



Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organization (SCIO) SC045955

NEWSLETTER 49 Summer 2018

Editor's comment

We hope very much that as many people as possible will be able to attend our AGM, to be held in the Croquet Pavilion on Friday 22 June at 7.30 p.m., preceded as usual with an opportunity to play croquet, by kind invitation of the Croquet Club. We need to discuss many difficult issues, not least that of barbecues, which have been a huge problem over recent years. *See the article on page 2.*

We also need to elect members of the Board for the coming year. Warm thanks to Bridget Stevens, who has been replacing Robin Morris in representing Merchiston Community Council on the Board over the last few months. She has wide experience of community work locally, and has been a member of FoMBL for many years. Please see the back page for the list of current members.

Wild life on the Meadows

We are so lucky to have a large expanse of green space right in the centre of our city, and we need to take every opportunity to appreciate its variety and care for it responsibly. In this issue we have the chance to study it more closely with the help of Mark Thompson, who writes about birds, on which he is an expert (a member of the RSPB and as it happens, my neighbour): see page 2. Yusef Samari, our Volunteer Co-ordinator, is also something of an expert on pollinators, which are so important in the cycle of wild life. He contributes an article on page 3.

Planning on the Meadows

Some of you will have heard about the Golf Tavern's application for permission to build a second golf starter's hut and extend their hospitality space onto the Links. Your Trustees (with one exception) did not think this was a good idea, and submitted a formal objection, together with 67 others, so it is unlikely to succeed. Those in support were only 7. It would have contravened the 1991 Act forbidding any structures on the Meadows or Links except for public toilets, bandstands, police boxes, and boxes for housing gas or electricity apparatus. Unfortunately we were unable to send a circular round in time for you to put in your individual comments, though some people did anyway. We need to preserve our wonderful park and care for it. Commercial activities and more buildings are inappropriate.

Heather Goodare (Editor)

**Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links
Annual General Meeting: Friday 22 June 2018: 7.30-9.30 p.m.
at the Croquet Pavilion, Leven Terrace**

*preceded by an opportunity to try your hand at croquet, from 6.00 p.m., and refreshments
Speaker William Hinchliffe, Arboricultural Consultant at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh*

Barbecues

Barbecues used to be forbidden on the Meadows and the Links, but the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 changed all that. Anyone is allowed access to the parks for recreational purposes, which includes having a barbecue. However, the law says that the right of access must be exercised responsibly, and no damage must be done. So anyone burning the grass with a barbecue is breaking the law. Now the Council have put down slabs for BBQs, and put up notices encouraging responsible barbecue use. Sadly these notices were not in evidence when the first sunny day brought out the barbecuers.

But the main problem at the moment is not actually the barbecues themselves, though too many people ignore the slabs and put them straight on the grass, creating nasty burn marks. Rather worse, they tend to put instant barbecues, still hot, into litter-bins, setting fire to them, and necessitating a call-out to the Fire Station. On the first warm day this year there were four call-outs. The photo below shows one of these fires. The Council has the powers to introduce a byelaw banning barbecues - do you think they should? And if so, how would the law be enforced, given the reduction in Park staff? *(Ed.)*



Photo: Fernando Andrade Miranda

The Meadows - rich in bird life

How many varieties of birds do we see while walking the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links? No doubt the loud arguing between great black-backed gulls over scraps of pizza and chips discarded by our 'human' friends stands out, or the *chak-chak-chak* sound of the magpie as he chases away the busy blackbird when he is on nest-building duties in spring.

Throughout the year, look and listen, and you will be surprised at what you see and hear. Towards the east end of the Meadows you will see the tiny tree-creeper, searching for insects as he creeps up the trunks of mature trees that enrich the surroundings of this open space. I always hear a flock of long-tailed tits before I see them, as they search the tree-tops. I hear the constant lively *zee-zee-zee* sound.

Visitors to the Meadows

After heavy downpours on the Meadows and Links, water collects in large puddles. I have seen a pair of mallard ducks enjoying their new temporary surroundings. Overhead, soaring high above, I have seen a buzzard flying with ease on the thermals rising from below.

On Bruntsfield Links I have seen waxwings stripping trees of berries and moving on to the next tree and doing the same there, until none are left. Pied wagtails hurry around, crows caw, and goldfinches give out their delightful sounds, all of these on our own doorstep. Back gardens thrive if you put out fresh water, and seeds, crumbs and fat to attract the birds, so that you can enjoy their displays. When I first moved to Glengyle Terrace in 1990, I heard the haunting sounds of owls from Barclay Church spire during the night . . . Wouldn't it be nice to hear that again! Perhaps they took fright when the mobile phone mast was installed.

Species of birds I have seen on the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links include: pied wagtail, starling, thrush, blackbird, goldfinch, chaffinch, blue tit, long-tailed tit, coal tit, robin, tree creeper, wood pigeon, feral pigeon, swift, swallow, peregrine falcon, carrion crow, dunnock, magpie, mallard duck, swan, seagull, heron, buzzard, sparrow-hawk, goose, waxwing, jackdaw, redwing, chaffinch, greenfinch, and wren.

Mark Thompson

See also the list of birds given on the FOMBL website: www.fombl.org.uk. (scroll down to 'Birds on the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links' in the right-hand column on the opening page). It is not as comprehensive as Mark's list above, but you can see pictures of all the birds mentioned.

Pollinators on the Meadows

Walking among the avenues of trees on a sunny day in the Meadows, you might spot some half-fly/half-bee looking things, hovering in the sunshine. These are male hoverflies of the genus *Syrphus*, who defend sunny patches under trees to attract females. If you hang around for a couple of minutes, you will see groups of males involved in dramatic dogfights, darting, swooping and circling round one another. Hoverflies, along with bees, butterflies and many other flies and beetles, play key roles as plant pollinators, so are vital both for our food production and the wider health of our environment. However, these insects have markedly declined in recent years.

Perhaps surprisingly, recent research has shown that cities can support substantial pollinator populations. Two of the main threats facing wild pollinators in the agricultural countryside are pesticides, which directly reduce their numbers, and loss of forage and nesting sites, as smaller fields, flower-rich hay meadows and hedgerows have become grubbed out by extensive monocultures. However, while pesticide use still occurs in cities, it is nowhere near on the scale of that in agricultural land.

Public and private gardens, allotments, green waterways and cycle paths can provide an abundance of floral resources and nesting sites throughout the year. Many studies have shown increased diversity and abundance of pollinators in urban compared to surrounding rural areas, while others have shown the opposite. Much of this variation is likely due to the contrasting urban layouts and amounts of green space in different cities, and the differential responses of different pollinator species to urbanization. Clearly, more research is required, but we know enough to say confidently that cities at least have the potential to act as havens for insect pollinators, if managed correctly.

Pollinators in cities

A recent large-scale survey of the cities of Edinburgh, Bristol, Reading and Leeds found that, while areas such as allotments and gardens support high numbers of pollinators, parks and green spaces support disproportionately low numbers, yet cover a relatively large area of the city. It is in these areas, such as the Meadows and Links, where small changes in management may have the greatest benefit. The Parks and Greenspaces Department of CEC, Edinburgh University and the Scottish Wildlife Trust have been working together to 're-naturalize' sections of Edinburgh's parks, to boost their wildlife value. FOMBL too, have

been playing their part, helping to create the large wildflower meadow next to Warrender Park Terrace, and recently creating a new small wildflower meadow in the fenced-off children's area to the south-west of Bruntsfield Links. Keep an eye on these patches and see how the display changes as different species bloom throughout the season. Look out too for the busy insects foraging for a meal, carving out a life in the urban jungle. *Yusef Samari*

Forthcoming events

Meadows Festival: a community event with stalls, music, food etc. Sat 2 June 10-19 hrs; 3 June 11-18 hrs.

Muriel Spark Walk: official opening of this path on the Links, from Bruntsfield Terrace to Whitehouse Loan: 6 pm on Friday 8th June. All welcome; bring a picnic if convenient.

Oxford Shakespeare Company: *Macbeth*. Two free back-to-back performances of *Macbeth*. Sunday 10 June at 4.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m.: near the junction between North Meadow Walk and Middle Meadow Walk.

HSBC UK City Ride: part of a national series of new mass cycle rides in cities across the UK, starting and finishing in the Meadows, with a registration point and portaloos. 23 June-24 June.

Decathlon sports series 5km: a UK-wide series of 5 km runs encouraging families to engage in physical fitness to improve physical and mental well-being and create a sense of community. 7 July.

Underbelly Limited- The Meadows- Festival Fringe venue dedicated to bringing a spectacular programme of UK and International Circus displays. 1-27 August.

Theatre bath bus - The Meadows – Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The bus will host 10 shows per day throughout the first week, 10am – 9:15pm. 24 people per show 1 August - 13 August.

Fun Fair at the Fringe. Annual Festival Fun Fair, 10-20 August.

Kids Fest 2018. Children's Festival to raise money for Radio Forth Cash for Kids. Inflatable games, bungee run, gladiator joust, magician's comedy acts, and local talent taking the spotlight. The Meadows 25 August.

World Short Hole Golf Pairs Championship for the Lord Provost 2018: Bruntsfield Links 7 September. 12 noon to 7.00 p.m.: charity event

Meadows Chamber Orchestra: Saturday 29 September at 7.45pm in Inverleith St Serf's church, with Gordon Bragg (SCO, ex-Edinburgh Quartet) as guest conductor. The programme is not yet agreed.

Useful Contacts

Mike Shields, Parks and Greenspace Officer South East Tel. 0131 529 5126; 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>.

Anti-social behaviour (Edinburgh Council): Tel. 0131 529 7050; **Environmental services:** 0131 200 2000;

South Office: 0131 529 5051 **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, Senior Transport Team Leader: Tel. 0131 529 3719; email: alan.dunlop@edinburgh.gov.uk

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: Family and household support service 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: Paul Baxter Tel. 0131 529 5204; or 608 1100

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

FoMBL Trustees

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