



# Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

N E W S L E T T E R 17  
Autumn 2007

## **Climate change and the Meadows** by P L Yap, Chairman

This summer saw a local effect of climate change on the site of the Moonwalk and the Ladyboys of Bangkok Tent. As you will recall, this year we had a very wet summer and as a result of the Moonwalk organizers having too big a tent and having to use very heavy equipment for the erection and dismantling of their tent, during a period of heavy rain, a great deal of damage was done to the Meadows. Parts of it were heavily furrowed and other parts became mud baths. This particular section of the Meadows could not be repaired after the Moonwalk tent was dismantled because of the heavy rain, and no sooner had attempts been made to repair this part of Meadows than the Ladyboys was erected.

The Ladyboys tent was there for about five weeks, and during that time, damage was done to the grass in this section of the Meadows, as it had been completely covered by the Ladyboys tent and various footpaths and vehicles. Worse was to follow as there was then a spell of dry weather, which resulted in this section of the Meadows becoming even more compacted, preventing the grass from regrowing. The surface became as hard as concrete and uneven and, as a result, this section of the Meadows was not used by anyone for many weeks.

### **Reinstatement bond**

We are told by the Council that a reinstatement bond is obtained from each of the users of the Meadows, and that this bond is used to patch up the damage. However, this is of little use when there is permanent damage done to the Meadows in the form of severe compaction or muddy areas due to deep furrows being left by heavy vehicles. People who use the Meadows are prevented from enjoying these spaces as it is very unpleasant to play football or other games in muddy or compacted areas where little grass grows. Three years ago there was also very heavy rain in summer and a similar problem arose, in the area between Middle Meadow Walk and the Ladyboys tent, which became a large deeply furrowed mud-bath, resulting in a lot of complaints to the Friends of the Meadows. Since then, grass has not grown properly in this area.

### **Climate change**

We have been told that one of the effects of climate change will be more rain and more changeable weather, so has the time come for a restriction on events in the Meadows? This need not necessarily cover all events - for instance, Fringe Sunday was attended by a very large number of people and there were many large tents, but little damage was done, perhaps because the tents were not too large and the vehicles used to erect and dismantle them were not too heavy. Also, the tents were only present for a very few days, and the organizers took particular care to avoid any damage to the Meadows. We hope to persuade the Council to change their policy on events in the Meadows: please come to our next meeting so that we can hear your views.

<b>NEXT MEETING OF FRIENDS OF THE MEADOWS &amp; BRUNTSFIELD LINKS</b>
<b>Monday 12 November 7.30 p.m. at the Croquet Pavilion, Leven Terrace. Meet the Councillors! In attendance: David Jamieson, Head of Parks and Green Spaces; Mike Shields, Community Parks Officer; Councillors Alison Johnstone and Marilyn MacLaren; and Community Beat Officer PC Lindsey Thomson.</b>



### Muddy Meadows – a personal view

When I first heard of the setting up of a Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links, I wondered what it was for, and whether I should get involved. Having discovered that part of the remit of such a body is to protect the Meadows, I wonder how we should be doing this. No one is proposing building on the Meadows as far as I know, but the area is being over-exploited by various groups, in my opinion. It has become obvious that the triangle to the east of Middle Meadow Walk cannot sustain the battering it is taking from the vehicles, people and constructions associated with many of these events. The photo above shows the damage after the Moonwalk event in June.

#### **Exceptional weather?**

I know that it will be said that we had an exceptionally wet June, but I have the rainfall figures and it was quite a bit wetter in June 2004. Substantial work has been done on drainage in this area since then, but this year is worse than ever. As I write (in early September) there is still standing water in the middle of the area three weeks since it last rained. Community events such as Meadows Festival, Fringe Sunday and Make Poverty History have a track record of leaving the Meadows with very little damage. If 250,000 people can gather on the Meadows without needing tented constructions and barriers it becomes clear to me what causes the damage.

The Meadows are for local people to enjoy, not for the exclusive use of those who pay to hire it. Neither the FoMBL committee, nor the Community Councils, are consulted in any way as to which events are currently given permission to use the Meadows, and only since January this year have they even been informed what applications have been made. Some people assume that the money raised by letting the Meadows all goes directly to fund improvements to the Meadows. This is not true. Only part of what is paid, a reinstatement bond (of £5,000), is used on the Meadows, and this only pays for reseeding damaged areas. In other places damage has to be made good. Returfing is much more expensive, but gives instant results if it is cared for properly.

#### **I propose the following:**

- We ban all profit-making events, whether shows, food fairs, fun-fairs or charities, from the Meadows for at least a year.
- We should allow school sports days, cricket, football, running and other informal activities, which at present need no special provision.
- We should allow community events such as those listed above, provided proper tracking is laid for any essential vehicles.
- We should not allow any event that fences off large parts of the Meadows, often for several weeks, and then leaves us with a bare or muddy area unusable for many months.

**What is FoMBL for?** I suggest that one important role is to protect the Meadows from over-exploitation. The Meadows belong to all the people. What do you think?

*Comments to FoMBL via the Editor, or at our next meeting*

**Hilary McDowell**

## Cycling in the Meadows

Cyclists in Edinburgh are lucky: they have many off-road cycle paths, especially in the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links. So what's the problem?

Unfortunately many (if not most) cyclists ignore the 'No Cycling' notices and ride on pedestrian-only footpaths, as well as on the grass itself. These cyclists are not just teenage tearaways: they include senior citizens. At night, moreover, many cyclists ride without lights, wearing dark clothing so that they are invisible to the unwary pedestrian. They also ride the wrong way down one-way streets (e.g. Glengyle Terrace).

The cycling organization 'Spokes' does its best to promote cycling and responsible cycling behaviour. How can the Friends also help to ensure that both cycling is encouraged and the rights of other park users are respected? My suggestions would include:

1. **Opening up some more pedestrian paths for dual use.** This would involve some of the wider paths linking the northern and southern sides of the Meadows and Links diagonally.
2. **Prominent display of the relevant Park Rules** for cyclists in large type (to include also rules about alcohol, litter, and barbecues).

**What do readers think?** What else would you like to suggest? It would be really helpful to have your views. Please write to me at 3 Glengyle Terrace, EH3 9LL, or email [hm.goodare@virgin.net](mailto:hm.goodare@virgin.net), or come along to the next meeting and say how you feel.

**Heather Goodare** (*Editor*)



### THE PAVILION CAFÉ in the Meadows

Even though the summer has been almost non-existent, the café has survived. Our regulars keep coming back and we have a steady stream of new people every day that are surprised and glad to see a café in the meadows. We now have an informal playgroup/meeting for mothers and kids on Wednesday mornings, which is very popular and noisy! We are trying hard to think of ways of keeping it warm in the café so we can stay open a bit longer in winter, as well as trying to get a bit of funding to replace the other three windows (making it nicer to sit inside - it would be lovely to be able to sit and watch the autumn/winter season of the Meadows whilst sipping a hot drink). It has been beautiful watching the trees through the seasons and I'm glad we have been able to provide a community space where people can appreciate the Meadows.

We aim to be opening at 8.00 a.m. starting in November for all those coffee drinkers on a cold morning, and hope to stay open until Christmas. Thanks once again for all the support.

**Antonia Dickson**



*Press-ups on Bruntsfield Links*

#### **Our new CBO**

You may like to know that PC Bruce Burt has been moved to other responsibilities, and that our new Community Beat Officer for the Meadows is PC 5801 Lindsey Thomson, who can be contacted on 0131 662 5022. For emergencies dial 999, or to report a crime, dial 0131 311 3131.

#### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE MEADOWS**

##### **The Meadows Chamber Orchestra**

**‘Music performed with zeal, passion and a smile’ – *The Scotsman***

The usual venue for MCO concerts is the Queen’s Hall, but their next concert will be in Greyfriars Kirk on Saturday 17 November at 7.45 p.m. The programme is as follows:

**Jean Sibelius:** Incidental Music for Kuolema      **Johann Hummel:** Trumpet Concerto in E flat  
**Alasdair Spratt:** Insight      **Franz Schubert:** Symphony no. 3 in D

This is a rare chance to hear Sibelius’ famous *Valse Triste* in context with the rest of the Kuolema music, together with a work by the rising young composer Alasdair Spratt, a showy trumpet concerto (soloist **Simon Reeves**), and that favourite among Schubert’s earlier symphonies – the graceful Third.

**James Lowe**, RSNO Associate Conductor, directs an excitingly varied programme.

**Tickets** (£10, concessions £8, students £4, children £1) from the Queen’s Hall Box Office  
 Tel. 0131 668 2019, discounted from members of the orchestra (local contact Heather Goodare 228 6998), or at the door.

**The Spring Meeting of Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links**  
 will be held on Monday 18 February at 7.30 p.m. in the Staff Room at  
 James Gillespie’s High School, Lauderdale Street, EH9 1DD

**Committee members (please address all correspondence to the Secretary)**

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**FOMBL: MEMBERSHIP FORM 2007-8**

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