



Friends of the Meadows & Bruntsfield Links

Issue 01 : Autumn 2001

Newsletter

Groundwork ... 'Friends of Parks' is an initiative by the Parks Division of the City Council's Department of Recreation. It is intended to serve as a means of involving local people in the protection and development of local parklands. Not least among these is the strategically and historically important area known as:

'The Meadows and Bruntsfield Links'

Originally this land consisted of the South Loch and the Burgh Muir lying to the south of the Castle and the Old Town of Edinburgh. The loch was its first major water supply, and the moor served as rough pasture and hunting ground for the earliest townspeople. Over succeeding centuries the moor was exploited for timber and stone, and the loch drained to provide recreational parkland. There are several fascinating accounts of how this area evolved through the centuries, which can be accessed via Edinburgh's excellent Public Library Service.

Hopefully, a most significant development took place on 18 June 2001, in the forming of 'Friends of The Meadows and Bruntsfield Links' supported by the Parks Department and three Community Councils bordering the area (Marchmont & Sciennes, Southside, and Tollcross). The Objectives of the Friends include: - conservation and enhancement of the landscape; development of its facilities for education, recreation and leisure use; providing a focus for interaction between the various communities with

interest in this unique parkland, and the Parks Department's Executives. These communities range widely from merely relaxing, walking the dog, and enjoying the views, to energetic indulgence in the many sorts of individual exercise, play, and team sports, practised throughout the year.

It is an ambitious programme, but many hands make light work, and the more members we have, the more power we will have to achieve our common objectives.



The current annual membership fee of £2.00 for individuals, and £10.00 for organisations, is calculated to cover basic costs of communications such as this newsletter, stationery, postages, etc.

Urgent : Stop Press

**The Meadows & Bruntsfield Links
Next Meeting of 'Friends'
7.00-pm on Monday
5 November 2001
at
The Royal Company
of Archers' Hall
Buccleuch Street Edinburgh**

Stop Press : Urgent

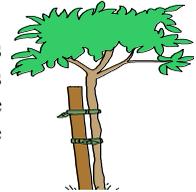
Planting the Seeds ... In the beginning was an exploratory meeting on 17 January 2001, hosted by the recently relocated Bush Croquet Club at West Meadows Bowling Pavilion, and convened by Steve Leslie (then Secretary of Tollcross Community Council). Those attending represented various bodies with a specific interest in the Meadows & Links, including local Councillors and Parks administrators.

Discussion ranged widely, but centred around the apparent deterioration of the condition and appearance of the Meadows & Links, and the actions needed to effect improvements. Litter, including dog waste and broken glass, was an obvious concern for most people present (including officials). Not surprisingly, as it seems that we have fewer bins and collections now (in the take-away-throw-away era) than in living memory. Similarly, the perception of crime, vandalism, and disorderly behaviour, has never been so high, yet we have no daily patrols by police or park wardens, much less evening or night patrols. The officials present assured us that our concerns were noted and would be brought to the attention of the City Council.

The Parks Department expressed their particular concerns for the deterioration of the fabric of the park, e.g. the growing need to replace ageing trees, benches, boundary fences, and the restoration of monuments. It seems that there are some funds available to community groups for environmental improvements, which are not available to councils. A Friends group could usefully access these funds for specific improvement and renewal projects, thereby releasing more of the council's budget for essential maintenance and repairs.

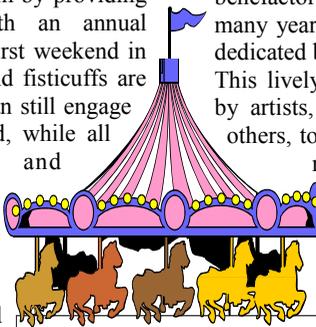
The outcome was that the meeting agreed to form a representative steering group to set up a constituted body, to be known as **'Friends of The Meadows & Bruntsfield Links'** with the launch this at the Meadows Festival on 2 June - an appropriate event at which to recruit members.

Meanwhile, a tree was planted on the edge of the Links near Wrights Houses by Cllr Steve Cardownie (CEC Leisure and Culture) and Dr Chris Wigglesworth (Secretary FM&BL), to commemorate the launch of the 'Friends of Parks' initiative on the day of the heaviest snow fall of the winter (26 February).



Come to ye Olde Faire? Well, perhaps not *that* old! - but the Meadows Festival Association (founded 1974) follows ancient custom by providing Edinburgh's populace with an annual market and funfair on the first weekend in June. Although jousting and fisticuffs are now infradig, local youth can still engage in battle on the sports field, while all around trader's stalls and performers compete for your custom.

The Friends chose this occasion for their first membership drive, and recruited thirty five new members, while distributing hundreds of leaflets on the 'Friends of Parks concept'. Our base was a pergola tent, kindly donated by our first



corporate member, William Keith Taylor of Taylor Amusements. — His father William Newton Taylor was a benefactor of the Meadows Festival for many years, and is commemorated by a dedicated bench near the sports pavilion. This lively festival is widely supported by artists, craft stalls, performers, and others, too numerous to list here. It is remarkably well organised by a few unpaid community volunteers, who are desperate for your help with any aspect of it. **Whether there is one next year may depend on you.**

**For further information
telephone 0131 620 9108**

The Inaugural Meeting.....of thirty five members met at 7.30 pm Monday 18 June 2001 in the Meadows Croquet Club. The draft constitution offered for 'Friends of Meadows & Bruntsfield Links' was formally accepted by the meeting, and a management committee of seven people including three officers (see insert) was appointed for one year. The officers were instructed to open a bank account in the name of FM&BL. We resolved to have at least four General Meetings and endeavour to produce two newsletters, in the course of the year.

Jim McKay and Ian Hay (CEC Parks Management) addressed the meeting on their problems and hopes for the Meadows and Links, much as described for the exploratory meeting on 17 January (see report 'Planting the Seeds'). The ensuing discussion suggested that the committee should consider forming focus groups to cover the following areas of current concern:

1. **Benches and bins** location, to include lighting, litter and dog dirt.
2. **Buildings**, to include huts, catering stalls, toilets, signs, monuments, boundary fences and walls.
3. **Landscape**, to include trees, turf, pathways, drainage, erosion, and damage (e.g. disposable barbecues).

Any member with an interest in any of these concerns, is warmly invited to join an Action Group and help decide how we should deal with them. Please contact the secretary at →

Before closing the meeting, Dr Yap invited all members to our first Guided Walking Tour of trees and monuments on the Meadows in July. He would very much appreciate your feedback on this, and any suggestions for future activities.

**“It’s Your Show! We want to do
What You want us to, So Feed back now!”**

Park Watch Partners... Every Friend is a partner in helping to protect our unique urban environment by acting as the Council’s eyes and ears. They need your assistance as they can not be everywhere at all times. Telephone one of the numbers below if you see something that needs their attention (you may give your name or not— as you prefer).



Look out for the 1950’s style ‘Parkie’ doing his rounds!

**Office
Bearers
&
Committee**

Chair: Dr Peng Lee Yap, 5 Meadow Place, EH9 1JZ. Tel 229 0948
Secretary: Dr Chris Wigglesworth, 12 Leven Terrace, EH3 9LW. Tel 228 6335
Treasurer: Josephine Scott, 31/8 Salisbury Road, EH16 5AA. Tel 667 3386
Committee: Rona Dunbar; David Rintoull; John Simon; David White.

Dumped Items	0808 100 3366	Rubbish, furniture, traffic signs, shopping trolleys, etc..
Litter Problems	0131 664 8330	Environmental Task Force Manager for Meadows & Tollcross
Park Warden Service	0131 332 2368	Vandalism to trees, turf, seats, playgrounds, monuments, etc.
Pathway Lighting	0800 23 23 23	Non-functioning lamps - quote lamp post number or exact location.
Police—St Leonard’s	0131 662 5000	Disturbances, fires, vehicles parked on grass, vandalism
Police—West End	0131 229 2323	As for St Leonard’s Police, but for the west end of the Links

A word from the Chair Dr Peng Lee Yap.



"A Nice Hot Cappuccino"

Q) How did you first become involved in Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links?

A) Marchmont and Sciennes Community Council were keen supporters in setting up the Friends group, and they nominated me as Convenor.

Q) What do you see the Friends group doing for the Meadows and Links area?

A) Suggested areas for activity are offered in the report on 'The Inaugural Meeting' in this Newsletter - Page 3. We would like to be an organisation whereby individual members of the public can initiate improvements to the Meadows and Links. How often has one felt that there was something needing done to improve the Meadows or Links, but been unable or disinclined to act on our own? We would like to give our members an opportunity to join with others who want to contribute something.

Q) What would your pet project be for the Meadows?

A) I see the Meadows as quite bleak at times, and vandalism as a major problem. My favoured solution would be to convert part (but only part!) of the Games Pavilion near the Whale's Jawbones to a cafe. Imagine being able to have a nice hot cappuccino on a cold afternoon on the Meadows? With more people using it as a meeting point, I am sure the opportunity for vandalism would decrease. A cafe could bring in some funds to help maintain the building, and might even lead to a toilet facility there too.

Q) Do you foresee any approaching problems for the Meadows and Links?

A) My main concern is that proposed traffic tolls plans for Edinburgh could lead to Melville Drive becoming even more heavily used by traffic, and consequently create a barrier between the Meadows and the Links. Traffic control is important, but people are more important, and we do not want an impassable barrier between the Meadows and the heavily populated communities around them.

Q) And the greatest asset?

A) I have no doubt that the frequent and varied use of the Meadows and Links by all sections of the public is its greatest asset, and this ensures that we all have a vested interest in their well-being. However, we must be wary that overuse does not become a problem. Currently we are losing trees to old age, disease, and vandals. Turf is eroding badly in places from damage caused by vehicles and overuse. Somehow we must encourage the various users to be considerate of each other's uses, as their best interest in the long term is their common interest in conserving the whole.

Q) What do you see as the prime objective for the Friends?

A) To recruit as many members as possible. Many hands make light work, many heads produce solutions to problems, and many people represent much influence. If the Friends of Corstorphine Hill can recruit over 1,000 members, so can we! So if you are not already a member, and care about the Meadows and Links—**please do join us.**

Bruntsfield Links—Short Hole Golf ... has now moved to its winter course at the east end of the Links.

Beyond the Fringe...

Well, how was it for you? My feed-back on First Fringe Sunday on the Meadows has been mixed, but leans toward the positive. Living on the edge as I do (of the Meadows!) I will admit to pangs of NIMBYism, but I had to agree that strategically it was the best site for a popular event of this sort.

The Royal Infirmary and the Parks Department were even more apprehensive, but it seems their fears were not fulfilled either. Casualties were mostly minor, and much less than expected considering the estimated attendance of 150,000 despite the threatening rain. The impact of heavy vehicles and litter was very obvious when the site was cleared on the following day, and the inclement weather made it look worse. However, the Parks Department assures me that the premium paid by the Fringe would adequately cover the costs of the remedial work required.

Most people seemed to enjoy themselves, but although those with kids might have spent more, had the funfair and the very many catering stalls offered better value for their money. On the other hand, the variety and quality of free performances more than compensated.

As expected, parking was chaotic and many resorted to parking off-road, as police and park wardens did not seem to mind, but I have no doubt that next year the new 'Enforcers' will recognise an earning opportunity when they see it.

John Simon

Trees and Monuments Walk..... More than twenty five people turned out on an evening in July for the first Friends walkabout, which focused on trees and monuments on the east side of the Meadows, and was conducted by Jim McKay and John Munro (City Parks Management), and Paul McAuley (Monuments Conservator).

Starting at the landmark of the Whale's Jawbones, Paul McAuley explained that many of the monuments on the Meadows, including the jawbones, are relics of the 1886 Exhibition held here. He told of the history behind various monuments, including the Helen Acquroff Fountain by the Cricket Pavilion, (which used to have a dolphin water spout - what happened to that?) and Nelson's Pillars at the east end of Melville Drive. These pillars were donated

PEOPLE NEED PARKS

Do you use the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links regularly, for recreation, exercise, play, sport, dog walking or even just for recreation?



PARKS NEED PEOPLE

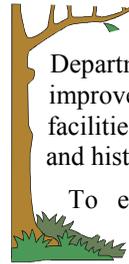
Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links are an association of Edinburgh citizens, with a particular interest in this area. We are especially keen to be involved, with the City of

Edinburgh

Recreation

Department, in the planning for improvement of the landscape, facilities and use of this unique and historic parkland.

To ensure all interests are fairly represented—we need your ideas and input; please come and join us!



PLEASE OBSERVE



BBQs On Footpaths Fouling

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by Nelson the publishers around 1880, and are made from the same sandstone as the Scott Monument.

Jim McKay suggested that a possible future project for the FM&BL could be to reinstate the iron boundary railings at the Hope Park end of the Meadows. Currently this area is fenced off with wire mesh—cheap but a bit tatty for a city centre park.

John Munro (Tree Specialist) said that about a quarter of the Meadows’ trees are Elms, and that between five and seven of these are lost each year due to age and Dutch Elm Disease. FM&BL are invited to consider what sort of trees should replace them. For example, Lime trees could be suitable as they offer similar stature and grandeur, and another possibility might be disease-resistant Elms. Sycamores were quite popular replacements for a while as they are ‘fast growing, but rather uninteresting’.

Another problem for FM&BL to consider, is what action should be taken regarding the trees on Melville Drive. Many of these now constitute a safety hazard as they grow old; they now overhang the road and are therefore a potential danger to traffic.

It was also mentioned that planting trees in groups needs to be more carefully managed, as many of the younger trees on the Meadows are now suffering from suppression by those towering above them.

The tour concluded at a ‘vandal proof’ bench which the Council had temporarily placed on Middle Meadow Walk so that FM&BL members could assess its appearance and effectiveness. What do you think of it?



Litter — Bin it please!...

We are hoping to have a few more bins strategically situated on the Meadows and Links in the near future.

Of course, getting bins is just a little easier than getting some folk to use them. However, it does give Friends the opportunity to set an example. How often would you have picked something up to deposit in the nearest bin, if you did not have to carry it a half mile to find a bin?

The first ‘Friends’ Meeting of 2002 will be on 19 February in Barclay Church at 7.00-pm



Friends of the Meadows & Bruntsfield Links Membership Form

Forename: _____ Surname _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

Tel. _____ E/mail: _____

I enclose Annual Subscription of £2 (individual) **or** £10 (organisation) £

Please make cheques payable to ‘Friends of the Meadows & Bruntsfield Links’.

Signature Date

Please return to: Mrs Josephine Scott, 8 Salisbury Heights, 31 Salisbury Road, Edinburgh EH16 5AA