



Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organization (SCIO) SC045955

NEWSLETTER 59

Autumn 2021

Message from the trustees to all our members ...

Everyone has suffered through a very long and tedious pandemic, and while we are all aware that it is certainly not over yet, we can start to look forward to possibly being able to start having our regular public meetings again next year with a spring gathering, with interesting and informative speakers. We have all missed these very much, and we have missed seeing our fellow members at these meetings.

More than ever, we have been able to appreciate how lucky we are to have the beautiful Meadows and Bruntsfield Links to spend time outdoors during these trying times. Whether or not it has been due to the pandemic, there has been a great increase in the numbers of volunteers helping at our monthly working groups - thank you all so much. Since the council has been employing more temporary staff to do the litter picking, we have been able to concentrate on all the other jobs, such as maintaining the wildflower areas, cleaning up graffiti, sweeping up all the composted leaves from the paths, cutting off the dock seed heads to prevent them spreading. There is always plenty to be done, and we hope that lots of people will join in.

After several adverts in the newsletter we are now very lucky to be able to welcome our new secretary, Neill Walker, who has joined the Board of Trustees.

In the next few months, look out for new bird boxes which have been donated by Rebel PT, an outdoor fitness group, and Crags Yoga. Five more bird boxes can be made available, by way of donation from FoMBL to the Tree Aid charity. Also you will see that 10 new trees are being planted to replace those which have been lost, with a further 10 next spring.

Happy Christmas and Best Wishes for the New Year

Christmas Creativity

You are invited to the Community Gardens creative event on Saturday 4 December at Lauriston Hall, Lauriston Street.

4pm to 5pm Christmas crafts for all

5pm Tea with oatcakes

5.30pm to 7pm. Creative writing workshop with poet Elizabeth Rimmer (*left*). Bring a picture of a plant to inspire you!

This event is free: donations welcome. Please email Sarah at greeningourstreet@gmail.com to book places.



Proposals for the Pavilion

A community action group has applied to CEC for a Community Asset Transfer. (The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 introduces a right for community bodies to make requests to all local authorities, Scottish Ministers and a wide-ranging list of public bodies, for any land or buildings they feel they could make better use of.) This is under consideration. They await a legal judgement on the length of lease allowed which is critical to the viability of the proposal. Meanwhile the community action group have been offered a licence to occupy the building until 31 March 2022.

Improvements for the rear garden



Tentative proposals have also been made by the Rerooting cooperative to improve the rear garden and create new access paths although this is on hold until the legal situation is sorted.

Wildflower meadow



Next spring look out again for the wildflowers - the whole range of species and explanations about the planting, and the management which is required, are shown on this board sited beside the wildflower meadow at the east end of Bruntsfield Links (left).

Wildflower Meadow planting



In July Sheila Sims was commissioned to write an article with photographs by BBC Countryfile magazine to highlight the work FoMBL have been doing.

As yet the article has not been published but the group of volunteers in this photo will feature in the magazine when it eventually appears.

After a reasonable season the meadows have now had their autumn cut and raked. We fixed posts and a rope to protect the Links meadow from mowers and children and this worked so well we expect to repeat this next year.

After scarifying the earth, yellow rattle seeds have been sown by volunteers.

Neil Roger



Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) is an attractive and useful yellow-flowered annual meadow plant, from 8 to 30cm high. It is vital in developing and sustaining the variety of wildflowers in a meadow as it is a hemi-parasite that photo-synthesizes for itself but which also parasitizes the roots of some plants, especially grasses. As it steals nutrients from the grasses, they grow much less vigorously and the grassy sward is opened up allowing other, less competitive meadow plants to grow.

As its host plants become weaker, Yellow Rattle itself will become much less vigorous. The open patches are then available for colonization by other wildflowers.

Yellow Rattle is also a great source of nectar for many pollinators such as bumblebees.

Sowing: Yellow Rattle is effective when added to a meadow or grassy area by either sowing in a wide area, or in patches from where plants will self-seed, and spread in future years. It should be sown in late autumn/early winter.

First cut or graze the area to weaken the grass. Next harshly rake or rotovate to open up the grass sward and allow the Yellow Rattle seeds to make contact with the soil. Scatter the seed and roll or trample it in by foot.

Management: Yellow Rattle germination occurs in spring and the plant produces attractive flowers and then distinctive rattling seed heads in mid-summer. As the plant does not readily spread into healthy, vigorous grassland and it needs some open soil to germinate, neighbouring areas managed for hay, silage or lawns are unlikely to be colonized by the plant. If you wish to limit or remove Yellow Rattle, then cutting it whilst it is in flower will prevent it from seeding and growing new plants in the next year.

from: *Scotia Seeds, Wildflowers of Scotland*

Bird grove fencing



We had a lovely time, replacing the fence around this little plantation, to keep nesting birds safe from dogs, and to protect our young trees. This grove was planted four years ago, with funding from the Parks Officer, and the native trees were planted by the Trees and Woodlands team. It was time to replace the fence, and our team had to pull hard to remove the old fencing. We were fortunate in having two very bright international students to help.

They were brilliant at fixing the fencing while Jigme was hammering the posts into the ground. We stopped work for a picnic lunch, shared by all ten of us. Then we finished planting daffodil bulbs and spent a happy time matching the trees to the list of Linnean names, which was a challenge for all of us. Many thanks to the Fombls, community garden friends and university students for all their help!

Sarah Tolley

New toddler playground



Update from the Meadows Community Gardens

We are so pleased to be supported by the University communities fund and are setting up a little playground for toddlers, where their parents can sit and chat while the children dig around in specially built beds. We are also helping young citizens engage with the city's million tree challenge by providing a trench for planting seedlings in, which will be transplanted in a designated area when ready. The 20 minute neighbourhood policy fits well with our community gardens, as we welcome people

of all ages and backgrounds to come and have fun gardening, and growing food and flowers. It's all about promoting biodiversity, food security, healthy eating and combatting loneliness.

Sarah Tolley

New information boards



Summary of some of the text on the board above - this shows one of eight boards proposed for installation next year

[left panel] The International Exhibition of Industry, Science and Art was held here on the Meadows in 1886. International exhibitions, expositions and world fairs in the second half of the nineteenth century provided nations with opportunities to demonstrate their artistic, technical and scientific ingenuity. The International Exhibition of 1886, Scotland's first, was an opportunity to depict Edinburgh as both a modern and historic city, as well as a centre of trade and enterprise.

[left of centre panel] The site of 30 acres had 2,770,000 visitors and was opened by Prince Albert Victor, grandson of Queen Victoria, on May 6th. The Queen herself visited later in the year. Exhibitions included a reconstruction of demolished parts of the Royal Mile, including the Netherbow Port and a pavilion for the Zetland and Fair Isle knitters, made from two pairs of whale jawbones. Products on display included Czech violins, Turkish embroidery and Scotch whisky.

[right panel] The Masons' Memorial Pillars

Just behind you *[where this board will be sited]* on either side of Melville Drive *[at the west end]*, is a pair of commemorative pillars, donated in 1886 for the International Exhibition by the city's stonemasons and quarrymen. They are 26 feet tall and are mounted with a pair of finely carved unicorns, Scotland's national beast, and were designed by Sir James Gowans.



This is a draft layout of how the new boards may look

Forthcoming Events

Volunteers are always needed for work in the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links on the last Saturday of the month - the nature of the work depending on the season. We meet at the Cricket Pavilion at 10.00am, and any necessary tools can be provided.

Useful Contacts

Mike Shields, Parks and Greenspace Officer South East (Edinburgh Council). Tel: 0131 529 5126 or 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 notify on the City of Edinburgh Council website

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. Email: rab.farquhar@edinburgh.gov.uk, tel: 0131 664 8330 for recycling.

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

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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Merchiston CC: Bridget Stevens, **Marchmont and Sciennes CC:** Alison Service

Other FoMBL Contacts:

Webmaster: Philip McDowell. **Website:** www.fombl.org.uk

Volunteer Co-ordinator: Alison Carr. email: volunteer@fombl.org.uk

