



Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organization (SCIO) SC045955

NEWSLETTER 47

Autumn 2017

Editor's comment

Your new Convener

As you will all know by now, at the Annual General Meeting on 23 June a new Convener was elected: Andy Devenport very kindly agreed to accept the poisoned chalice. There is so much to do, and so little time to do it in, and Andy has a full-time job as well as various other voluntary commitments, but there is no one who is more familiar with the Meadows and Links than he is, since he has lived here since he was a child, and it is great that he has taken over from me, who only came to Scotland from 'down south' in 2003. At the AGM we also welcomed several new Trustees, enlarging our geographical remit to include members of Community Councils at the eastern end of the Meadows, and so enabling us to be fully representative of the whole area.

Park Rangers

We work together with the Park Rangers to do voluntary work, and were distressed when their number was cut from three to two in the Meadows and Links. At our August work party Jimmy Forrest did sterling work with us tidying up the area around the Croquet Pavilion, which we took further at the end of September, sadly without him. Jimmy is now in the Royal Infirmary after a motorbike accident. We have sent messages to him wishing for a good recovery, but it seems that this will take many months.

Voluntary work

Which brings me to the topic of voluntary work. We are delighted that Yusef Samari, who is studying for a PhD at Edinburgh University and will therefore be with us for the next four years, has taken over from Joe Boyle the job of Volunteer Co-ordinator. He has made a splendid start (see the article on p. 2 in which his supplementary activities are described) and I do hope that more of you will join in with the work, which will continue during the autumn and winter. If you haven't been before, meet on the last Saturday of the month at 10.00 a.m. at the Cricket Pavilion: bring gloves and £1 for coffee at the Pavilion Café, which will remain open until the end of October. This newsletter focuses particularly on voluntary activities, especially with wild flower patches. But it also raises a policy issue: to what extent should we focus on this kind of work rather than general maintenance?

Autumn public meeting

Our next public meeting will be on Monday 6 November at the Söderberg Pavilion, 1 Lister Square. We were particularly keen to hold a meeting inside Quatermile, and also to have a speaker from Quatermile: we have managed to secure as our speaker no less than its Managing Director, Paul Curran. The meeting starts earlier than usual, at 5.30 p.m., but we hope this will not be too inconvenient for members. Please come along if you can and be prepared to ask questions: there are quite a few matters that we might want to raise with Paul, and we look forward to a fruitful working relationship with him. Our first joint project will be an information board about the old Royal Infirmary. A poster is included with this mailing: please print it out and put it up near you.

Heather Goodare (Editor)



Wildlife walkabout

'Mostly just a bunch of people walking around, looking at things, taking pictures and saying "oh, that's cool...". ' That was what FoMBL's Volunteer Co-ordinator Yusef Samari promised for the first Meadows & Links Wildlife Walkabout on Friday 8th September.

There were plenty of people saying 'oh, that's cool', as Yusef led us round the log gardens by the Pavilion Café. Rolling over one of the logs, he produced various woodlice, a centipede and other tiny wild creatures of the park while telling us tales about each one. Apparently slime mould can solve mazes, and woodlice still hark back to their watery past, exuding ammonia vapour through their shells instead of urinating. And the puzzling white and brown spots on so many Meadows trees are not a fungus but an insect: horse chestnut scale.

Tiny denizens of the trees

A great tit cheeped in the lime tree above us as Yusef passed around a woodlouse for examining with a hand lens. The woodlouse weighs so little on its many legs that we couldn't even feel it walking across our palms. Tree lichens came as another surprise. The Meadows & Links have a healthy population, not just of the pollution-tolerating nitrophiles but also of some others that are flourishing here yet are in decline in rural areas blighted by the impact of fertilisers. He found ten different species on one ash tree.

Another puzzle explained was the iridescent trails that go up some of the park's trees. They're left by slugs, which make their way up the trunks to eat the algae on lower branches. Slugs' slime helps protect them from predators: it glues up the jaws of attacking ground beetles. Yusef told us that all terrestrial slugs evolved from snails and a tiny bit of shell can still be found in them all, sometimes externally. Although not much loved by some gardeners, slugs, it turns out, are important composters and valuable to the park's ecosystem.

Hoverflies

We ended up at the wild patch on Leamington Walk and Yusef's greatest area of expertise, hoverflies, a couple of which he caught (humanely) and passed around for a look. A Red Admiral sped past us then settled on the newly mown dock to sun itself. The friendly group shared stories

and more, with one handing round his delicious freshly made rosehip tea, the hips picked on Arthur's Seat and then soaked with spices. Another promised scones to Yusef and the hard-working volunteers maintaining the wild patch. A grand morning out: thanks, Yusef. He promises more walkabouts to come.

Tweeter @SunshineOnLeaf

Living Landscapes

The Edinburgh Living Landscapes programme (<https://edinburghlivinglandscape.org.uk/>) is a partnership between numerous Edinburgh organizations, including the City of Edinburgh Council, University of Edinburgh, Royal Botanic Garden, Scottish Wildlife Trust, and more. Its aim is to develop a network of nature-friendly sites throughout the city for the benefit of people and wildlife.

In spring 2015, FOMBL volunteers played their part in the ELL vision by planning, preparing and seeding a new wildflower meadow between Warrender Park Terrace and Leamington Walk in collaboration with Mike Shields of the CEC. Mike kindly allocated a site adjacent to a popular cross-walk which was also in an area where local residents were used to grassland plantings being left fairly 'high' over long periods. This wildflower patch was a true meadow, meaning it consisted of 80 per cent grasses as well as the colourful native wildflower species, also attractive to urban pollinators.

Urban Pollinator seed mix

The 'Urban Pollinator' seed mix used for the meadow had been especially designed by Scotia Seeds (<http://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/shop/urban-pollinator-mix/>), based on the research on urban wildflower meadows by Professor Graham Stone of Edinburgh University. It consists of native wildflower species that can provide nectar food sources over a longer period over the summer and without 'food scarcity gap periods', which sometimes occur in other wildflower seed mixes.

This results in a long and continuous flowering period from early spring to late summer, and the grasses provide breeding grounds for species like butterflies that must lay their eggs on grass stalks. The pollinators that will benefit include bees, hoverflies and many others too small to notice. This spring the site was doubled in size to about 200 square metres with the help of FOMBL volunteers (with the Council kindly doing the ground rotivation with a machine beforehand). It will be cut just once annually, giving as much time as possible to provide resources and nesting habitats for wildlife.

It is very important to remove as much as possible of the accumulated plant matter at the end of the year as lower fertility ground is what allows wild flowers to prosper and spread. In the adjacent 'naturalized grasslands' to the east, which have been much less cut by the Council, the plant biodiversity – and thus benefit to wildlife – is increasing slowly, but the Council does not have the manpower to remove the grass cuttings. This year an extended group of hard working FOMBL volunteers raked this very large area after the Council 'half-cut' it to try and help deal with the Common Dock explosion that had occurred on this site.

By continuing to rake the sites and remove the arisings we hope that the species seeded in the true wildflower meadow may spread to the naturalized grassland (they did not include dock seed!) to make it even more useful to wildlife and beautiful to us wildflower lovers. See <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/2016/08/50-for-the-future-re-naturalise-urban-green-spaces/> for more background on such ELL initiatives.

Tim Duffy Edinburgh Living Landscape (ELL) Board member and member of FOMBL



Community Garden

Greening our Street members are happy to have achieved all and more that was planned for Phase 1, and now have a wee orchard, and a small garden with raised beds for wheelchair access. The funding from South Central Neighbourhood Partnership was used to commission raised beds from the Grassmarket Community Workshop, and we had a great day moving them from Greyfriars to the garden site. Come and enjoy the flowers and winter veg, and take a moment to inspect the wildflower plot before it's put to bed for winter. Phase 2 will start in 2018 when we'll introduce a new growing scheme. Contact greeningourstreet@gmail.com for further details.

Sarah Tolley

Forthcoming Events

Meadows Chamber Orchestra next concert Saturday 25 November: Mozart Requiem with the Scottish Chamber Choir, directed by Iain McLarty, at Inverleith St Serf's, 7.45 pm. Programme includes Stravinsky: Concerto in E flat 'Dumbarton Oaks' and Schneizer: A Freak in Burbank. Saturday 3 February 2018, also at Inverleith St Serf's: Beethoven's Eroica symphony, with Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto no. 2 in C minor and Mozart's overture *La Clemenza di Tito*. Conductor Peter Evans.

**Next FOMBL public meeting: 5.30-7.30 p.m. on Monday 6 November
in the Söderberg Pavilion, 1 Lister Square
Speaker Paul Curran, Managing Director, Quatermile.
Come along, ask questions, and voice your concerns.**

Useful Contacts

Mike Shields Parks and Greenspace Officer South East Tel. 0131 529 5126 or 0777 440 3523; email: mike.shields@edinburgh.gov.uk

Police: To report a crime: 101 (costing a flat rate of 15p per call); emergency 999; or (anonymously) to Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111.

Police Service of Scotland website is <http://www.scotland.police.uk>.

Customer care (Council): Tel. 0131 529 7050; or 0131 200 2000; or 0131 529 3030.

Litter: 0131 608 1100

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

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

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

Complaints regarding Council vehicles driving on Links or Meadows: Tel. 0131 529 3030

Task Force Manager (responsible for street cleaning and grounds maintenance) Rab Farquhar:
Tel. 0131 664 8330 or 07786 110377; email: rab.farquhar@edinburgh.gov.uk

Graffiti: report to 0131 200 2000 or Police 101 if persistent

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

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

People Against Litter (PAL): *please contact* <http://www.peopleagainstlitter.org/>

FoMBL Trustees

Convener: Andy Devenport. email: convener@fombl.org.uk

Secretary: Sarah Tolley. email: secretary@fombl.org.uk

Treasurer: Robin Morris. email: fombltreas@fombl.org.uk

Membership Secretary: Alec Mann, 5 West Newington Place, Edinburgh EH9 1QT, Tel. 0131 667 8212.
email: membership@fombl.org.uk

Volunteer Co-ordinator Yusef Samari. email: volunteer@fombl.org.uk

Project Manager Neil Roger

Newsletter Editor Heather Goodare. email: newsletter@fombl.org.uk

Please send in any contributions to the next newsletter by the end of January 2018.

Other Trustees: Iain Black, Joan Carter, Kaaren Haughton, Jim Orr, Alison Service

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