



# **Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links**

## **NEWSLETTER 36**

**Spring 2014**

### **Convener's Comment**

#### **Meadows history**

Our artwork project has made us focus on the history and indeed literature of the Meadows, and prompted by Rachel Woolf, our poet and wordsmith, I have been looking at the quotations used on the sundial pictured in our last newsletter (a memorial of the 1886 exhibition). Alec Mann has kindly helped me in searching for sources for these sayings, and we are getting there, though 'Time and tide wait for no man' remains anonymous, and also 'I mark but the hours of sunshine'.

The rest are as follows: 'Light is the shadow of God' - Plato; 'Time is the chrysalis of eternity' - Jean-Paul Richter; 'As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow' - Job 7.2; 'Time as he passes us has a dove's wing unsoiled and swift and of a silken sound' - Cowper; 'Man's days are as a shadow that passeth away - Corncockle' - Psalm 144.4 (though Corncockle is a bit of a mystery!) Rachel has contributed an article on the literary contribution to the artwork project: see p. 3.

#### **Artwork project**

As always, projects tend to take longer than planned, and we now hope to have the artwork up for all to admire in the spring, some time in April or May, to coincide with the cherry blossom. We were glad to have an update on the work at our Autumn meeting, when unfortunately Steven Webley was unable to come at the last minute, and our artist Astrid Jaekel stepped in at very short notice. However, he will now be speaking about 'Trees in the City' at our Spring meeting, now scheduled for Monday 24 February. See below. Do come along, bring a friend, and your questions about trees.

#### **The Viking connection**

The Jawbone Arch has become a well-loved Edinburgh landmark, but conservation work is now needed. The plan is to remove the bones for detailed examination, before specialist conservation can take place. The City of Edinburgh Council, Edinburgh World Heritage, FOMBL, and local resident Heidi Pearson (a Shetlander) are collaborating on an appeal to raise £60,000 to ensure the arch is preserved for future generations. FOMBL has already ring-fenced £500 as a contribution to this work.

The Up Helly Aa Jarl Squad from Shetland were visiting Edinburgh to take part in the Hogmanay events and kindly gave their time to help promote the appeal. A Facebook page has been created to help raise awareness for the project; in addition Summerhall TV have produced a video interviewing Heidi about her involvement with the appeal and the recent support shown by the Vikings' visit to the Jawbone Arch. Please see the historical article on page 2. Watch this space . . . and join the campaign!

*Heather Goodare (Convener)*

**The next meeting of FOMBL will be on Monday 24 February at 7.30 p.m. at the Barclay Viewforth Church (please use the side entrance). The speaker will be Steven Webley, City of Edinburgh Council Forestry Manager, on 'Trees in the City'. Refreshments precede the meeting, and all are welcome.**



*Photo: Heidi Pearson*

## **Jawbone Arch**

The four-legged structure that stands on Melville Drive, at the southern end of Jawbone Walk (which cuts across the Meadows), is made of a pair of whale's jawbones. Their original purpose on the Meadows was to act as a display stand for the Shetland and Fair Isle Knitters who came to perform their skills at the Edinburgh International Exhibition of 1886. Although photography was not allowed in the Exhibition (except in the Old Edinburgh Street, and then only by one privileged photographer), some adventurous person smuggled in a camera and took a shot of the jawbones in all their glory, draped with the hand-knitted lace shawls, hosiery, and other products of the ladies from the Northern Isles.

## **Whaling in Scotland**

Arches of whale's jawbones are fairly common in areas that once played an active part in the whaling industry, sometimes even incorporating a harpoon into the structure. Although Lerwick was involved in whaling, it was not one of the great whaling ports; it was more of a supplier of crews to the whaling vessels that came from towns on the Scottish east coast, notably Dundee. However, that is not the reason for this arch being in Edinburgh. It was instead intended to act as a striking focal point for another aspect of Shetland culture, for which these islands are perhaps better known.

## **Shetland and Fair Isle knitting**

The idea of having Shetland and Fair Isle products represented at the Exhibition may have come from the Shetland Warehouse in Frederick Street, which was established more than half a century earlier. There was a political element to the display as well, and it has been seen as an attempt to free the knitters from the ‘truck’ system, whereby wages were paid not in money but in goods, or by credit notes, which took the place of proper currency. The girls who came to Edinburgh (three from Shetland and three from Fair Isle), operating in relays, demonstrated the crafts of dyeing, spinning, and knitting, funded by the Sheriff and Vice-Admiral of the County of Zetland (to give it its old-style spelling).

## **Donated to Edinburgh**

In the year following the Exhibition, the whale’s jawbones were donated to the City of Edinburgh, being initially erected as two pairs before being united to form a single four-legged structure - the only such example in the northern hemisphere, as far as is known. The chosen site was but a stone’s throw from where they had stood in the Exhibition, and there they have remained for the past century and a quarter, becoming an iconic symbol of the Exhibition, and a part of the lore of the Meadows.

*Graeme Cruickshank*

*Edinburgh Historical Enterprises, January 2014*

## **Artwork on the Meadows**

FOMBL is looking forward to a new and vibrant landmark. Astrid Jaekel is working on the illustrations for five panels of a mural that will adorn the walls of the Scottish Power substation. To see how she has enlivened other parts of Edinburgh and elsewhere, have a look at Astrid's website. <http://www.astridjaekel.com/>

As with her other projects, Astrid will be weaving words and images together. On the Middle Meadow Walk wall, a quote from *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark, one of the area’s most renowned writers, will set the scene:

‘They were crossing the Meadows, a gusty expanse of common land, glaring green under the snowy sky. Their destination was the Old Town, for Miss Brodie had said they should see where history had been lived; and their route had brought them to the Middle Meadow Walk.

Eunice, unaccompanied at the back, began to hop to a rhyme which she repeated to herself:

Edinburgh, Leith,  
Portobello, Musselburgh  
*And Dalkeith.’*

Eunice enjoyed the sound and rhythm of the place names. In the same way, the names of four of the walks on the Meadows form a central motif for the mural panels on the North Meadow Walk wall, as a story unfolds of a great celebration on the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links:

### **Boys Brigade, Middle Meadow, Coronation, Jawbone**

Astrid promises a fresh and playful interpretation of Meadows sights and history, with lots of action. As to the reason for the merriment, the official unveiling should take place when the cherry trees are in bloom.

*Rachel Woolf*

## **Students are welcome**

As the current university journal *Edit* (Winter 2013/14) observes, ‘The Meadows are a storied part of the Edinburgh cityscape . . . Both a thoroughfare and a retreat, the Meadows have a special place in the heart of many students.’ Some FOMBL members attended an inspiring event on 29 January on ‘Students in the Community’, where funding for voluntary projects was discussed and voted on. Students, we know you are only here for a short while, but do join us: we’d love to have you!



## **Litter picking**

Are people are aware of a local initiative called PAL = People Against Litter? Run by Francesca Saunders, who lives in Bruntsfield, it is a database of people who are willing to pick up just one piece of litter a week and get one other person to do the same. No subscription. To find out more: <http://www.peopleagainstlitter.org/>.

## **Charitable status**

Your committee is still considering the new SCIO constitution recommended to us so as to be fully compliant with the requirements of OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator). We hope to have this ready for your consideration at our meeting on 24 February.

## **Volunteering**

Voluntary work continues on the first Saturday of every month, led by the indefatigable Richard Ellis, who cheers us on with chocolate and much enthusiasm. Please let him know if you'd like to join us: email [rellis.consultancy@virgin.net](mailto:rellis.consultancy@virgin.net), or ring 0131 447 4124. We are delighted to say that our efforts have attracted the attention of the Royal Bank of Scotland, who will be sending a group in early March to do a whole day's work on the Meadows. We hope that this will lead to more RBS involvement with FOMBL.

## **Meadows Chamber Orchestra**

The next concert of the MCO will be in Greyfriars Kirk on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February at 7.45 pm. The programme, conducted by Peter Evans, includes Michael Tippett's Concerto for Double String Orchestra, Francis Poulenc's Organ Concerto (soloist Tom Wilkinson), Dvorák's Wind Serenade in D minor, and Beethoven's Leonora Overture no. 3. Tickets in advance from the Queen's Hall Box Office: £11/£9; students £5; children £1. See also a chamber music concert featuring Meadows players on Saturday 22 March in St Mark's Unitarian Church at 7.45 pm, with Milhaud's Suite Op. 157b, Stravinsky's Septet, and Dohnányi's Sextet in C Op. 37.

## **Events on the Meadows**

Currently there is a consultation on the Events Manifesto, which may be accessed online via [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/eventsinparks](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/eventsinparks). You can also request a paper copy from 0131 529 7921. This is your chance to say how long you think events should be allowed on the Meadows. At the moment in all parks except the Meadows the time allowed is 15 days: should we not be in line? Do make sure your voice is heard.

## **Useful contacts**

**Mike Shields** Community Parks Officer Tel.0131 529 5126; email: [mike.shields@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto: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: 101 (costing a flat rate of 15p per call); emergency 999; or (anonymously) to Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111.

**New Police Service of Scotland website** is <http://www.scotland.police.uk>. New police 101 non-emergency number is now in use 24/7. This should reduce pressure on the 999 system, but do still ring 999 in emergency.

**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 (responsibility for roads, parks and green spaces): email [david.doig@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:david.doig@edinburgh.gov.uk) Tel. 0131 529 5187

**Forestry Service**: email [forestry.service@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:forestry.service@edinburgh.gov.uk). Tel. 0131 311 7079

**Complaints regarding Council vehicles driving on Links or Meadows:**

Taskforce, Craigmillar Depot: 0131 664 8330; or Jim Monaghan on 07786 110 377

**Graffiti**: report to 0131 200 2000 or email [operationdivide@lbp.pnn.police.uk](mailto:operationdivide@lbp.pnn.police.uk)

**Kathy Evans**: Local Community Safety Manager (tackling anti-social behaviour and joint working with the police): [kathy.evans@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:kathy.evans@edinburgh.gov.uk) Tel. 0131 529 5106

**Environmental Warden team leader**: Mohamed Demnati Tel. 0131 529 5204

## **FOMBL Committee members**

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