



Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

NEWSLETTER 39

Spring 2015

Convener's Comment

Commemorative Tree

Congratulations and thanks to Audrey Simon, who has kept in mind our obligation to mark the planting of a tree on Bruntsfield Links (near the Golf Tavern) to commemorate the founding of the Friends of Parks Forum in 2001 (see her article in our last newsletter, p. 3). In the end, David Jamieson, Parks and Greenspace Manager, managed to find some money down the back of a sofa (in spite of budget cuts) to fund the placing of a stone (rather a beautiful one) complete with an engraving to mark this event. Very many thanks to David, and to the Parks staff who completed the work.

Events on the Meadows

The report on last year's events has now been published, and was considered by the Transport and Environment Committee on 13 January. Several comments from community groups still made the point that four weeks was too long for commercial events on the east Meadows. The system for booking events for this space is now that of tendering: but the community is not to be consulted until after the Council has agreed the deal, which seems unsatisfactory. Apparently this will have been done by 16th February. MABLAG (Meadows and Bruntsfield Links Advisory Group) will be looking into this at its next meeting on 23 February: unfortunately too late to influence the process for this year. Your committee will continue to lobby for a maximum of 15 days for events, as in other Edinburgh parks.

Students in the Community

We are delighted to announce that a student organisation, eVOLve, was awarded a grant at the Students in the Community evening in the autumn to organize an event in the Meadows on 28 March, the Get inVOLved Volunteering Day, the aim of which is to encourage volunteering among local children. We are working with them on this project, which promises to be inspiring. On this occasion our usual volunteering morning will coincide with this event, so we shall be joining in.

Heather Goodare (Convener)

The next meeting of FOMBL will be on Monday 16 February at 7.30 p.m. at the Pillar Hall, Barclay Viewforth Church. The first half of the evening will take the form of a musical exploration of the Meadows Mural. Instruments illustrated or mentioned on the mural will be played (bugle, clarsach, pipe, fiddle, accordion), and the specially commissioned 'Heather's Jig' will be heard. The second half will be an opportunity to raise any other business.

Refreshments precede the meeting.

All are welcome: please spread the word.

Designing and Managing Forests for Health

Jennifer Thomson, our Treasurer, is researching this subject for her Ph.D. We are delighted to have this preliminary abstract of her work so far, and we wish her all the best in her research.

Health benefits

Growing evidence suggests that exposure to natural environments, including forests and parks, has benefits for human health and wellbeing. For example, studies have shown that people living in close proximity to green space report better health outcomes than those living further away. This includes lower levels of self-reported stress and higher life expectancies. The mechanisms by which natural environments offer health benefits include opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and mental restoration.

Unresolved issues

However, there are still many unresolved issues in this field of study – for example, some research suggests that not everyone benefits from having green spaces in their neighbourhood. I hope my research can begin to offer some explanation as to why this inequality exists. Studies have acknowledged that we still don't know enough about what shapes people's relations with nature, but it has been suggested that both individual-level and area-level factors are important. This may include someone's age, gender, socio-economic position and also the social and physical contexts of their neighbourhood. Another limitation of previous work has been its cross-sectional study design; this approach does not take into account how the above factors evolve and change throughout a person's life, and cannot determine causality.

Forests across Scotland

I hope that my PhD can address this research gap by taking into account the broader geographical and historical contexts that shape the ways in which people might or might not benefit from natural environments. In particular, my research will focus on the health benefits of forests to people living in different urban communities across Scotland.

Jennifer Thomson

Good news for the Jawbones

The appeal to restore the Jawbone Arch has received a welcome boost with a grant from the Shetland Amenity Trust. The grant of £4,000 will go towards the conservation of the bones and their re-installation in the Meadows. The extra funding means that only another £4,500 is required to reach the fundraising target: consider donating if you haven't already. See the following link: <http://www.ewht.org.uk/news/486/102/Shetland-Grant-for-the-Jawbones> .

Update on Trees *by Neil Roger*

After being told that there was no funding for new trees for the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links I was very surprised and delighted to see a large number of new trees being planted over the last few months. A wide variety of species have been chosen including some unusual evergreens. A total of 134 trees have been planted, mainly between existing mature trees where gaps have been left due to previous tree/stump removal.

Paul Vine of the council's forestry service is responsible for the choice of species, and he is hoping to produce a plan showing the location and species of all new trees. In the meantime anyone with a particular interest can look at the labels, which have the Latin name only. An important issue is the problem of watering during dry periods and the consequential loss of many young trees. This is costly and unnecessary. Paul Vine recognises this, and

has put in an additional sum for watering during the next financial year. I suggested that FOMBL could look into the possibility of applying for grant funding towards a mobile watering vehicle, as we agreed that this was essential to ensure trees could be watered promptly and efficiently during drought periods.

Neil Roger

A Traveller Returns *by Janet Reid Thomas*

Since moving back to Edinburgh from overseas this summer, we've been living either close to, or on, the Meadows and Links. It is wonderful to be so near this green open space, and it makes one appreciate just how crucial it is to keep these precious city spaces usable and cared for. However, taking the dog out for walks early in the morning over the summer, it's been distressing to see the aftermath of the previous evening's activities – mounds of rubbish and bottles left exactly where they were being used, even just feet from a rubbish bin. A couple of hours later, the area is once again an inviting place to visit, thanks to the unsung efforts of the Council's rubbish collectors.

The Meadows compared with Central Park, NY

We lived in New York City for several years. Anyone who has visited Central Park in recent times knows what a wonderful and defining place for the city it is. However, in the nineteen-sixties and seventies it was in serious decline, and was itself scruffy and unkempt. In the nineteen-eighties, a group of concerned citizens set up the Friends of Central Park to try and improve the situation. Thirty years later, the Central Park Conservancy is a huge and tightly run not-for-profit organization that has made Central Park a fantastic resource for NY's citizens, and a huge tourist attraction.

Our efforts at FOMBL may seem puny by comparison and, happily, the Meadows are not in a state of decline, but it's up to the FOMBLs of the world to take responsibility for the beautiful spaces we want to preserve.

Janet Reid Thomas

We are delighted to welcome Janet back to Edinburgh. She is already a stalwart member of our volunteer group. We are also pleased that the eVOLve student group joined us on 31st January for more work at the Hope Park end of the Meadows. See our website www.fombl.org.uk for a photo of the whole group (14 in all).



A photo of FOMBL volunteers at the end of November at the Croquet Pavilion. Have a look at what they achieved, and come and join in next time.

Forthcoming Events

Meadows Chamber Orchestra

The next concert of this orchestra will be on Saturday 7th February, at 7.45 p.m. at the Greyfriars Kirk. The programme is: Shostakovich's controversial Symphony no. 9 in Eb major; Benjamin Britten's wonderful Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings (remember 'O Rose, thou art sick?'), and Dvorak's warm and sunny Symphony no. 8 in G major. The soloists are Joshua Owen Mills (tenor) and Patrick Broderick (horn), with David Watkin conducting. *Discounted tickets from Heather Goodare, 228 6998.*

Fombl volunteers morning: Saturday 28 February. Meet at Cricket Pavilion 10.00.

Meadows Marathon: Sunday 8 March

Get inVOLved Volunteering Day Saturday 28 March. See page 1 for further details. Please come and help, bringing children and grandchildren with you!

Edinburgh and Lothians May Day Parade: Saturday 2 May

All under one banner vote SNP: Sunday 3 May

James Gillespie's High School Emergency Training Day: Tuesday 19 May. Pupils learn skills to use in emergency situations.

FOMBL AGM: at the Croquet Pavilion on Friday 26 June. Come at 6.30 pm for a croquet taster. We can promise you an interesting speaker, followed by the usual AGM business.

Useful contacts

Mike Shields Community Parks Officer Tel.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: 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 Tel. 0131 529 5187

Forestry Service: email 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

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

Environmental Warden team leader: Mohamed Demnati 0131 529 5204

People Against Litter (PAL): please contact <http://www.peopleagainstlitter.org/>. *If you wish to help, you only need to commit to picking up one piece of litter a day.*

FOMBL Committee members

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