

BLOOMING NORTH MUSKHAM



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Introduction to Blooming North Muskham

After a couple of meetings in October 2025 to find out about East Midlands in Bloom it was decided at the North Muskham Parish Council Meeting to enter the competition and funds were made available to get us started. It was decided as a Parish Councillor that I would take the lead.

Our first meeting was held in the backroom of The Muskham Ferry on Wednesday 12th November and 18 volunteers attended. We discussed the way forward and we've worked together as a fantastic team which has grown to 24 members.

I would like to thank people in the village who have helped with watering, tidying and putting planters and hanging baskets outside their properties.

A big thank you to David Hinchliffe for rotavating the allotments and to Scott Pearson, Headmaster at the school for allowing children to help with planting.

Also a thank you to Newark & Sherwood District Council for sowing wild flowers.

Alison Luke

Committee, Volunteers, Sponsors & Donations

Chairman of the Parish Council:

Ian Harrison

Blooming Chairman:

Alison Luke

Workforce Co-ordinator:

Andy Willey

Bloomers (volunteers):

Ann Willey
Barbara Shaw
Debra Holmes
Douglas Williamson
Elaine Wareing
Gary Hobbs
Jan Lawson
Jayne Bush
Jayne Millichamp
Joe Luke
Julie Frampton
Linda Guy
Marian Jackson
Martin Whalley
Paul Buck
Peggy Buck
Sandy Ellis
Steph Routledge
Stephen Guy
Rob Lawson
Val Preston

Sponsors & Donations:

Andy Clay - trough
Anonymous Donations - by two people
Ashiana Restaurant - Raffle Prize
British Sugar - Topsoil & Donation
Cheryl Patterson - Donation
David Hinchliffe - Rotavating & Printing
Floral Media - Plants
Hollybeck Garden Centre - Discount
J & J Burnetts - Seed Potatoes
Jean Best - Planters & Pots
Newark Heating Services Ltd - Donation
Paul Lane - Large Planters
Pina Dickinson - Donation
Sophie's Cleaning Services - Donation
Val Preston - Pottery

Best Front Garden: Old Police Cottage, Mike & Wendy Stout

Best Pub Garden: The Muskham Ferry, Ande Shagauchi



North Muskham Village

North Muskham is a quintessential English Village set alongside the beautiful River Trent, first recorded in the doomsday book of 1086.

As you would hope with an ancient village, there is a rich array of architecturally interesting buildings with no less than 12 buildings listed with National Heritage England, including the medieval Grade 1 listed St Wilfrid's Church, with its indomitable position over the River Trent.

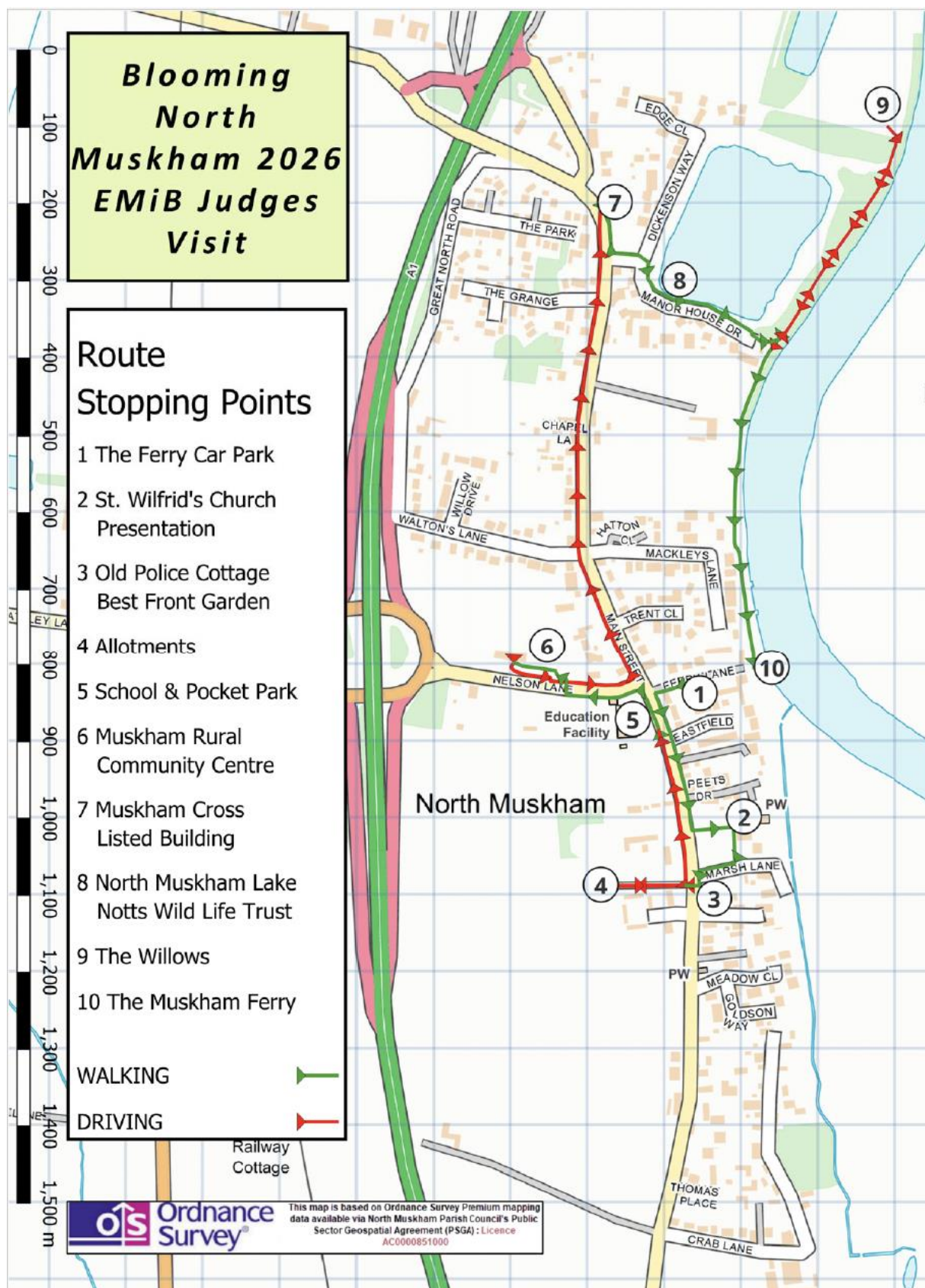
Nowadays, with a population of around 1000, the village showcases a harmonious blend of medieval and Georgian structures alongside modern sustainable architectural additions.

Without a doubt the River Trent and tranquil setting, affording residents unrivalled riverside walks with beautiful views, fauna and wildlife is a major attraction. But once within the village there is so much more we are proud to share, including the vibrant Muskham Rural Community Centre with plays and social events organised indoor and out, of course the Muskham Ferry, riverside pub and the aptly named 'Secret Barn' cafe, not to mention fun events such as wassailing at Bracken Farm.

The community is the beating heart of the village, young and old. The school children attending Muskham Primary School, pensioners who attend the weekly Luncheon Club and all between, support and are supported by the village and its residents with activities and social support.



Route Map – Judges Visit



St Wilfrid's Church North Muskham

Originally consisting of a chancel and a nave, the Church dates back to the end of the 12th century and is dedicated to St Wilfrid, as are so many churches in the Trent Valley.

There have been many additions over the years with the lowest parts of the tower 13th century, a small west window is 14th century and the rest over 500 years old.

Although the Church has only one service on the 1st Sunday of each month and a monthly Messy Church (see page 6) due the fact that there are movable chairs that can be used with tables it lends itself to numerous events such as Coffee Mornings; Afternoon Teas; Candlelit Concerts; Wine Tastings & a Christmas Fayre.

We have also had Christmas Wreath making session.



We have a beautiful display of poppies for Remembrance Day which was made by the Knit & Natter ladies.



We have protected bats that have a nursery roost in Church and in June 2025 a few of us sat outside the porch at dusk to count them and monitored the species with a special device that identified them by their sound pitch.

There were 11 bats, including Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Natterer's.

The Churchyard is very peaceful and has a variety of birds and wildlife including roe deer, hedgehogs and grey squirrels.



Also beautiful spring flowers.



We have recently put up a Tawny Owl nest box.

Messy Church

Once a month there is a children's Messy Church service held in St Wilfrid's Church North Muskham.

In March the theme was 'Animals and Plants in the local environment'.

Children considered their role in taking care of plants and animals. Activities included re-vamping the Bug Hotel in the churchyard.



Also finding out about the animals that visit the churchyard and planting violas in pots.

Following this a Tawny owl box was put up in the church yard.



North Muskham Knit & Natter Group

Our Knit and Natter group has been running for more than 20 years. We meet fortnightly on Monday afternoons in the Methodist Chapel School Room.

We welcome all knitters and crocheters with lots of experience or none, we are happy to share our knowledge with everyone and willing to teach new beginners to our craft.

We all work on our own projects and many of us also knit and crochet for various Charities including our Remembrance Poppy display [approximately 2000 poppies] for St. Wilfrid's Church North Muskham, TEAMS4U Christmas Shoeboxes, Baby Basics and end of life care blankets for Newark and Kings Mill Hospitals.

During the last few months Linda, Debbie, Lynn, Jan and Jean B. have been very busy knitting and crocheting flowers and leaves to make a floral display for the Porch entrance to our beautiful Church.



Best Front Garden - Ye Olde Police Cottage c1850, Marsh Lane

Located at the start of Marsh Lane in North Muskham, at the edge of the 11th Century Grade 1 Listed Church grounds bursting with countless beautiful old trees that bear witness to the history of this place — Wendy (a family lawyer) and Mike (a Research Scientist, and erstwhile botanist, taught by David Bellamy) have lived here for more than 25 years.



A block paved drive leads up to the charming brick cottage with west-facing, lawned front garden bordered by mature holly hedges and beset with flower beds. The garden is graced by several mature trees including two large silver birch in the farthest corners with apple blossom, rowan and maple each adding their story. The central flower bed is resplendent with lavender, rosemary and numerous bedding plants whilst the lawn border beds are home to large mature hydrangea, both blue round mophead and white conical paniculata. Smaller beds to the front of the cottage contain several types of rose.

A charming Monet-like bridge sits over a glistening pond, home to numerous “living jewels or swimming works-of-art” (Nishikigoi carp) and a babbling cascade is nestled by a variety of mature Japanese maples. It is notable that the nutrient rich pond water is recycled for the plants in this garden. A wooden deck for pond viewing, relaxation and entertaining with mature olive trees, box topiary shrubs and helical stemmed bay trees make this area a real sanctuary but there are also several benches and an arbour to rest and take in the sunset.

A front conservatory with full length windows brings the garden into the home all year round but especially in the milder months when, with the doors wide, the afternoon and evening sun, bird song and the fragrance of lavender, roses and fine wine fill the warm air.



Allotments

In 2024 the Parish council decided to tidy and grass over plots 1, 2 & 13 as the requirements for allotments had declined.

Back in 2021 two 1000litre containers were donated and filled with water by a local farmer for use by allotment holders until running water was later installed. In 2022/23 guttering was installed on the shed and the 2 containers re-purposed as water butts. This now gives us 2000litres of stored rain water for use during the growing season and saves on water bills.

The Parish Council had received quotes from contractors to clear the plots and tidy the car parking area. So when Blooming North Muskham met in November it was decided to take on the role to clear the plots and get the school involved. We decided to plant potatoes, pumpkins & courgettes which would be low maintenance once planted. The potatoes when ready will be used by the Muskham Luncheon Club that offer a meal & social once a week. The pumpkins will be given to children in the village.



In March we started the clearing and weeding with the help of a David Hinchliffe with a small tractor and rotavator we got the plots ready to plant. Early potatoes planted on plot 2 & grass seed sown on plot 13 in front of the container. This is now a seating area.



Blooming North Muskham has used the allotments as a base, we have held meetings, constructed and planted the planters.



The school visited again in early June to plant the pumpkins & courgettes that they had sown in pots during a lesson in school. They then toured the allotments to see the sunflowers and potatoes they had planted.

Muskham Primary School

Community Gardening Project Report

Muskham Primary School has long been at the heart of the village, promoting not only academic success but also community spirit and wellbeing. Over recent years, we have been keen to strengthen our links with the local area and provide children with meaningful, real-life experiences that enrich their learning beyond the classroom.

A significant step in this journey was the appointment of Mr Pearson, whose enthusiasm for outdoor learning and community engagement has helped to drive this project forward. With his leadership, the school has developed a stronger connection with the village, encouraging children to understand the importance of sustainability, responsibility, and pride in their local environment.

The project began in the classroom, where children planted seeds and learned about the early stages of plant growth. This hands-on experience sparked excitement and curiosity, laying the foundation for further outdoor learning opportunities.



Back at school, the children have also been involved in the creation of a new flower bed.

They worked collaboratively to prepare the area and carefully planted a variety of flowers, taking pride in transforming the space into a vibrant and welcoming feature for the school community.

This project has been generously supported by The Mary Woolhouse Charity, a local organisation dedicated to supporting children within the village.

Their funding has enabled us to provide resources, seeds, and equipment, ensuring that all pupils could take part in these valuable experiences.



Through this initiative, children have developed a deeper appreciation for nature, teamwork, and their role within the community.

We are proud of their achievements and look forward to continuing to build on this partnership with the village in the future.

Pocket Park & Bulb Planting

The Pocket Park is the small area in front of the school which is owned by the Parish Council. There are three memorial seats and a memorial lamp post that have all been repainted. A Totem Pole that was made from an old clapper gate post from near the River Trent was a Newark Community Arts Project, it was created by local people in late 1997. Funded by Nottinghamshire County Council's Community Initiative Fund. It is in need of refurbishment and is included in our future plans. The area around it has been resurfaced with gravel that was donated by someone in the village.



In November 2025 we planted numerous Daffodil and Tulip bulbs purchased from Spalding around this area and other parts of the village.



These were the results in Spring 2026.



Muskham Rural Community Centre

The hall was constructed alongside the existing one to maintain consistent usage of the facility, and it was completed in October 2009.

When designing the hall, we aimed to future-proof it as much as our budget allowed. We explored both new and existing technologies to optimise the building's functionality. The development included various renewable energy sources, such as air source heat pumps (ASHPs) for heating water in the hall and changing rooms (including showers), as well as for comfort heating and cooling in the main areas. We also incorporated heat recovery systems from the main spaces and restrooms, along with rainwater harvesting from the roofs, which is used to flush the toilets and urinals.

The later addition of a 10kW solar panel array has helped reduce the centre's electricity costs whilst benefiting from a feed-in tariff.

The hall was designed to accommodate a wide range of activities, with adequate storage being a top priority. We now consider it a success, as it is in constant use throughout the day and evening. The later addition of a purpose-built bar provided the opportunity to have separate catering and bar facilities, allowing for events that require either service individually or simultaneously.

The following activities are held regularly:

Children's Breakfast, After School & Holiday Club; Pre-school; Luncheon Club for the Elderly; Art Group; Craft Group; History Group; Yoga; Seated Exercise; Table Tennis; Short Mat Bowls; Football.

Meetings for the Parish Council; MRCC committee; Neighbourhood Plan.

Annually the Pantomime is held in November; Christmas Farce in December; Open Mic Night once a month and various other fundraising events throughout the year.



Volunteer planted hanging baskets to the front of the hall.



A committee member helping children scatter wildflower seeds at the far end of the playing field.

The Muskham Cross

At the north end of North Muskham, 30 metres south of the Georgian house, 'The Shades', is an old standing stone. Today, it is set behind iron railings in the middle of a circular patio of stone sets, like some kind of monument. It was not always so. This is 'The Muskham Cross' which holds many myths and legends as well as its primary function.

Adjacent to the cross is the remains of a track which led to the river, now reduced to a public footpath linking Main Street and Dickinson Way. In medieval times, when the stone was erected, the River Trent would have been wide, multi-channelled, and tidal, but relatively shallow much of the time. The Muskham riverbank was some 150 metres down this lane, known as Holme Lane or Trent Ford Road. The Muskham Cross marked the route to the 'safe' crossing point. Travellers were said to have 'taken their life in their hands' crossing the river, praying for safe passage at the cross before they ventured forth.

We have tidied this as much as possible due to the fact that is a Listed Building.



Wild Flowers

Newark & Sherwood District Council. Under The Greener Gateways Scheme planted wild flowers on their land on Manor House Drive. There was no cost to the village and they water them regularly.



The Willows



The willows forms part of the ESG strategy for a North Muskham based company (OHF Consulting Ltd). The goal is to restore the once celebrated and heavily fished “Manor house fisheries”, well known from the 60's onwards by its eccentric owner Walt Bowers an inventor and champion bodybuilder!

The land had become overgrown and hostile to a wide variety of wildlife and plant life becoming a waterlogged, brambled wasteland.

OHF is slowly restoring the land with the long-term goal of creating both a fishing venue for locals to enjoy but also a conservation area with wildflower meadows, native hedgerows, native tree copse and a thriving ecosystem of life around the site. While it is still early days and this is a 5+ year plan, we are already starting to see good results for both people and wildlife.



One of the lakes now supports life with a largest water bird breeding season yet; ducks, Canadian geese, pink foot geese and swans are all successfully raising chicks on the lake. We have native birds of prey nesting on site for the 2nd season running, along with many ground nesting species on our carefully managed undergrowth areas.

We have recently completed the creation of an amphibian wetlands area which has been planted with native wetlands plants. As it grows in, it will form a much needed wet and sheltered area between the lakes and the river for migrating frogs after spawning is completed.

In terms of the human element, we have improved access to the public foot paths and are creating pathways around the land for people to enjoy the wildlife. We have deployed 2 bird hides for the twitchers out there to utilise and we look forward to many more human centric ways to enjoy the land including working with local schools to do ecology and biodiversity based talks and days out for school children to learn more about the environment and ways that good management of land can benefit everyone human and wildlife alike.



The Muskham Ferry Inn

From the 1850s until 1976 this Public House was named 'The Newcastle Arms' in honour of the Dukes of Newcastle who owned a great deal of the parish. "The Muskham Ferry" is an equally apposite name as the ferryman lived here in the early 19th century, before the first mention of a beer-house on the site, and successive landlords carried out the dual occupation of victualler and ferryman well into the 20th century.



The Muskham Ferry Inn 2026



Planters

After an email on the Muskham Messenger and on Facebook people in the village very kindly donated planters of all shapes and sizes. We refurbished them, used peat free compost and planted them with plants that were mainly grown from seeds, plugs and cuttings by our Bloomers. A few were bought locally from market stalls and garden centres.

The Fuschia in the log planters underneath the North Muskham signs is Muskham Melody that was bred in 2008 by Stan Raynor and was propagated by Steven Routlege at Floral Media.



The group then made, lined and filled, as before, 37 small planters to go underneath every street sign in the village.



Potatoes

We grew early potatoes on the allotments and Alison Luke is pictured handing the first dig over to Peggy and Denise for them to cook for the pensioners at the Monday Luncheon Club. Muskham Primary School children have helped plant main crop potatoes in another allotment to provide the Luncheon Club with potatoes over winter.



Pottery

One of our Bloomers Val Preston who is a fantastic potter made these for our group to sell.



Posies

Jade Loftus, RHS Florist of the Year at Chelsea 2026 arranged a "No Foam" mini workshop in Church for 14 of the Flower Ladies and the Bloomers. She is coming to help us with the Church flowers as she lives in our village.



Hanging Baskets

Stephen Routledge from Floral Media, Caunton, came to talk to us about horticulture at one of our meetings and he kindly offered for the group to make our hanging baskets with his help using plants he had. So on 7th May twelve bloomers went to Floral Media to make 30 hanging baskets that had been ordered by people in the village. He then watered them until they were ready for collection and distribution. We even made a small profit.



Wednesday Craft Group

Marian Jackson and the Wednesday Craft Group's involvement with the Blooming North Muskham Project started in January 2026 exploring ways of making flowers from fabric scraps, felt and our signature "bubble wrap fabric". The aim was to make garlands to decorate the two bus shelters in North Muskham. This has been achieved by individual and group creativity, learning new skills and lots of fun. What will our next project be?



Litter Pick, Tidying & Sign Cleaning

The Parish Council organise a litter pick twice a year and invite residents of all ages to join in.

We have helped by tidying the village too. There was a lot of detritus from the winter flood.

This has included sign cleaning.



Before



After



Painting

We repaired and painted fences, lamp posts and containers.



Community Help

We approached some elderly people who have always contributed to life in North Muskham who now due to health problems struggle to do their gardens. They were very pleased with the help we gave them and the final result.



North Muskham Nature Reserve

North Muskham Lake nature reserve is approximately 6ha in size and was transferred to Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust in 1998. It is dominated by a sizeable steep-sided lake that has developed from disused mineral workings. The almost rectangular-shaped lake is believed to be about 5m deep in the north-eastern and south-western corners, elsewhere being around 3m, although this does vary somewhat through the year in response to groundwater changes. An underwater ridge runs parallel to the Trent near the river side of the lake. The lake supports a limited selection of wetland birds, including breeding mute swan, moorhen, mallard, little grebe and sedge warbler. Tufted duck is a common year-round visitor, joined occasionally by rarer species such as wintering smew. Although detailed surveys have not been carried out, a range of common invertebrates is known to be present, including damselflies, dragonflies and butterflies.

In the Northern area of the reserve, over 1500 trees were planted in 2000, funded by the Woodland Grant Scheme. Ash and Pedunculate Oak were planted in larger number than other species present including Silver Birch, Wych Elm, Field Maple, Crab Apple, Rowan, Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Guelder Rose and Spindle.

In the autumn of 2025, a small group of North Muskham volunteers started regenerative work of the Nature Reserve under the supervision of the Notts Wildlife Trust. The group meet at least once a month with volunteers ranging from 8 years old to nearly 80 years old. Works carried out to date include coppicing, dead hedge laying, live hedge laying and general tidying up.



Live hedge (Derbyshire hedge) over the course of just a few months flourishing and being enjoyed by the resident sheep as well as other wildlife.

Volunteers of all ages helping maintain both inside and outside the nature reserve.

Social Event

On Saturday 30th May we had a well-earned Cheese and Wine evening in Jayne and Douglas' beautiful garden and the weather was warm and sunny.



Blooming North Muskham Future Plans

Open Gardens throughout the village.

Clear the path from the Muskham Cross to Dickinson Way.

Plant the green area between The Grange and The Park with wildflowers.

Muskham School to continue working with the group & would like two allotments.

Hopefully the school will enter the Best School Garden Competition next year.

Create compost bins at the Allotments.

Collect all fallen leaves in the churchyard and make our own mulch.

Collect leaves to make a wormery.

Plant roses along the Severn Trent fence on Main Street.

Get the History Group involved to do information boards in the village.

Continue to improve the planting around the village.

Have a better presence on social media

Try and get more of the younger adults and children in the village involved

Autumn hanging baskets

Winter pansies and primroses in planters.

Wildlife surveys - birds, insects, bees, bats, etc

Repair the Totem Pole at the Pocket Park.