



Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

NEWSLETTER 41

Autumn 2015

Convener's Comment

Charitable status

It has been quite a journey towards charitable status, as we had to re-write our constitution to comply with the requirements of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), but we have finally made it. OSCR 'is satisfied that the organisation meets the charity test and the legal requirements for being a SCIO, and has entered it in the Scottish Charity Register. This means it is now an incorporated body having charitable status under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005.' Our charity number is SC045955.

This should make it much easier to gain funding for new projects, and donations and subscriptions will gain an extra 20% gift aid for FoMBL. Particularly warm thanks are due to our Secretary, Nina Fedenczuk, who steered us through the somewhat complicated procedures towards success. So we look forward to great things in the future. We shall be able to celebrate at our next public meeting on Tuesday 10th November (see announcement below).

Events on the Meadows

By the time you get this newsletter it will probably be too late to let the Council have your views on recent events in the Meadows. We hope you have already done so, using the link below (valid until 5th October). Before next year's contracts are signed we should have had ample opportunity to let the Council know how we feel about the extended length of the Underbelly stay, and the excessive noise from the Funfair. Events on the Meadows are good fun, but we still campaign for them to last no longer than a fortnight, so that extensive reinstatement is not needed. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ParkEventsReview2014-2015>.

Jawbones

We hope very much that by the time of our public meeting, the Jawbones will be once again in place. We are grateful to Alec Mann for writing up his visit to the bones, which seems to have been of great interest (*see page 2*). The only possible setback now seems to be the arranging of the uplighting, which apparently may take longer than expected. *Heather Goodare (Convener)*

The next public meeting of FoMBL will be on Tuesday 10th November at 7.30 p.m.
at the German Church, 1 Chalmers Crescent, Edinburgh
speaker: **Anna Canning of Floramedica - People Plants Places (www.floramedica.org.)**
Anna will be telling us about the medicinal and food uses for some plants in the Meadows.

Refreshments precede the meeting, to celebrate our charitable status.

All are welcome: please spread the word.

The Jawbone Arch

History

The Jawbones were part of the Zetland and Fair Isle Knitting Stand at the Edinburgh International Exhibition of Science and Industry, held on the Meadows in 1886. The stand was originally a tent-like structure inside the great exhibition building, with the jawbones framing it. At the exhibition, the two pairs of jawbones were placed in parallel, but after the exhibition closed they were moved to the side of Melville Drive and arranged in their present configuration. This consists of two pairs of jawbones, from two whales of the same species (sperm whale?) whose wide ends were put at the bottom in the four corners of a square and their narrow ends met at a point, forming a cross-vaulted arch. This is one of only two whalebone arches with four bones, the other being at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands.

The wide ends of the jawbones were fixed to concrete bases by iron rods, and their narrow ends met at a point and were held together at the top by an iron cruciform structure. Bronze bands with descriptive text were fixed round the lower parts of the bones.

Deterioration

Over the last 125 years or so, the iron has rusted and expanded, putting pressure on the bone structure at the fixing points. Rainwater and its dissolved pollutants have also attacked the bone, staining and weakening it, and allowing lichens and other biological material to grow on the surface. The Portland cement bases trapped rainwater, which caused deterioration of the bases of the bones. About 1970 some damaged parts of the arch were repaired using polyurethane car body filler, textured to make it look like bone.

Proposals

Three options were put forward for the restoration of the arch. The best option was to restore and re-erect the bones, but if that was not possible it was proposed to replace them with a replica, either with a bone-like material as at the arch on North Berwick Law, or a full-sized model in bronze. As it happened, it was still possible to save the bones and re-erect them.

Removal

Before removing the arch for restoration, a photogrammetric survey was made of the bones *in situ*: several photographs were taken of the bones from various angles, and the digitised photographs were combined to produce a three-dimensional picture of the arch. Many drawings were also made of the structure, and all the parts carefully numbered to make sure that they were put back in the right places. The bones were encased in a strong bleach-free material, which acted as a casing firm enough to allow the bones to stand during dismantling and to be lifted without breaking.

The iron cruciform link at the top was carefully removed by sawing through it and its fixing bolts, and the concrete bases carefully cut away from the bones. Some of the concrete was so firmly attached to the bone that it was kept there because trying to remove it would have caused the bone to disintegrate: for the same reason, one of the iron bars fixing a bone to the base could not be removed.

Conservation

The bones were taken to a place where they could dry out, and six months later they were taken to the conservation workshops. Here they were given another scan with lasers, and the results of this scan compared with the one from the photogrammetric scan.

Over the years, the bone surface had taken on a texture similar to tree bark, and was covered with lichen, which has been removed as far as possible. Large voids in the bones have been filled with a lime-based filler, and a similar material is being used for a shelter coat to fill and repair the small cracks in the surface. It should also protect the smooth inner side of the bones from fly-posting. Some parts of the bones are starting to flake away and stick out. The gaps are to be filled with lime filler; they are all quite high up so they should not be attractive to inquisitive fingers.

The large areas of car body filler have been left: as it is not known how deep they are, it was felt that any attempt to remove it could cause the bones to disintegrate. However, the work was well done visually: unless you look at the bones very carefully it is not obvious which bits are real bone and which are filler.

Restoration

The bones will be put on new bases, made of water-permeable lime concrete that will allow trapped rainwater to escape. The iron cross joining the bones at the top will be replaced by a stainless-steel cross, textured to look like the bone structure; it will look rather like lace, which was one of the exhibits at the knitting stand. The old iron cross still exists and is likely to become a museum exhibit. The bronze bands at the base of the bones are being kept, and will be cleaned and re-waxed. It is proposed to put up an information board near the arch. It will mention the history of the arch, the 1886 Exhibition, the knitting stand, and the restoration. There is also a plan to install floodlighting. After that, the arch will need occasional maintenance.

Alec Mann

Regi Claire: local novelist

Regi Claire and her husband, former Edinburgh Makar Ron Butlin, have been walking their dogs on the Meadows for around twenty years. Leila, a beautiful golden retriever, regards the Meadows as her personal fiefdom, her own back garden, and is doubtless pleased to have it restored to normality after all the excitement of the Fringe. Regi, who was born and brought up in a small village in Thurgau Canton, Switzerland, and now lives with Ron and Leila in a flat just off the Meadows, is the author of four works of fiction, including *The Waiting*, a novel inspired by, and set partly on, the Meadows. The book's elderly heroine, Lizzie Fairbairn, is based on a real-life Edinburgh pensioner, Miss Dorothy Harrower, with whom Regi used to chat in the course of their dog-walking, and the result is a wonderful blend of real life and fiction.

Regi explains:

It really started off with my dog walks with my then retriever, Amber, where I met this old lady - I used to hear her shout for her dog Barney. Gradually we became very friendly and she started telling me about her own life and I remember thinking these stories were unbelievable. We would go to her house in Marchmont after walking our dogs and she would have prepared sandwiches and cakes, the teapots would be out, and there would be gin and tonic too - though she soon realised I preferred vodka - and she would tell me all these stories. The novel was kind of inspired by these stories.

Regi Claire's work has twice been shortlisted for a Saltire Scottish Book of the Year award.

Bridget Stevens

Bruntsfield Links Playpark

We promised an article about this playpark in our last newsletter. Linda has turned up trumps.

This smallish playpark has a reasonable collection of equipment for most ages of children. Slide, roundabout, four swings (two for toddlers and two for children who are older), a couple of shoogly things with seats, a climbing frame environment with bridges and wooden tunnel has a wiggly chain walkway and several different metal, wood and rope ways of climbing up to access it.

There are benches inside and outside the fence to suit how closely or not parents and carers want to supervise their children. Don't be deterred if the first gate you see is locked, as the unlocked one may be further round the site. The yellow picnic bench on the grass inside the fence looked quite inviting but we did not have a picnic with us. (It also doubles as a snakes and ladders board.) Good views of the golf and croquet being played next door to the park help to keep adults amused.

Linda Hendry

The Meadows Bandstand

Fernando Miranda, who spoke at our AGM in June, has hosted several gigs over the Festival in his wee back garden at the Police Box at the top of Middle Meadow Walk, but the result has been calamitous for his newly planted grass, and he is wondering whether a proper bandstand for summer entertainments might not be better. In fact we used to have a bandstand (*see over*), but it was demolished in 1950 and no one seems to know where it is stored. Does anyone know where the bandstand can be found? Would it be a good idea to restore it? Ideas, please!

(Ed.)



The Band Stand in 1945

(http://www.edinphoto.org.uk/0_a_l/O_around_edinburgh_-_meadows_bandstand_1945_000-000-058_026_768.htm)

Meadows Chamber Orchestra

The next concert will be on Saturday 3 October 2015 at Inverleith St Serf's Church, Ferry Road, at 7.45 p.m. Conducted by Steve King, the works are Symphony no 5 by Vaughan Williams, Sibelius' fifth symphony, and a new work by Findlay Spence, Perpetuum Mobile. The November concert, in the same church, will be on Saturday 21st, conducted by Peter Evans, with Aleksei Kiseliiov, cello; the works are Mozart's Overture to the Magic Flute, Tchaikovsky's Variations on a Rococo Theme, and Rachmaninov's second symphony.

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 South Neighbourhood Service Manager - Environment (with responsibility for roads, parks, green spaces, and street cleaning): email david.doig@edinburgh.gov.uk Tel. 0131 529 5187

Forestry Service: email forestry.service@edinburgh.gov.uk. Tel. 0131 311 7079

Road repairs and development: Alan Dunlop, Area Roads Manager: alan.dunlop@edinburgh.gov.uk. Tel. 0131 529 3719

Complaints regarding Council vehicles driving on Links or Meadows:

0131 529 3030; Task Force Manager (responsible for street cleaning and grounds maintenance): Rab Farquhar

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/>.

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