic dwellings of this time and it was initially felt that the building could perhaps be a small grange, hospital or alms house. However, unfortunately this is not the case, there was no evidence to support this and ultimately the simplest explanation was agreed upon- that the croft had a water supply, primarily for animals and to ease domestic life.

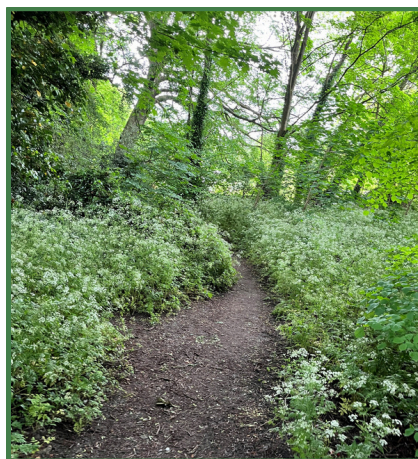
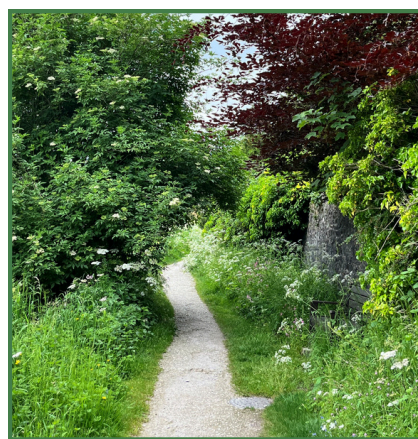
There were few finds of later medieval or Tudor ages around the site, which appears to become a backwater until after the English Civil War, when the adjacent ditch (alongside the woodland walk, once the course of the Warmbrook) became a dumping ground for large amounts of stone. The ditch was then part of the "common midden" of the town at the rear of St John's Street: a status it appeared to keep until the end of public dumping of rubbish with the coming of urban sanitation in late Victorian times.

The croft has now been re-covered for its preservation and associated finds will ultimately reside with the Heritage Centre.

Information provided by Anton Shone, WAS

Pictorial Diary

Spring has sprung in The Meadows





Contractor Spotlight: Who are Wildscapes?

Wildscapes CIC is owned by the Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust. They were established in 2007 and all of their profits are re-invested back into the charitable work of their parent company. They are registered with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (whose Registered Practice scheme is a mark of excellence) and their current clients include the National Trust, Natural England and Moors for the Future as well as many numerous other Wildlife Trusts. For Natural England they are the appointed habitat delivery body for an initiative across Yorkshire, Derbyshire and North Lincolnshire, creating and restoring in the region of 100 ponds per year for the benefit of great crested newts. Since 2020 Wildscapes have been contracted annually by the National Trust to support with the regeneration of native woodland in the High Peak Moors. The project aims to improve the structure of biodiversity, habitats and the landscape; stabilise soil, help manage bracken, store carbon, improve water quality and mitigate against flooding. Each year, as part of this project, they plant in the region of 40,000 trees as well as carrying out aftercare work.

As demonstrated by projects such as these, all of Wildscapes' work is underpinned by the vision to increase biodiversity and create a sustainable future for wildlife, the environment and the people that share these spaces. This ethos perfectly matches the vision for rejuvenation of The Meadows.

What's Next?

Preparations will begin for breaking ground on the project in September. Neighbouring residents will hear directly about the timetable of works, but residents with questions or concerns should contact April Fussell, the Project Administrator using the contact details below.

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