



Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

NEWSLETTER 30

Spring 2012

Editor's Comment

As I write this, our new Convener, Linda Hendry, has not yet returned from the USA, where she has spent the winter, so it falls to me again to fill the gap. Linda will however be back for our next meeting on 19 March (*see p. 4; see also p. 2 for alternative ways of receiving your newsletter*).

Camping on the Meadows

Your committee has been busy since our last meeting at the Golf Tavern. You will be interested to learn that the Council has now voted to keep environmental services in-house: we look forward to working with them in a spirit of co-operation. We have met with Council officials and clarified some points about the new Park Rules, which will be adopted from 2013. One of them concerns camping: this is definitely not allowed on either the Meadows or the Links, which is why we were inevitably concerned when the *Occupy* movement pitched their tents. However, their conversation with the Council seems to have been quite amicable, and they have now moved on.

How do we feel about it?

A comment from Chris Wigglesworth, until recently our Convener, probably sums up the thoughts of many of us. He was quoted in the *Evening News* as saying that he had 'sympathies' with the group, and went on: 'We are very anxious not to have the Meadows spoiled, and I can't say I'm thrilled, but I feel Occupy Edinburgh have got everybody thinking about the banks – their protest is understandable.'

So it seemed reasonable to have a conversation with them, which resulted in our offer to consider an article for the newsletter (*see page 3*). Obviously this piece cannot represent the views of your Committee, but we thought you would be interested to see what the movement has to say for itself.

In fact there is another 'camper' who has been sleeping underneath a certain tree on the Links alongside Glengyle Terrace for several weeks now, in rain, frost, snow and gales. He has certainly left a bare patch where the grass will not grow for some time, but has been entirely peaceful! It takes all sorts . . .

Heather Goodare (Newsletter Editor)



Occupy Edinburgh camp: 31 January 2012



Rough sleeper on the Links: February 2012

Volunteering

There's always a great deal to do on the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links and there are never going to be enough Council staff to do it all (was that so in the past?). Without going into the debate on the Big Society, it does seem that today where you have a successful park you have Friends and some volunteer help. This doesn't have to be heavy labour: it's the tidying, sorting, picking up, sweeping,



bending down, piling up and bagging of litter, leaves, twigs, small branches, up-ended bins, blown notices, chewed balls and discarded city maps.

Pensioner power

Very little of this takes strength. At our first foray before Christmas the average age of volunteers was bus-pass plus plus. It does take a little flexibility and plenty of determination. The rewards are to see a cleared area, a smarter space, a safer play area for all, plus the banter and conversation of like-minded souls. Tools such as rakes, bags, forks etc are provided - and folk bring refreshments for themselves and to share. Breaks are taken at irregular intervals because muscles mustn't be strained, and we are volunteers after all. It may be that as we do more of these outings then the range and interest of the work can increase, but it is often the ordinary and humdrum work that is ignored - so much easier to rush around in power carts.

Picking up sticks

Our next outing is **Saturday 25th February, 10 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.**, meeting outside the Cricket Pavilion. The aim: to collect twigs and small branches (debris arising from recent gales) - emphasis on the small. Do come along. Bring gloves if you have them. If you have been given a tabard please bring it. We'll bring some as well. These tabards help us engage with passers by and hopefully increase our membership. They are boldly printed *Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links*, so you won't be considered to be an offender working off your crimes! We hope to have one of these outings each month, so March 24th should be the next. Please let me know if you would like to come.

Richard Ellis

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How would you like to receive your newsletter?

Please help us to save money by agreeing to receive your newsletter by email, if you do not already do so. If you are receiving this by post, this means we do not have your email address. Please let us know if you have one: send your message to webmaster@fombl.org.uk If you would still like to have a hard copy, that is not a problem: just let us know.

Editor

Occupy Edinburgh: an Introduction

As this reaches you the remnants of our relatively short stay in the Meadows will be long gone; however, they will not be forgotten. Following my discussion with Heather Goodare, I was delighted to be given the opportunity to open a dialogue with Friends of the Meadows. We at *Occupy Edinburgh* believe that these links are extremely beneficial for us all, in order to rebuild the real sense of community that Edinburgh once had. *Occupy* is, in my opinion, about human rights. It strives to tackle injustices and fight for equality, whether it's social, financial or political. *Occupy* is the first worldwide protest that proposes something new: a real direct democracy based on the needs of the worldwide community.

What price democracy?

There are many problems with the current system of democracy but it is HOW we make the vital decisions that is the key to how 'society' is organized. For example, many of us have been brought up to believe that the western-style system of voting is the highest form of democracy. Yet in these havens of human rights there are still millions of people who will not vote, who feel as if voting will not make a difference to their lives. This is because most decisions are made by a small elite, whether it's powerful politicians, bonus-crazy bankers or bungling business people. It is the 'how' that *Occupy* looks to change. We believe in consensus decision-making, a process that is a truly dynamic and creative way of reaching agreements, and by being properly facilitated, we can remain efficient and inclusive.

Common good assets

There is dissatisfaction with some aspects of the running of the City of Edinburgh Council. There have been concerns over the management of common good assets, not just here but across Scotland. The land that is supposed to be being managed/leased/occupied by the Council isn't even being run by a common-good committee. According to the information we have, there are a large number of properties on the Council's accounts that were acquired using common-good funds. And while this practice continues, we at *Occupy* will be trying to achieve a true change in awareness. I think it's an exciting time: let's improve our community, concentrating locally, while we focus on the basic fundamental beliefs that we all share.

Pete Nicholson

Forthcoming events

Meadows Festival

The Meadows Festival will be taking place as usual on the first weekend in June this year – Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd. There'll be all the usual attractions: Taylor's Funfair, the Music Tent with the best of local (and some not so local) musical *maestri* (just showing off that I know the plural of *maestro*!) and we can promise there will be something to please every musical taste; the beer tent hosting even more music; lots of activities specially for kids (including the football contest); and as many weird and wonderful performers and workshop leaders as we can pack into the performance area over the weekend.

We're also bringing back the dog show, which proved so popular last year, and this time we'll be holding it on the Sunday instead of the Saturday so that people hoping to show off their pride and joy won't turn up a day late. And of course, there will be the usual eclectic mix of stalls, so whether your taste runs to wood sculpture or having a relaxing massage, there should be something to tickle your fancy. The programme will be finalized soon. Check our website next month for more details.

<http://www.meadowsfestival.3st.org.uk>

Liz Summerfield, Festival Media Contact
summerfield.liz@gmail.com

As we mentioned in our last newsletter, the Meadows Festival Association runs the Meadows Festival. They are a charity, and all work at the Festival is done by volunteers. If you would like to get involved in the work of the Association please contact Linda Hendry: Linda@anamika.freeserve.co.uk. There is a small membership subscription.

The next (Spring) meeting of FOMBL will take place at Lauriston Hall, the Lauriston Centre, Lauriston Street, at 7.30 pm on Monday 19 March. Speaker: Professor Graham Stone, Institute of Evolutionary Biology, University of Edinburgh. Subject: 'How do we make cities better habitats for pollinators?' The Summer meeting of FOMBL (AGM) will be on Thursday 21 June at 7.00 pm at the Croquet Pavilion, Leven Terrace.

Meadows Chamber Orchestra

The next concert in the current season, marking the 40th anniversary of the founding of this well-loved local orchestra, will be on Saturday 25 February at 7.45 pm in Canongate Kirk. The conductor and piano soloist will be Peter Evans, and the programme starts with the world premiere of a new work commissioned by the MCO, *Tomnaverie* by James Clapperton. Then follow two popular works: Mozart's piano concerto no. 20 in D minor, K 466, and Beethoven's second symphony in D major. For more detailed information, please have a look at the website: www.meadowsorchestra.org.uk. Discounted tickets (£1 off) from Heather Goodare (address below).

Meadows Marathon 2012 4 March 2012

Sponsored Sleep Out 23 March 2012

Fun Fair 30 May-5 June 2012

Edinburgh Canal Festival 30 June 2012 at Edinburgh Quay: contact Pat at 0131 453 4617

Letter to the Editor: Sylvan House

I am a 3rd-year Architectural History student at the University of Edinburgh, and am this semester doing a conservation course for which I am writing a conservation statement on Sylvan House. Whilst carrying out some research on the internet I came across your website and in particular a newsletter from Spring 2003 (no.4) which had a small article on Sylvan House, written by Margaret A. McNeill. I have found some very interesting information on the house and its area so far but was hoping that you may perhaps be able to provide me with any information or sources of information on the history of the surrounding area and also perhaps the house itself? One problem I am having is trying to find out the different names that this area has been known by from the early 18th century and what it was known for, and this is making it slightly difficult for me to further my research.

I understand you must all be extremely busy but I would very much appreciate any help, information or advice you could offer me. I would also like to say that having never heard of the FOMBL before, your website was extremely interesting and it is wonderful to see the work that you do and the time you must put into it. For students like myself, such websites are extremely helpful and I have already emailed the link to others on my course as I am sure it will also be of interest to them, so thank you.

Best regards, *Charlotte Cook* (charliecmk@aol.com)

Useful contacts

Mike Shields Community Parks Officer 0131 529 5126; email: mike.shields@edinburgh.gov.uk

Police: Safer Neighbourhood Team. PC 4601 Yocksan Bell 0131 662 5022 or Sgt 4554 Peter Houston (same number). To report a crime: 0131 311 3131; emergency 999; or (anonymously) to Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111.

Anti-social behaviour (24/7): 0131 529 7050; **Litter:** 0131 529 3030

Defective lamp-post lighting: note number and ring Clarence – 0800 23 23 23

David Doig Local Environment Manager: email david.doig@edinburgh.gov.uk Tel. 0131 529 3711

Complaints regarding Council vehicles driving on Links or Meadows:

Taskforce, Craigmillar Depot: 0131 664 8330

Graffiti: report to 0131 200 2000 or email operationdivide@lbp.pnn.police.uk

FOMBL Committee members

Convener: Linda Hendry, linda@anamika.freereserve.co.uk

Secretary: Lucie Wang, littlelucie.w@gmail.com

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