

Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organization (SCIO) SC045955, www.fombl.org.uk



2023 FoMBL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Venue: The Meadows Croquet Club, which is at the west (Tollcross) end of the Meadows in Edinburgh, between Leven Terrace and Melville Drive.

Date: Tuesday 12 September 2023.

Time: 6.30-8.30pm. Croquet lawn opened for play from 5.30.

Refreshments were served.

Minutes.

Attending: Iain Black, Martin Howorth, Jim Orr, Maureen Parnell, Neil Roger, Neill Walker.

Apologies: Joan Carter, Alison Service, Bridget Stevens, Sarah Tolley.

1. Welcome and introduction from the Convener with apologies noted.

Good to see healthy attendance at the meeting.

2. Review and approval of minutes of 2022 FoMBL AGM.

Proposed: NR

Seconded: JO

Minutes approved.

Action: JO will follow up on holes dug by dogs on the short golf course with David Kyles.

3. Presentation of 2023 Annual Report and Financial Accounts for questions and noting.

Dr. Tim Duffy was asked to report on the two FOMBL project-led wildflower meadows:

The South Links fenced wildflower area, led by Neil Roger, will now have low bushes planted in the autumn to augment food sources for birds and pollinators.

The 400 sq m 'Meadow Beside the Meadows' at Leamington Walk on Bruntsfield links led by Tim, recently had 200 native wild carrot and common knapweed plugs planted in the meadow with the grateful help of at least 10 FoMBL Volunteers. These were provided by David Kyles the new park manager to replace plants lost when the council cut the meadow 3 months earlier than agreed last year. This year's annual cut and rake will be an experiment - trialling for the first time brand new mowing uplift and bailing equipment obtained by David with a grant and on the usual FoMBL volunteer task on Saturday 28 October will help clear up following this experiment and maybe distribute the bailed cuttings around the base of trees to help them. After this task we, with the support of the FoMBL chair and David Kyles will be writing to Scottish Water to encourage them not to forget their commitment when finally restoring the land after the sewage tank works have been fully completed (maybe at least a year to go?) to use the same wildflower meadow mix (Scotia Seeds' Urban Pollinator) as on the adjacent meadow thereby at least doubling the effective size of the meadow. With the future management of this much larger site by annual cut being greatly helped by this new equipment.

Provision of new public toilets is considered to be a priority by FoMBL. (CEC have now committed funds to build new public toilets at the Cricket Pavilion)

Invitation to come up with ideas for new projects from the FoMBL membership.

NR gave a brief summary of the September project report (which can be read on FoMBL website).

There is to be no more glyphosate spraying in parks in Edinburgh.

Appeal for more FoMBL volunteers.

Welcome to the students in attendance.

Challenge of maintaining the quality of the grass if large scale events take place on the Meadows or Bruntsfield Links.

JO stated that the Hogmanay torchlit procession will start at the Meadows this year with concerns over grass damage and a possible donation could be given to the Social Bite.

Jimmy Robertson emphasised the distinctive history and importance of Bruntsfield Links, and its golfing history, in the context of him feeling that Bruntsfield Links is sometimes overlooked. Further, Jimmy Robertson drew attention to a widespread lack of recognition of the separate identity of The Meadows and Bruntsfield Links, even within FoMBL itself on occasions.

Jawbones: JO gave a brief summary followed by GC who highlighted some of his concerns.

GC is an official adoptor of the Jawbones.

Two key issues:

1. what to do about replacing the Jawbones?

Action: The CEC committee will meet in 6 months and before that comments should be made (and agreed at a FoMBL trustee meeting) and presented to the CEC committee regarding member's views.

2. what to do with the relics of the Jawbones?

The destruction of the bones are scheduled for the end of this month and action should be taken to stop this happening.

Action: Again, any action should be agreed by the FoMBL committee, but presumably FoMBL would ask for the destruction to be put on hold.

Open discussion: audience invited to give their views on the state of the Jawbones, and what to do with them.

Members of the audience came up with various thoughts and suggestions:

Concern about the decision to junk the original Jawbones.

Possible topic for another GC talk.

Concern that CEC throwing out its heritage.

Concerns have been voiced in Shetland.

Fibreglass Jawbone proposed.

See through material proposed.

Opposed to killing of whales so proposal for no replacement but it was pointed out that Jawbones were from beached dead whales.

Put the original Jawbone in fibreglass.

Commemorates the exhibition of 1886.

GC summarised: The key element is that the original Jawbone Arch cannot be restored because of the fragile condition of the bones after conservation. We have six months to make suggestions to the Culture and Communities Committee as to the question of a replacement ~ should there be one, and if

so, what form should it take, and what material should be used? Of a more pressing nature is the future of the bones, the Committee wanting to dispose of them by the end of September i.e. in less than three weeks time, only a few cross-sections to be retained. This is grossly premature, and must not be allowed to happen without due consideration of the options. We must also bear in mind the feelings of the Shetlanders ~ the jawbones are part of their history as well as Edinburgh's. Reaction to the news of the arch's imminent destruction has caused some consternation up north.

Financial Accounts:

Accounts accepted.

FoMBL has £18,000 in the bank, though much of this is already committed.

Jimmy Robertson then oversaw the election of Trustees.

4. Election of trustees followed by elections for committee positions.

FOMBL members who wish to become trustees were welcome to put themselves forward. This could be done on the night or by emailing convener@fombl.org.uk.

No new nominations to be a Trustee.

All Trustees were re-elected on block.

Sarah Tolley is standing down as a Trustee and we thanked her for her contributions to FoMBL.

Proposer: Jimmy Robertson.

Secunder: Dr. Tim Duffy.

It was decided to take 6. before 5. so that the AGM formalities were completed before the talk.

6. AOCB

A member expressed appreciation for the Little Library at the Community Garden / Greening Our Street.

The issue of the preservation of found water pipes was raised by GC. GC described how the remaining wooden water pipes have been preserved.

The AGM meeting closed, followed by the talk.

5. Local historian Graeme Cruickshank delivered a short talk:

Title: Water - a clutch of local anniversaries.

Description: Last year saw the anniversaries of half a dozen events relating to Edinburgh's water supply, which included a centenary, two bicentenaries, two tercentenaries, and a quarter-centenary (that's four hundred years). Several of them had connections with The Meadows and/or Bruntsfield Links.

Bio: Graeme Cruickshank is a graduate of Edinburgh University in Scottish History and Archaeology, being a prize-winner at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. For fifteen years, he was Local Historian with Edinburgh City Museums, being awarded both the Associateship and the Fellowship of the Museums Association, and since 1988 has run his own little business, Edinburgh Historical Enterprises. He is also a founder-member of FoMBL.

Talk Summary: EDINBURGH'S WATER ~ a clutch of anniversaries in 2022, relevant to The Meadows and Bruntsfield Links, by Graeme Cruickshank

Prior to the introduction of piped water, Edinburgh's insufficient wells meant that the town's water supply was heavily dependent on the South or Burgh Loch. That changed dramatically when the Town Council passed 'An Act anent supplying water to the city from a distance' in 1621. The scheme probably got off the ground in the following year, giving us the first water anniversary, a quater-centenary. A pipeline was constructed all the way from Comiston Springs to the reservoir on Castlehill, the water being carried in wooden pipes. Illustrations showed the ways in which they were constructed. Maps charted the course of the pipeline, including crossing Bruntsfield Links (which supported a number of hand-pumped wells) and The Meadows.

An important tercentenary occurred in 1722, when Thomas Hope took over the draining the Burgh Loch (started in 1657), the third man to do so following the good work of John Straiton and William Carfrae. Hope was president of the Society of Improvers and made great strides, but completion was only achieved in 1863. His house still stands in Hope Park Square. A vital element in Edinburgh's water supply were the water cadies (instituted 1718), who by 1722 were operating to a set of rules. Illustrations show both men and women engaged in this vital task.

A most notable bicentenary marked the introduction of water right into peoples homes in 1822, and the practice of 'waiting at the well' ceased. That year also saw water come into Edinburgh in another way, almost reaching The Meadows ~ the opening of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Union Canal, terminating at Port Hopetoun on Lothian Road. The plan to take it through the middle of the Links and alongside The Meadows before heading to Leith came to nought. Exactly a century later, Port Hopetoun closed, in 1922; a

monument of 1935 by Pilkington Jackson now marks the place. Finally, instances were shown of the old Burgh Loch being briefly restored in recent years ~ who knows, climate change may yet complete the job!

Following the talk, we were treated to a rendition of a charming song called 'I Walked through The Meadows', composed and sung by Vroni Holzmann.